

## **New Parent Hockey Primer**

So you have decided to have your child try hockey. We think it is a great idea as hockey is a great team and friend building experience for the entire family. USA Hockey has a great training program that is designed to fun for the skaters yet maximize each individual skater's potential.

To get you started in the right direction the association wants to provide you with a list of essentials for getting started in this great youth sport.

**Skates.** Hockey skates only. Get hockey skates that are properly fitted by someone like Middleton Sports. Do not rely on shoe size because skate sizes do not correlate. Skates can be purchased new, used, or borrowed. Usually in the early years it is best to get used skates since they usually only fit a player a few years. Used skates are already broken in and should reduce the chances for blisters as a youth's foot gets conditioned to skating. Used skates can be found at Crossovers Pro Shop, Play It Again and Middleton Sport. New skates must be sharpened before they can be used. Always have a spare pair of laces in your hockey bag of the correct length. Cotton calf length skate socks will work for skating but there are also socks specific to wearing hockey skates.

**Skate guards.** Skate guards are a good idea to protect the blades during transport in your hockey bag and promote drying of the skate itself to avoid rust. Guards also allow the skater to walk on surfaces protecting the edges of the skate.

**Boys and girls athletic protectors (cups).** Shorts with a removal cup are best as long as you can keep track of both components. The removal of the cup makes for easier laundering of both pieces. The shorts also come with Velcro pads to keep your hockey socks in place on the skater's legs.

**Under Equipment Clothing.** Probably half of the younger skaters wear Under Armor or moisture wicking long underwear. The rest just wear a t-shirt. This will depend on how prone your skater is to getting cold as well as their intensity level on the ice. They will work up a sweat.

**Hockey socks.** These are the socks that go over your shin guards and are either held in place by your athletic protector shorts or tape. An oversized pair of cotton sweat pants can also be used over the shin guards during practice.

**Shin pads.** Needed protection for the lower legs and there is a right and a left. Make sure that they fit snug but allow proper movement and are not cracked.

**Breezers.** These are the protective pants/shorts. Suspenders are optional to personal preference or body size, but typically needed for the newer skater. The breezers should allow proper movement, reach their bottom part of the knee and overlap the shin pads.

**Elbow pads.** There is a right and a left.

**Shoulder pads.** There is a front and a back. Velcro attaches to the front.

**Practice jersey.** Typically issued to younger skaters.

**Neck guard.** Optional, but recommended. Some are built into a spandex shirt (turtleneck). Some are a simple collar that velcros around the neck.

Hockey gloves. Provide adequate coverage of hands and wrists. Beware of excessive wear on the palm areas of each glove.

Helmet with a cage. Helmet should be fitted similar to skates and prior to purchase. Usually they can last multiple seasons as the small helmets are adjustable. Note the date on the HECC sticker on the back of the helmet. The helmet expires when the listed date is reached.

Mouth guard. Always buy mouth protector that can be fastened to the helmet and train your skater to wear it at all times on the ice.

Hockey stick. Start with a youth wood stick as the weight is better for early development. Cut to length by measuring the distance from the ice to the player's nose while wearing skates or to the chin when in bare feet. First time players should have a flat blade stick unless you absolutely know they will be shooting and handling a puck right or left handed. Player's dominant hand has nothing to do with the stick of choice. Watch them and you will eventually see their preference. They do not need a curved stick until they have enough strength to "lift" the puck. You will need hockey tape to tape the lower face of the stick and the cut end (top) of the stick. Ask someone in the locker room how to do this or at the sporting goods store. Tape comes in many different colors and patterns so have fun with this item.

Hockey bag. You are going to need to put everything in something to go back and forth to the rink. The equipment when they are young is small so an average duffel bag will work but eventually a standard hockey bag will be needed. A wheeled hockey bag promotes self-sufficiency at an early age.

The preferred order to put on equipment is as follows:

Under equipment clothes/long underwear

Athletic protector	Helmet
Mouth guard	Gloves
Stick	Skate socks
Shin guards	Hockey socks
Breezers	Skates
Shoulder pad	Elbow pads
Jersey	Neck guard

Never be afraid to ask another parent how things work or fit best. Everyone started from the beginning sometime in their children's lives.

#### Other Hints:

A majority of the protective equipment can be rented from the association up to the Squirt level. View the website to obtain the equipment managers contact data.

A majority of these items can be machine washed. These little people can really sweat playing this awesome game!

Many of these items make great birthday or holiday gifts.

Sizing varies greatly from manufacturer to manufacturer.

Practice dressing your skater at home. Determine how long it takes you and get them use to wearing the equipment. Can they last 60 minutes in the helmet?

It is common for parents to dress their skater at home and just have the skates to put on at the rink.

When undressing in a crowded locker room, take a piece of equipment off and put it directly into your hockey bag. (With 20 sets of equipment in one room, something is bound to get misplaced.) Good idea as well to have each piece of your equipment labeled with your last name for identification. Usually a mandatory thing that needs to be done when attending hockey camps as well.

Hockey gear needs to be aired out to dry after every game and every practice. Set aside a specific area and get in the habit of hanging it out together every time, so you don't accidentally leave something at home. This is also a great way to teach responsibility – by requiring your skater to hang up their equipment.

Record video of your skater early in the season and then at the end. You will be amazed at their progress on just one season! The ADM system produces awesome results.

The internet has a plethora of “How To” hockey information. See the links on our WYHA New Parent Information Page.