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Inline Hockey Equipment Tips & Hints

Undergarments: Choose an arrangement of undergarments to wear under your equipment that will help keep you cool and comfortable. This will help avoid irritation to the skin from your protective equipment. Undergarments will help absorb moisture from your skin.

What a player wears under their equipment is their personal choice. Several fabric types work well as undergarments. The most preferred type is a 50/50 blend of cotton/polyester as it allows for maximum comfort and ventilation.

It is advised to wear a single pair of socks in your skates that allow for ventilation, comfort, and have moisture absorbent qualities. After each skating session it is advised to change into a fresh pair of socks.

To maintain good hygiene and avoid chaffing from your equipment always ensure that your socks and underwear are dry and clean. Remove any wrinkles in your socks before tightening up your skates.

Always carry an extra set of socks and underwear to change into after games. In the case of a tournament carry several sets and change them after each game.

Proper Fitting and Maintenance of Inline Hockey Equipment

Athletic Supporters: Athletic supporters incorporate a plastic cup with either a jock/jill strap or a boxer short style holder.

The jock strap (males) or jill strap (females) and boxers are fitted according to the player's waist size. The straps or boxers should fit like a pair of briefs. Not too tight to restrict movement or cause chaffing but snug enough to ensure that the protective cup is held in place.

The jock/jill strap will need to be fixed or replaced if it tears in any way. Tears will allow the cup to shift out of position and increase the risk of an injury. The most common place for tears to occur is where the two straps meet the protective cup. Inspect the plastic cup for cracks, and if any are found replace it immediately.

Machine wash the strap/boxer regularly (make sure you remove the plastic cup) and hang to dry. The cups and straps/boxers should be hung to dry after every game.

Shin Pads: Shin pads come in a variety of sizes; Junior (approx. 8” to 13”), Senior (approx. 14” to 17”), etc. The cap of the shin pad should be centered on the kneecap while the calf padding should wrap around and offer protection to the lower part of the leg. The protective padding should overlap with the bottom of the inline girdle or hockey pants by about 2”.

To check for good fit; with the skate open the shin pads should rest approximately 1” above the foot when the foot is fully flexed upwards while not inhibiting the movement of the foot in any way. The tongue of the skate should be positioned behind the shin pad for maximum protection.

A Shin pad that is too long may cause discomfort, irritation, and restrict the movement of the knee and ankles. A shin pad that is too short will leave areas of the body exposed.

Shin pads should be hung and air dried after each session.

Inline Girdles and Hockey Pants: Inline Girdles and Inline pants (made of light breathable material which cover the girdles and shin pads) provide the same protection as Hockey pants and socks. The girdles are much cooler as they have ventilation holes built in making them cooler to wear. Many players still wear their hockey pants without complaint and use socks to cover their shin pads.

Girdles and Pants are sized according to the player’s waist size. They should be fitted with shin pads in place to ensure the 2” overlap of shin pads top flaring and the girdles/pants. Female players should fit the hips first then check the position of the leg and kidney pads to ensure adequate coverage.

It is important to ensure that the correct position of rib, hip, thigh, and kidney padding to ensure proper protective covering is attained. The padding around the waist of the pants should cover the kidney area (halfway between hips and underarms). Padding on the rear of the pants should extend far enough to completely cover the bottom end of the tail-bone. Thigh padding (plastic shell) and hip padding must fit over the appropriate areas.

If the pants are equipped with a belt, it should be positioned above the hip bone to allow for a snug adjustment without falling off the players hips. Ensure that all of the necessary padding is in place, protecting all of the vital areas, while allowing for a full range of movement. A good measure of movement is to have the player fully squat with the pants and shin pads on. If this can be done comfortably with all of the padding remaining in place covering the vital areas then the pants fit properly.

Any tears should be fixed immediately and any cracked plastic pieces should be replaced. Pants should be hung and air dried after use.

Inline Skate Boots: Inline skates sizes vary from manufacturer to manufacturer but as a general rule they fit ½ a size smaller than normal street shoes. When sizing a new pair of inline skates it is advisable to wear the same type of sock that you would wear in the Inline skates during use. Many newer types of inline skates come equipped with ventilation holes built in so wearing a good pair of breathable socks is advised. Ensure that there are no wrinkles in the socks prior to lacing them up.

When fitting an inline skate, loosen the skate to allow the foot to be easily slipped into the boot. Then slide the foot all the way forward to press the toes against the end of the skate. With the foot in the forward position you should be able to slide one finger between the heel of the foot and the boot.

