

Skate Sharpening

How often should I sharpen my skates?

Skates should be sharpened after every five sessions, provided that they are properly taken care of. This means having your skate guards on at all times while off the ice and providing that you haven't fallen and hit the mats. At meets, skates should be sharpened after every race. There is nothing worse than going out on to the ice at a meet and finding that you have no edges!

Every time you sharpen your blades is also an excellent opportunity to check the bolts on your blades. With continued use, bolts may shake themselves loose, and the blade may move, so check to make sure the blades are where they should be. The only thing worse than having no edge, is losing a bolt.

How to test the sharpness of the blade:

You can test the sharpness of the blade the same way you would check a kitchen knife; by LIGHTLY running your hand over the top of it on a slight angle (See image 1). The second way is to use your thumbnail. If you lightly run your thumbnail down the blade, and a top layer of nail comes off, then the skate is sharp, you shouldn't need to apply any pressure if the skates are sharp. (See image 2).

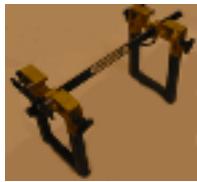


Image 1

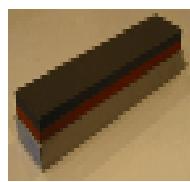


Image 2

What you need to sharpen your skates:



Jig



Sharpening Stone (dark side)
Polishing Stone (light side)

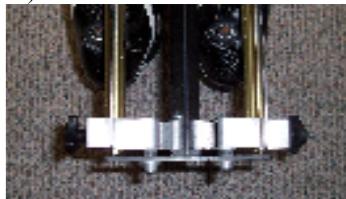


Burr stone

*most sharpening stones and polishing stones are combined on the same stone.

Placing your skates in the Jig:

It is best to sit with the jig between your legs on the ground. This way you can keep the jig steady while you sharpen. Place the left skate on the right side and the right skate on the left side. It is best if you can be consistent with which skate you put on what side of the jig. Have the back of the jig (the side with the stopper) and the heel of the skates facing you. Make sure the skates are flush against the back stopper. (See Image below)



When tightening the brackets, you want to make sure that the skates are going to be level with one another. The best way to do this is to lift the blade up slightly until the bracket hits the tube of the skate. (See image below). To test that the blades are level with each other, place the smooth side of the sharpening stone on top of the blades. If the blade rocks back and forth, then the skates are not level.



Sharpening your skates:

You are going to place the sharpening side of the stone on the blades at either the toe or heel end of the blades. Image 3 shows you how to place the stone on the skates just before you start. You are going to move the blade in a diagonal direction, in this case down and to the right as images 4 & 5 show. It is crucial to note that the stone is **ALWAYS** perpendicular to the blades. Turning the stone slightly will take your edges off. Do not simply go back straight back and forth as you will damage the stone by making two grooves and an uneven surface on the stone.

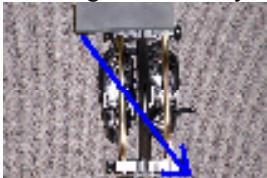


Image 3

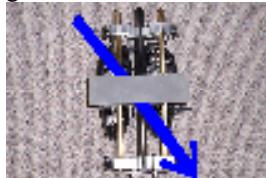


Image 4

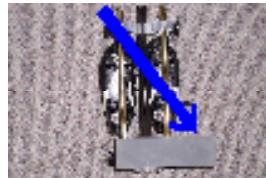


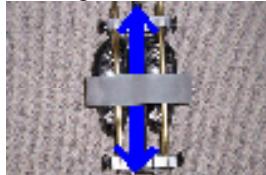
Image 5

The process should be repeated roughly 20 times, and then repeated in the opposite direction. Once you have done both sides, you want to turn the jig around so that the toes of the boots are facing you and again repeat the process, moving the stone 20 times in both directions. Do not push down on the blade while you are sharpening. This will not make the process any faster, all it will do is grind the blade down and significantly shorten the blades life.

Once you have finished sharpening, you should see a ‘burr.’ The burr is the left over metal filings on each side of the blade. The goal of sharpening is to have the blade flat on top with a 90 degree angle on both sides. You therefore need to remove the burr. The way to do this is to run a bur stone the length of the blade a couple of times. See Image below:



Once you have taken the burr off, you want to run the polishing stone lightly over the blade to take off any left over metal filings. Unlike with the sharpening stone, the polishing stone is run straight back and forth across the blade, and not on a diagonal angle. The stone itself should be placed perpendicular to the blade like the sharpening stone was though. Run the polishing stone up and down the blades 5 times. See Image below:



After you are done these steps, your skates should be sharp. Make sure to check the blades in the manner that was described above. It is most important that the centre of the blades are sharp on both sides because this is where the rocker is the deepest and is the first part of the blade that touches the ice. See Image 10:



It is also a good idea to give the stones a cleaning once you are done because little pieces of metal will get stuck in the stone. The best way to do this is to run water over the stone and give it a quick wipe with towel. Always keep blades absolutely dry when not in use to prevent rust. Do not store blades in plastic skate guards as water/ice collects in the bottom of the guards and rusts the blades. Always store your blades in a sock protector / towel.

If you have any questions about sharpening, don't hesitate to ask other members of the club. It is better to ask than to sharpen the skates improperly and run the risk of damaging the blades.