

It is essential that skates fit properly. Skates that are uncomfortable or too big will frustrate beginning skaters. It's important to take the time to find a pair that offers adequate support and fits comfortably. Always take a little walk in your skates off the ice before going on the ice to help determine if they fit properly.

FITTING

First, find a pair of skates that snugly and comfortably fit your feet. Your heel should be as far back inside the boot as possible and should not be able to slide up and down once the skates are properly laced. Your toes, however, should not feel pinched. Once the skates are laced, you should be able to wiggle them. Remember, you're seeking a snug fit and comfort.

Now, find skates that offer adequate ankle support. If a skate boot lacks support, you will need to use a lot of strength just trying to stay upright.

Socks or tights are very important as well. Your feet will feel best if you wear one pair of light-weight socks or tights. Bulky or thick socks can limit the skate's support and create uncomfortable "bumps" inside your boots.

Rental skates are made to fit everyone — therefore, they fit no one precisely. Be aware that your skate size is not always the same as your shoe size. Take your time and keep trying on skates until you find a pair that fits.

LACING

The way your skates look when they are laced up can offer a clue as to how well they fit. To get started with proper lacing, tap your heel back into the boot as far as possible. Gently pull the tongue completely up and try to secure it straight up and down before tucking it beside your foot. Starting with the second or third set of laces from the bottom, begin to pull the laces tightly, one pair at a time, so the boot closes well over the front of your foot. It is important that the laces do not slip. The laces should be snug through the ankle area and the bottom two sets of hooks. The top two can be a little looser to allow for some flexibility. If extra lace remains, try to cross it over the hooks neatly. Do not wind the extra lace around the skates if possible. Beware of loose flying bows, because they can cause accidents. When skates are laced properly, there should be enough room, with ankles flexed, to stick a finger down between the back of the boot and your leg. If your foot hurts or doesn't feel right, take time to re-lace and adjust.

TAKING CARE OF YOUR SKATES

Never walk on hard surfaces or concrete with uncovered blades — this will ruin them. If you own your own skates, purchase a pair of skate guards for walking off the ice to protect your blades. Always dry off your blades with a towel before storing them in your bag or taking them home. Wet blades may rust, and rusted blades will not glide very well. Also, keep your blades sharp. Sharp blades grab the ice better than dull ones, especially when stopping. Ask your director or instructor for the best places to get your blades sharpened.