

Hockey Equipment Basics for New Players & Families

- **Safety equipment is non-negotiable.** Every player must wear all required protective gear before getting on the ice.
- **Required equipment includes:**
 - Helmet with a full face cage or shield (full face protection is required for youth players)
 - Neck guard
 - Mouth guard
 - Shoulder pads (chest protector)
 - Elbow pads
 - Hockey gloves
 - Hockey pants (breezers)
 - Protective cup (Jock/Jill)
 - Shin guards
 - Hockey socks
 - Skates
 - Hockey stick

Protecting Your Player

- **Neck guards are mandatory** and help protect against serious skate-cut injuries.
- **Consider adding wrist cut protection.** Base layers with built-in neck and wrist protection or separate cut-resistant wrist guards provide additional safety.
- **A mouth guard is required** for league play and helps protect teeth from impact.
- **Always wear a protective cup (Jock/Jill).** It may take time to get used to, but it's an essential piece of safety equipment. Start wearing as early as possible.
- **Players missing required safety equipment (such as a neck guard or mouth guard) cannot participate until properly equipped.**

Helmets

- Buy a **new helmet whenever possible**, since helmets have expiration dates and are designed to protect against impacts.
- Make sure the helmet fits properly and adjust it as your child grows.
- The official NWAHA helmet colors are red or black helmets (goalies may have custom helmets).

Skates

- **Sharp skates are essential** for learning proper skating skills.
- Plan to sharpen skates approximately **every 10–20 hours** of ice time.
- New players should start with a **½-inch (half-inch) sharpening radius**, which provides the grip beginners need.
- Poorly maintained skates make learning edge control much more difficult.
- The 8U teams have a dedicated SPARX sharpener to make skate sharpening a bit easier, reach out to your board rep or coach for more information.
- The Jones Center also offers skate sharpening at a reasonable cost.

Hockey Sticks

- **Don't assume stick handedness matches writing hand.** Many right-handed people use left-handed hockey sticks and vice versa.
- Coaches can often help determine whether a player is naturally left- or right-handed before purchasing a stick, so feel free to ask them.
- Stick **length** should generally reach:
 - Around the player's **nose (without skates)**
 - Around the **chin (with skates on)**
- Stick **flex** should generally be about **half the player's body weight** (for example, an 80-pound player typically uses a 40-flex stick).
- Keep in mind that **cutting a stick shorter increases its flex**, making it stiffer (for each 1" you cut from a stick, you will get an additional 2-3 flex)

Buying Equipment

- **Used equipment is a great option** for growing players—especially skates, pads, gloves, and pants.

- **Avoid buying used helmets** due to age, wear, and expiration dates.
- Local resources include:
 - The NWAHA equipment trailer
 - NWAHA Buy/Sell Facebook group
 - Other hockey families and coaches
 - Online options such as [sidelineswap.com](https://www.sidelineswap.com)
- Children grow quickly, so there's usually no need to purchase the most expensive equipment early on.

Helpful Tips

- If you're unsure about equipment sizing or fit, **ask a coach or board member** before purchasing.
- Most Learn to Play participants receive starter equipment, making it easier to begin the sport.
- Hockey families are generally very willing to help new players find affordable equipment and answer questions.

Remember: Properly fitted, well-maintained equipment not only keeps players safe but also helps them learn skills more effectively and enjoy the game.