



Equipment Maintenance

It is important to properly maintain your equipment during the season. Regular maintenance helps keep the skater performing optimally and ensures a longer life for the gear.

Short Track skates are \$75 to rent for the season or can be purchased online at ilovespeedskating.com.

BOOTS

Of particular importance when choosing equipment for speed skating is the fit of the equipment. Speed skating is about feeling the ice; therefore, it is important that all equipment fits properly. Avoid boots or blades to *grow into* as this will negatively influence the capacity of the participant to acquire skills. It is also important to properly dry out all equipment between each practice and wash it regularly.

When selecting a speed skating boot be sure:

- The boot provides support for the foot and the ankle.
- The boot allows the skater to move their knee as far forward as possible.
- The boot needs to be tight but comfortable without cutting off the skaters' circulation. If the boot does not fit snugly, or is not properly tied, the skater's foot will slide around inside the boot and decrease control of the blades.
- Purchase boots that can be heat moulded. This will improve the fit and increase comfort for the participant.
- To keep spare laces available as they can break at any time. Laces should be kept relatively short to avoid tripping over them.
- Clean skates after each use by wiping dry with cloth.
- Tuck in the tongue and laces, close all velcros and buckles.
- If you find that the skates are very uncomfortable then consider heat molding the boots to your feet.
- Checking skate hardware: Before you put on your skates check that all nuts and bolts are tight and that there are no visible signs of deterioration.

BLADES

Speed skating blades are quite different than those used for hockey or figure skating. Not only are they longer, but they are also completely flat on the bottom. This allows the skater to glide

more effectively, **but also requires that speed skating blades be sharpened by hand.** If speed skates are sharpened using a machine designed for hockey or figure skates it will permanently damage the blades. Matsqui Blades Speed Skating Club will host a skate sharpening clinic each season.

The set-up of the blades for a speed skater is just as important as the boot. For developing skaters maintaining sharp blades with a proper rocker and bend will have the most significant influence on a blade's performance, far more than the actual quality of the blade. Improper blade set up often limits a participant's ability to perform a skill, making the sport less enjoyable. Improper blade set-up is the equivalent of not properly inflating the tires on a bicycle.

To properly maintain blades:

- Be sure to fully dry the blades after each use to prevent rust from developing.
- Hard skate guards are to be used when you are walking from the dressing room to the ice surface and return to the dressing room. **DO NOT STORE THE SKATES IN THE HARD GAURDS.** If you keep the plastic skate guards on the blades while they are damp, rust will form and damage the skate blade.
- Store the blades in a soft skate guard (soakers) any time you are not using them, such as between practices.
- Sharpen the blades regularly. It is best to sharpen quickly on a regular basis rather than an occasional long sharpening job. This can be done by using club sharpening jig and stones.
- Check the edge of the blade with a fingernail to check for sharpness and burr. If you are able to scrape some of your nail, the blade does not need to be sharpened. When checking for burr, you want to be able to scrape your fingernail upwards on the side of the blade without catching it on a piece metal.
- Have the rocker and bend on skates checked at least once per season by a club coach or equipment person.
- The tips of the blades must be rounded to the radius of a nickel to reduce their possibility of puncturing an object.

Speed skates are intended for use only at practice and sanctioned competitions. Any damage to club blades when used on outdoor ice will be the financial responsibility of the skater.



SHARPENING

Speed skates are sharpened by hand, using a jig, a sharpening stone, and a deburring stone. Instructional sessions on how to sharpen your skates are held during the skating season. If you have rented club skates you are responsible for sharpening them throughout the season. The club has jigs available for club members to use. Please ask your coach or an executive how to go about this.