Prior to lacing up the boot, kick the heel into the boot heel by banging it lightly against the floor. Lace the boot with the first 3 eyelets snug, the next 3-4 eyelets loose, to prevent constriction in this area, and the last 2-4 eyelets very snug to maximize energy transfer to the boot. When the skates are laced up there should be 1½” to 2” between the eyelets. If they are wider then a wider boot may be necessary. If they are closer then a narrower boot may be necessary.

Walking with both inline skates on for 10 to 20 minutes will help ensure a comfortable fit. Next remove the inline skates and check your feet for red areas and pressure points, which are a good indicator of an improperly fit boot. Take the time to break in your skates properly by wearing them for short periods of time (this avoids blisters and chaffing) prior to extended use.

***Walking on a carpet (that won't be damaged by the inline skate) with your skates on is a great way for new players to get used to getting up and moving around with the inline skates on. The restrictive effect of the carpet help builds a child's confidence and comfort prior to stepping onto a smooth surface.

The tongue of the inline skate should be worn behind the shin pad to help protect the lower part of the leg. Never strap laces completely around the boot of the inline skate as this can restrict normal blood circulation to the foot and irritate the Achilles tendon.

Inline skates should be removed from use if cracks develop in the skate boot. This is a sign that the boot is no longer safe to wear and should be replaced.

After use, remove the inline skates liner, open the inline skate and set up to allow for natural air drying. This will help reduce odour and prolong the life of the inline skate.

Inline Skate Brakes: It is advised to remove the brake from the inline skate as players should learn to skate without using it. It gets in the way of play during a game and will cause some problems to the player. Most tournaments have the brakes listed as illegal equipment and players with them won't be allowed to play with them on. So it is our opinion that the players should learn how to skate without them.

Inline Skate Wheels: The most important aspect of choosing the right wheel is to determine which wheel works best on the particular floor the players mostly play on. Asking other more experienced players or the pros at the sports shops is a good idea to finding out what type of wheel works best. For example: a wheel with a 74A rating is softer, more grip, smoother riding, and has a shorter life when compared to an 82A which is harder, less grip, rougher ride, but a longer wear life.

***It is advised not to wear the softer wheels that you would wear indoors on the smooth surface outside on a rough surface as this will drastically reduce the life and use of the wheel itself. If you wish to use your skates outside as well then swap the wheels and bearings for a harder outdoor set.

Wheels also come in different sizes. Typical inline wheels range from 72mm to 80mm, with larger and smaller sizes being available outside of this range. Some skate use wheels all of the same size while others use smaller wheels in the front and larger wheels in the back of the chassis.

***Goaltenders: There are wheels specifically made for goaltenders, they are usually smaller, fatter, and harder (59mm/80A). These let help the goal smooth out the side to side motion necessary to tend net. They also have an improved life as the side to side motion is hard on soft wheels.

Many factors will affect the life of your wheels. These factors are the softness of the wheel, the players skating style, the surface skated on, the weight of the skater, and the frequency of the wheels rotation.

To rotate your wheels you will need two Allen wrenches (It is advised to keep the wrenches with your gear in-case you need to fix a wheel at the rink). The wheel changing technique is as follows:

1. While sitting, nestle the boot upside down between your legs
2. Remove wheels from the frame by unscrewing the axle screws with the Allen wrenches. Keep track of which position the wheel came off of the frame.
3. Reposition the wheels in the following manner:
 - a. **Four wheel, same size wheels version:**
 1. 1st wheel of the left side goes to the third position of the right skate.
 2. 2nd wheel of the left skate goes to the fourth position of the right skate.
 3. 3rd wheel of the left skate goes to the first position or the right skate.
 4. 4th wheel of the left skate goes to the second position of the right skate.
 5. Swap skate sides and repeat steps 1 to 4.
 - b. **Four wheel, different size wheel version:**
 1. 1st wheel of the left side goes to the second position of the right skate.
 2. 2nd wheel of the left side goes to the first position of the right skate
 3. 3rd wheel of the left side goes to the fourth position of the right skate
 4. 4th wheel of the left side goes to the third position of the right skate.
 5. Swap skate sides and repeat steps 1 to 4
 - c. **Four wheel, same size wheels version:**
 1. 1st wheel of the left side goes to the second position of the right skate.
 2. 2nd wheel of the left side goes to the third position of the right skate.
 3. 3rd wheel of the left side goes to the first position of the right skate.
 4. Swap skate side and repeat steps 1 to 3
4. Reassemble the axles and tighten. DO NOT OVER TIGHTEN as this can cause damage to the bearings.
5. Spin each wheel. If they do not spin for the same amount of time, adjust the tightness.

