

Frequently Asked Questions About Youth Hockey

Laramie Amateur Hockey Association

“Because it’s always a great day for hockey!”



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General Questions About Gear

Q: I have a new player. What should he wear under his gear?

A: A t-shirt, compression shorts should be enough - hockey players stay warm by working hard! Do not put on street clothes or warmer materials unless your player gets cold easily. Many players come off the ice in a full sweat. Many kids just wear a long sleeved t-shirt and lightweight sweat pants, pajama pants or shorts. Jeans are too bulky.

Q: Putting on gear is confusing - help!

A: see this video for some good tips: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fvefXKMi3cU>.

Q: Ugh, my player’s gear smells bad. Like, really bad. What can I do?

A: First, most gear, even shin pads (but not skates) is machine washable! However, a great routine is to spray gear with a 50/50 mix of hydrogen peroxide and rubbing alcohol. It is amazing how great this works. Fill a spray bottle with this mix and spray the gear until it’s pretty damp - it will dry on its own nicely. Kills bacteria and provides a light freshness. A godsend to hockey parents!

Q: My player’s socks don’t stay up. What do I do?

A: The best thing to do is buy an integrated protective cup. You can find them online at numerous places, including Amazon: <https://www.amazon.com/Shock-Doctor-Compression-Hockey-Bio-Flex/dp/B01N30NF88> . It’s pretty common to use sock tape (clear hockey tape) or regular white tape to wrap once or twice around the socks and shin guards to help them stay in place.



Q: Do shin guards go in the outside or inside of the tongue?

A; This is somewhat a player’s preference. Modern skates open up really nicely when a player turns hard, and having the shin guard on the outside helps this action, so more players are putting their shin guards on the outside. Older players are advised to put them on the outside because it increases protection from shots. Crosby keeps his on the outside of the tongue. Ovechkin does it the other way.... but more high level players keep them on the outside for the flexibility it offers when skating.

Buying Equipment

Q: Where can I get hockey gear?

A: Locally you can find some hockey gear at Westbrook's Pawn Shop. The closest sizeable hockey store is the Stick Rack near Fort Collins, located inside the NoCo ice rink. The Stick Rack often has good used gear, including skates. There are several big hockey stores in Denver, including Monkey Sports (aka Hockey Monkey), PureHockey, ProHockeyStock, and several Play it Again Sports that carry hockey gear. Online options include <https://www.hockeymonkey.com>, <https://www.purehockey.com>, <https://www.total-hockey.com>, <https://www.true-hockey.com/>, <https://www.hockeygiant.com>, and even Amazon. Keep in mind that LAHC is committed to keeping hockey costs down, and rental equipment is available at low cost.

Q: Hockey equipment can be expensive - how do I save money?

A: If you are looking to buy new equipment, doing so in the off-season can offer big savings as companies clear out their stock before the next year's models come in. A good strategy is to buy equipment that is from a previous year's release. Equipment doesn't change radically from year to year, so buying an older model is unlikely to make much difference, and a player can often get better equipment at a lower price by following this strategy. Used equipment can be found on eBay, Craigslist, and so forth. It is also good to let people in the club know you are looking for something. Families with older players often have extra equipment that they would like to sell or hand down.

Q: I need help choosing a hockey helmet - is more \$\$\$ always better?

A: No. There is no correlation between protection and money once you get beyond beginner helmets. It is very important to (a) choose a helmet that fits properly and (b) is highly rated for concussion. It is important to note that hockey helmets are not designed principally for head contact and concussion safety; mostly they are designed to protect against errant pucks and sticks, but that choosing the right helmet can help in reducing head injury. We recommend reading the "Hockey Helmet Ratings" page at Virginia Tech, which periodically reviews helmets for concussion safety (<https://www.helmet.beam.vt.edu/hockey-helmet-ratings.html>). We suggest identifying helmets with adequate protection in the right price point and then trying them on to ensure proper fit. Not all helmets are designed the same, and head shapes can vary greatly. Proper fit is important for comfort and safety.

Skates

Q: How do I properly lace up skates?

A: Player preferences vary widely, but the general approach is to (a) have it snug but not tight through the boot from the toe to the ankle, than (b) have it pretty tight through the ankle area, and (c) have it slightly looser towards the very top of the boot. If your player has foot pain, their skates are probably too tight across the bridge of their foot. If the player's feet get cold, the skates are too tight. If a player has ankle pain, then it might be too tight in the ankle or perhaps one lace is too tight and causing a flex point. Players' toes should move freely and the ankle part of the boot should be allowed to open up.

Q: Should I wrap laces around ankles? My parents did it for me.

A: No. Skates are designed to open up around the ankle and modern skates do not require wrapping. Your player will be a better skater if you don't wrap, even if it is harder at first.

