

## 6 Things You MUST Know Before Buying Your Next Pair of Ice Hockey Skates

Mistake #...

1.) Rushing out to buy the manufacturer's top model of skate.

Manufacturers make several models of skates to accommodate different levels of skating, different physical sizes of skaters, and to cover all the price points. So, the 'Top Model' (read most expensive) may not be the best choice of skate for you to buy. The higher the model of skate the more expensive it is, and the stiffer it is. If you're not physically heavy enough to deal with the stiffness of the skate it won't matter how much money you pay, your skating performance will suffer. Skates that are too stiff for a skater will restrict knee bend. Very often it can also mean long-term discomfort. Be really honest with yourself when it comes to your skating ability and physical size. Purchasing a model of skate that matches those two criteria, can dramatically increase your skating performance, and save you money.

2.) Fitting hockey skates like shoes.

Skates and shoes do not fit the same. A safe rule of thumb to use, is that a skate will always fit a size, to a size and a half, smaller than your shoe size. Depending on how you fit your running shoes, a skate may even occasionally be as much as two sizes smaller. If your skates are currently the same size as your running shoe they are definitely too big. For example if you wear a size 10 running shoe start with trying on a size 8-9 hockey skate. If you generally wear an extra wide shoe, start with a 2D width skate. The ideal fit length wise, can only be checked when you are standing in a skate that is laced up. The longest toe of the foot should lightly feather the end of the toecap. When you bend your knees slightly (like when you skate) the toes must pull completely away from the front of the toecap. If they don't pull away, then go up half a size, or if you need growing room, then go up half a size.

3.) Trying on a pair of skates and not lacing them up.

This is one of the most common reasons skaters end up in skates that are too big. Hockey skates are, by design, meant to fit when they are laced up. As the boot is laced, the foot will draw into the back of the skate. A skate that ultimately fits properly will, more often than not feel small when the foot is placed in the boot prior to lacing it. Trying on a pair of skates without lacing them up is like trying on a button shirt without buttoning it - both are meant to fit when they are done up. So when you put the skate on, be sure to give your heel a good kick into the back of the boot and then lace it up.

4.) Buying the same make and model of skate that the pro's (NHL) have.

This can be a tough one because the younger skaters want what their favorite NHL player is wearing. The bottom line with this is that the skates that the general public are able to buy off the shelf are not the same as what an NHL player is wearing. The Vapor XXX or CCM PRO or whatever the model might be, is not the same skate as what you, the general public, are able to purchase. The pros are wearing custom made boots from the manufacturer. The NHL is a great marketing vehicle for the skate manufacturers and consumers need to be aware of this fact.

5.) Buying a larger length to try and accommodate a wider foot.

If your foot is wide and the skate is tight then buy a wider skate not a bigger length. The really big skate that feels good in the store, will come back to haunt you almost every time. A skate has a very specific shape that is relative to the length of the foot going into it. If you purchase a skate that is the wrong length, nothing about the shape of the foot will line up with the boot. For example; the widest part of the foot comes back into the narrowest part of the boot. The arch of the foot no longer lines up with the arch of the skate. None of that will bother you in the store, but get out skating and it will show up.

6.) Not setting enough time aside to properly fit the skates.

It can take time to fit a skate for comfort. Wrapping a very stiff piece of material around the foot can sometimes be a challenge. How a skate fits in the first few minutes of putting it on compared to how it fits after spending some time to warm the boot up can make a dramatic difference. Give yourself at least an hour, so you can walk around the store and get a feel for the boot as well as warm it up. Also take the time to try more than one manufacturer's skate and models.

Different manufacturers' boots have unique feels and fit different from one another.

As a hockey player your skates are your single most important piece of equipment. Pay attention and you will have more fun. Because it's fun to skate faster!

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#### About the Author

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