Inline Skate Bearings: Bearings are located in the center of each wheel and each wheel contains two bearings. On typical pair of four wheel inline skates you will find 16 bearings in total. The bearings are rated by the ABEC system and the typical rating of inline skate bearings is ABEC 1 through 9. The higher the ABEC number the smoother the bearing runs and the more it will cost.

***Keep in mind that a player does not need the highest rated bearing, since no one can skate fast enough to maximize what an ABEC 7 bearing can do. In most situations an ABEC 3 or 5 will be sufficient.

During a bearing's life it will be exposed to dirt and moisture (especially if used outside or on a dirty or moist rink surface). Bearings should be cleaned and oiled usually around the same time as wheel rotation. The following signs are good indicators that bearings need to be cleaned:

1. Gritty dry sound when turning
2. Wheel vibrations
3. Wheels don't spin equally or freely
4. Dirt is visible

When cleaning bearings follow the manufacturer's instructions and recommendations

Bearings or axles that show signs of damage or extreme wear should be replaced immediately.

Lubricate your bearings with light synthetic oil regularly. Oil allows better freewheeling than grease but does not last as long in the bearing. Good quality lubricants can be found at any store selling inline wheels. Too much lubricant can leak onto the wheel surface making them slippery or even creating a slippery spot on the floor. Make sure that any leaked oil is cleaned up immediately.

Shoulder Pads: Shoulder pads should completely cover the shoulders, upper back, chest, and upper arms just above the elbow area. The protective plastic caps should be positioned on the top of the shoulders and the arm pads should extend to meet the elbow pads. It is recommended that the back of the shoulder pads overlap slightly with the hockey girdle/pants. The arm pads should fit securely over the bicep and triceps muscle areas.

Check all Velcro fasteners around the arms and mid-body to ensure they are intact and do not cause any discomfort. A player should not lose any range of motion while wearing shoulder pads. The player should be able to lift his/her arms slightly above shoulder height without the pads digging into the neck area.

Hang and air dry shoulder pads after use. Check for tears and cracks, and fix or replace any faulty equipment.

Elbow Pads: Most junior or intermediate quality elbow pads can be used on either elbow, but with the constant improvement of equipment some elbow pads now have left or right designation.

Place the donut inside the elbow pad on the point of the elbow, and adjust all the fastening straps snugly to ensure that the elbow pad does not slide when the arm is fully extended. The top of the elbow pad should meet the bottom of the shoulder pads' arm pad and extend down the forearm down to where the top of the glove starts. The forearm padding should wrap around the forearm and provide good protection.

The elbow pad should not restrict movement of the elbow. You can test the range of motion by bending the arm at the elbow and watch for any constriction or reduction of movement.

Ensure that the elbow pad contains a donut pad or pocket where the point of the elbow rests. The elbow pad should have plastic cup to protect the point of the elbow.

Slash guards are rigid plastic pads that protect the forearm area. The slash guards should be on the outside of the elbow pad.

Check the elbow pads for tears and cracks. Air dry after each session of use. Check and replace the donut when it shows sign of cracking or hardening. This can be done by pressing down on it with two fingers.

Gloves: Ideally gloves should be light weight and offer maximum flexibility. Gloves are made from a variety of materials like Kevlar and Leather. Leather gloves last longer but are heavier and take longer to dry.

Ensure that the gloves have adequate padding on the back and the hard shell components are of sufficient quality to protect your hand and wrist areas. This can be tested by pressing on the back of the glove with your fingers, and the compression should not be felt inside the glove.

Check gloves regularly for cracks, holes, and tears. Gloves should be air dried after each session of use. When testing a pair of gloves, use a hockey stick and stick handle on the spot for a few minutes to ensure freedom of movement in a variety of positions without chaffing.

Helmets: All helmets must be CSA approved, and have a CSA sticker indicating this approval. The stickers must remain on the helmet and be visible during play.

When choosing a helmet, choose one that fits snugly on the head, but allows for final fitting. Use the helmets adjustment mechanism to fit the helmet firmly enough that the helmet does not move when shaking your head side to side and does not cause any discomfort.

The front of the helmet should be just above the eyebrows. The chin strap should be adjusted to fit snugly under the chin to provide proper protection. A loose chin strap can cause the helmet to fall off during an impact and an over tight chin strap will cause some discomfort.