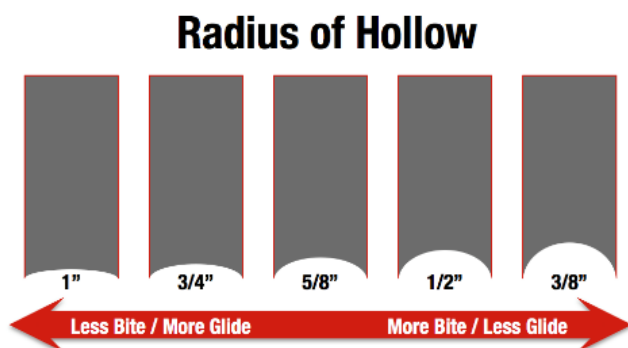
Q: When should my player be able to tie their own skates?

A: Some players catch on more quickly than others, but typically by PeeWee age players should be tying their own skates. Some players really like the feel of a tighter skate, and so ask for help as they get older or before games.

Q: How often should I sharpen my skates?

A: A general rule is to sharpen after every 15 hours on the ice (or so). Players who get on their edges hard, or are a little heavy, or simply like them sharp, should sharpen them more frequently. If a player steps on something metal or notices an imperfect edge, the skates should be sharpened.

Q: The rink asked me what “hollow” or radius I want for skate sharpening. What does that mean?



A: The “hollow” is the width of the groove that runs down the middle of the blade, and is why skate blades have two edges. A narrower/deeper hollow feels “sharper”, but it is really just cutting into the ice at a steeper angle, so it has more “bite”. Wider hollows are equally sharp, but they have less bite so they feel a little slipperier. Small hollow = easier turning but less speed. Wider hollow = less grip but faster. Speed skaters do not have any hollow! Smaller players and players who are starting to skate should have a narrow radius - try 3/8”. As skaters get stronger and better on their edges they

need more speed and less friction, so should migrate to wider hollows. A high school or bantam player might play on 5/8”, for example. The “typical” hollow is 1/2” at most rinks. However, there is no set standard - pro players skate on everything from a 3/8” to 1” hollow - and players who rely on sharp turns and hard stops lean towards narrow hollows, while players who use speed and glide choose wider.

Sticks

Q: Sticks are confusing! My player wants a new stick; can you help me identify a good stick?

A: There are four major questions to consider about sticks: (1) material; (2) flex, (3) blade pattern and (4) lie. Let’s get into it!

(1) Material - you can find wooden, two-piece and one-piece composite sticks. Wooden sticks are good for new players, but as players get more skilled they should switch to composite sticks, which help players pass, shoot, and control the puck a little better.

(2) Flex, which is the stiffness of the stick itself and how much it bends when they shoot. The rule of thumb is that a stick should have a flex about 1/2 the player’s weight. The trend is for players to use lower flex, even in the pros. A high flex is NOT a sign of being “better”, and players should only graduate to higher flex sticks when they are ready. Sticks come in "senior", which is adult (flex 85 - 115), intermediate (65 - 85), youth (45 - 65) and junior (35). Smaller hands should stick with junior sticks, which are narrower. Remember that when you cut a stick, it gets stiffer, so a 45 flex can easily become a 60.

(3) Blade pattern. This is probably the most useful thing to focus on since they really alter how kids play. There are a LOT of blade patterns out there, all named after players (Crosby, Lidstrom, Iginla, etc), but really there are some basic ones that all of the major manufacturers build that resemble each other. None of the players actually use the stick that is named after them - it is purely

marketing. Sidney Crosby does not play with a Crosby curve. All beginning players should start with a flat blade and be allowed to self-determine if they play lefty or righty. Many right-handed people end up playing with a lefty stick.

(4) Lie. This is also important. It relates to how vertical a player is when they skate. Lower numbers are for skaters who really lean over and skate low, and are usually offense men. The higher numbers are for more vertical skaters. The lie makes sure the stick sits on the ice properly - see this photo for an explanation



Q: How do I tape a stick?

A: Players have a lot of different strategies for taping a stick, and as a player continues in hockey they will develop their own style. The standard way is to start about 1-2” from the toe and slowly wrap the blade moving towards the heel with about 1/2 overlap every turn. Avoid wrinkles, but it doesn’t have to be perfect! Stop about 2” before the heel.

Q: My players wants me to get him some stick wax. Is it necessary?

A: No, but it does give some advantages. First, it repels water and snow, so ice buildup is lessened and players retain better control. It saves money on tape since it protects the tape from tears and water damage. It also adds a bit of a tacky feel so that stickhandling is slightly improved. Candle wax and paraffin are OK, but hockey wax will add more tackiness. Not everyone plays with wax; it is worth a try, but hard work and practice are the only true paths to stickhandling greatness.