

# Skating Barefoot -

## Should Skaters Wear Socks, Tights, or go Barefoot in Ice Skating Boots

by Claude Sweet

### Tights

Most female skaters wear tights or thin socks that do not to impede the feel of the ice through the boot.

The material the stocking is made of helps to soak up sweat and allowing the inside of the boots to dry out between use helps to prevent odors and reduces the moisture levels that allow athlete foot spores to flourish.

The thin cloth also provides a protective barrier so the inner lining of the boot and help prevents blisters or chaffing.

Ballet catalogs are a source of Footless tights if your local rink does not carry them. Some skaters prefer the choice of covering the toes or leaving them bare.

Some coaches believe tights help protect muscles against fatigue and sprain-type injuries. There are specialty leg coverings designed to increase blood circulation.

### Socks

Recreational skaters tend to favor cushioned athletic socks, but these are not recommended for figure skaters that require a precise feel of the boot to properly perform their technical moves.

The prevailing feeling is that a thicker sock worn in other sports impedes the sensations that would normally be felt inside the boot.

With the high cost of custom and stock boots, parents of beginning skaters generally prefer to purchase boots that have

some growing room. The extra space is filled with thicker socks to compensate for the large size and prevent blisters from the foot moving inside the boot.

**Ordering boots a full size larger so the skater can grow into them is not a good practice for skaters who are seriously trying to learn advanced elements such as double and triple rotation jumps.**

### Barefoot

Elite figure and speed skaters who prefer to forego socks or tights claim that skating barefoot allows their toes to spread out and grip the sole of the boot, thus improving their ability to control their balance and maneuverability.

**There are generally no variations in the materials between socks (imperfections) or bumps that cause blisters and calluses.**

The boot should fit snugly around the foot so there is no slipping at the heel or ball. A skater should literally feel their balance positioned over the blade and the precise edge as the blade contacts the ice.

I urge anyone who skates barefoot to use a boot cover or wear toe socks. Boot covers will help keep your feet warmer besides keeping skating boots competition-clean.

Toe socks cover only the toes and the balls of your feet. If your rink's sports shop doesn't carry toe sock, try stores that cater to ballet. You might consider

sacrificing an older pair of socks and cut them down to whatever size you want.

The decision to wear stockings or socks in ice skating boots is a personal choice. Ask your coach before you skate barefoot.

### **Parents**

If your child's boots are a little big, try out different types of tights or socks. Make a decision and then stick with one brand so that differing thicknesses doesn't provide a distraction to the skater

The skater should wear the same type sock in practice sessions and competitions. Don't introduce an unnecessary variable into the competitive experience.