Ear guards are highly recommended and are a standard component on many newer helmets. The ear guards will protect the ears from impact injuries. A helmet that was bought with ear guards attached must have the ear guards in place to maintain the CSA approval.

Helmets must be checked regularly to ensure that all straps, clips, snaps, buckles, and screws are in place and properly secured. Check the visor screws to ensure that they are not rusting in place. Check the inside padding of the helmet by pressing on the internal padding. If the padding moves back into shape it's original and does not crack or break then its OK. If the padding cracks or breaks than it is time to replace the helmet.

Stickers and/or painting on helmets are not allowed as this may weaken the structure of the helmet and will void the CSA certification of that helmet.

Facial Protection: All minor aged players are required to have facial protection on their helmets at all times. Adult players that do not have facial protection may not be able to claim some types of facial injuries (this will be up to the discretion of the insurance carriers).

There are three basic types of full facial protectors:

1. Wire Cage
2. High Impact Polycarbonate Shield (Visor type)
3. Wire Cage and Visor combination

The CSA stickers are colour coded to distinguish the range of use by each visor group. They are as follows:

- Type 1: White CSA sticker – Players 10yrs and older.
- Type 2: Orange CSA sticker – Players 10yrs and under.
- Type 3: Blue CSA sticker - Goaltenders of all age categories.
- Type 4: Yellow CSA sticker – Players in Major junior category and older.
- Type 5: Green CSA sticker – same as Type 1, the only difference being the penetration requirements of the CSA standard.
- Type 6: Red CSA sticker – Same as Type 2, the only difference being the penetration requirements of the CSA standard.

The facial shield must be compatible with the helmet. Masks are design to fit certain types of helmets only. The facial protector should fit to allow one finger to be placed between the bottom of the chin and the chin cup holder.

The facial protector should be replaced immediately if any breaks or cracks are found. Never cut or alter the facial protector as this will weaken its structure and void the CSA certification.

The face mask will help prevent dental injuries to an extent, so the use of an internal mouth guard is recommended. Mouth guards will help prevent dental injuries as well as concussions. It is recommended that the mouth guard be mould to the players' teeth.

The screws on the helmet and facial protectors should be checked regularly for tightness. Immediately replace any missing or damaged screws, clips, buckles, or straps.

Throat Protectors: throat protectors are not part of the mandatory inline hockey equipment and are not worn by many players. Inline wheels do not pose the threat that skate blades do in ice hockey. Throat protectors are very worn to wear and can cause some overheating issues with some players. Therefore we leave the decision of use strictly to the players or parents' discretion.

Throat protectors should be snug but not uncomfortably tight. Bib style protectors are worn beneath the shoulder pads and offer increased protection. The throat protectors should completely cover the throat and upper chest area. Collar style protectors; protect the throat area from lacerations and cuts. Each is made from ballistic nylon or similar type material. They do not offer any protection with regard to spinal or neck injuries. All throat protectors must bear the BNQ (bureau de normalisation du Quebec) logo. If the protector is altered in any way its BNQ certification is void.

They should be washed and hung dry regularly away from any direct heat sources. The Velcro fasteners should be kept in good shape and replaced if necessary.

Sticks: A properly chosen stick is essential to the developing effective puck control and shooting skills. The following are key points to consider when choosing a stick:

- **Junior or Senior Sizing:** Junior sticks are made with narrower shafts and smaller blades for better control. It is strongly recommended that junior sticks be chosen with a straight blade. Senior sized sticks are for intermediate or older players who have the ability to comfortably control the stick.
- **Length:** As a rule of thumb, in street shoes, the stick should reach between the chin and mouth of the player with the toe of the stick on the ground. While wearing Inline Skates the butt of the stick should reach just below the chin.
*****Note: some inline skate chassis cause a player to be slightly higher off the surface than in ice hockey, so a stick slightly longer may be necessary.**
- **Blade Lie:** This is the angle of the blade in relation to the shaft of the stick and affects the angle from which the stick raises from the ice. Generally, lies are available from 4-8 in a "ready stance", with the stick's blade flat on the ice, there should be no gap between the ice and the bottom edge of the blade. If so, try a different blade to remove the gap.
- **Shaft Material:** Wooden shafts provide varying degrees of flexibility. Generally, the less flexible a stick, the greater the amount of strength required to effectively use it. Younger players should use sticks with greater flexibility than senior players.
- **Aluminums Sticks:** offer a greater consistency in flex ranges and flex points.

The butt end of a stick must be covered with tape or a commercially manufactured butt end to prevent injuries. All aluminums sticks come with a wooden plug that must be inserted in the top of the stick and taped.

One aspect of the stick to consider, when choosing a blade for a stick, is that, most games are played on concrete or tile flooring. Graphite or composite blades will last much longer than traditional wooden blades.

Do not store sticks near any heat sources as this will cause them to dry-out more quickly.

Taping Sticks: Typically inline players do not tape the bottom of the stick as this will add to the friction, but rather only place tape or grit compound to the face and/or back of the blade.

Jerseys: A jersey should be large enough to fit completely over a players' equipment and allow them a full range of motion. The length of the jersey should be long enough to go over the pants and not ride up while the player is skating. The arms of the sweater should extend to the wrists. Ensure that the sweater is not so baggy that it gets caught in bench doors and other objects.

The neckline of the jersey should not compress the back of the neck as this can cause chaffing or an injury. Jerseys should be washed and hung to air dry regularly.

Inline Pants: Inline pants should be large enough to fit completely over a players' equipment while still allowing a full range of motion. They should be long enough to go from the waist to the top of the inline skates. Pants that are too long may get caught in the wheels and cause an injury. The pants should be snug enough on the hips as to not inhibit a player's movement or blood circulation. Inline pants should be constructed from a light breathable material that is resilient to cuts and snags. They should be washed and hung to air dry regularly.

Goaltenders Equipment

Goaltenders Stick: Goaltenders should choose a stick that allows them to get into a crouch (ready) position with the blade flat on the floor. Be aware of different lies (the angle at which the shaft rises from the ice), as well as the length of the paddle.

Try other sticks when you have the opportunity to see what length, lie, and flexibility best suits you.

With aluminium shafts do not interchange different brands of blades and shafts.

Leg Pads: always fit the goalie pads while the goalie is wearing his skates. Kneel down into each pad making sure that the kneecap is in the middle of the knee roll.

The large vertical roll should be on the outside of each leg. After doing up the straps, the pad should extend from the toe of the inline skate approximately 4" above the knee.

The leg pads should have padding at the back of the leg which fits under the straps. The top of the pads should extend approximately 3" above the bottom of the pants. Remember that a good quality fit is essential for good protective quality and comfort.

Pads should be stored standing to prevent flattening of the padding. Air dry to prevent mildew, and do not place near any sources of heat. Rubbing leather conditioner on the pads will help prevent premature breakdown.

Straps should be checked regularly and replaced if necessary.

Catchers and Blockers: The same procedures for fitting gloves are used to properly fit the Catcher and Blocker. Refer to the article on gloves.

With your hands at your sides the catcher and blocker should not fall off. The blocker should be off adequate size to ensure comfort, easy gripping, and control of the stick. The catcher should have a padded cuff that overlaps the arm pad for maximum protection. Routinely check the padding by pressing your fingers in to the padding. If the padding is lumpy or spongy it has broken down and requires replacement.

The use of leather conditioner will help prolong the life of the equipment.

Upper Body Protection: The upper body protection for a goaltender is designed to protect the collar bone, entire chest and abdominal areas, and down the arms to the wrists. A qualified technician should be consulted when fitting this specialized equipment.

Ensure that all straps are utilized and fastened properly. Elbow padding must be properly positioned over the elbow. Arm padding should extend down to the wrist. The body padding should tuck into the pants about 2” below the naval. The arm pads should overlap slightly with the gloves while allowing movement of the wrists and hands. Tape should never be used in place of straps as this might restrict movement and blood flow.

Air drying after every session is essential to prolong the life and quality of the equipment. Any damaged straps should be replaced or repaired immediately at a shoe or leather, or equipment repair shop.

Athletic Supporters: goaltenders wear a specially designed athletic support and cup which has extra padding and protection. The athletic support should be fitted with the same principles as a regular player’s equipment, but is specifically designed for a goaltender.

As with pants, goaltender pants are to adsorb and disperse impacts from pucks. Padding is positioned to protect hips, waist, lower back (kidney area), tailbone, and thigh and groin area.

The same principles apply for fitting, and maintenance with goaltender pants as for player’s pants except for:

- Ensure that the goalie pants are loose enough around the waist to allow for the belly pad to tuck into the pants.
- Remember that the pants have several additional protective pieces. Padding is heavier than regular pants and may require suspenders to help the pants from falling out of position.