



# SABRES HOCKEY

[www.somdsabres.org](http://www.somdsabres.org)

## Hockey Skills Learn to Skate Program

### Parent's Guide to Hockey

For those of you new to game, welcome to the world of youth ice hockey! I hope that you are as excited as we are to begin our inaugural season of the Southern Maryland Sabres Hockey Club. We feel strongly that a sound base that a player gains in this Hockey Skills Learn to Skate Program is the directly responsible for their future play on competitive teams.

Because hockey is so new to many of you, we decided to put together a brief “how to” pamphlet that attempts to answer many of the basic questions that arise with regard to the purchase and use of hockey equipment.

#### **Equipment: What will they need?**

Selection of hockey equipment is a key issue for players, parents and coaches. When purchasing and fitting hockey equipment, remember two important factors: 1) make certain the player is adequately protected and 2) be sure the fitting allows freedom of movement so the player can properly perform the necessary skills. By carefully considering these two factors, your child will be more comfortable and will better enjoy their participation.

A complete set of hockey equipment can be purchased for a relatively reasonable cost. Shop around for the best values and remember that you need not buy the most expensive equipment. It is critical the equipment fit properly. Buying skates or other equipment too sizes too large so that the child can get “a few years out of them” is a prescription for frustration for the child.

**Shin Pads** - Check for proper length so they protect the knee and shin completely. Surprisingly, these are measured best when seated. Measure from the center of the kneecap to the top of the skate. Match the player's shin size to the shin guard. Shin guards should be secured with straps or tape, don't rely on tight hockey socks to hold them in place.

*As with the elbow and shoulder pads, shin guards must be completely covered before stepping on the ice. Hockey socks are designed for this purpose, but sweatpants can achieve this as well.*

**Shoulder Pads** – Shoulder Pads should fit snugly, with the tips of the shoulder under the “shoulder cap.” The bicep (or arm) pads should not interfere with the elbow pads. A fiber cap is extremely important in preventing shoulder separations and should extend to the tip of the shoulder.

**Elbow Pads** – Properly fitted: so they do not slide. There should be no gap between the bicep pad on the shoulder pad and the cuff of the glove. Players who wear the short cuff style glove should purchase the long style elbow pad.

*Elbow and Shoulder pads must be completely covered by a jersey! Exposed equipment can create safety issues for both the “wearer” and for others on the ice. We will enforce this rule vigilantly.*

**Supporter And Cup** – Essential Protective Equipment. Don’t even think of not wearing one. Enough said.

**Pants** – Hockey pants provide protection for the lower back, hips, and thighs. Pants should reach the top of the player’s knee and extend to cover the kidney and lower ribs. Again, too big and the player cannot gain proper “hockey position”, too small and he/she is exposed to injury.

**Helmet** – According to USA Hockey regulations, all helmets must be approved by the Hockey Equipment Certification Council (HECC). Please look for the HECC certification sticker on the helmet or packaging.

In order to fit the helmet, open it to its largest setting and place it on the head so that the rim is one finger length above the eyebrow. Downsize the helmet until it fits snugly. Tighten and secure the adjustment. The helmet must be snug enough to prevent movement with the chinstrap secured.

**Facemask** – Must also be of a design and construction approved by the Hockey Equipment Certification Council (HECC). Specific face masks are built to be worn with certain models and sizes of helmets. Simply choose one of the recommended models to correspond with your helmet purchase.

**Mouthpiece** – Notwithstanding the toothless hockey player stereo-type, the mouth guard is not about protecting the teeth. That is the face mask’s job. While it may help with tooth protection somewhat, the main reason for the mouth guard is actually to protect against concussions. This is achieved by absorbing the “energy” produced when a player falls or is hit in the head. USA Hockey does not require a mouthpiece until PeeWee level, but strongly recommends it for younger children. We join them in that recommendation. Mouth guards must be a solid color (not clear) and be attached to the facemask (not loose).

**Gloves** – Check for proper fit, with good finger and hand mobility. The palm should be reasonably thin to allow a player to “feel” the stick. The thumb should be flexible, but with a protective polyethylene insert. Fingers usually have a thick foam padding to offer protection while allowing flexibility.

*It is very important that gloves fit properly. Too large, and the player will be hampered in controlling his/her stick. Too small and the fingers will be uncomfortably jammed, while the wrist will also be exposed.*

**Skates**- Purchase skates that will fit your child today, with no more than ½” allowed for growth. Seek adequate protection in the ankle, toe, and instep areas. Improperly fitted skates will hamper your child’s ability to skate.

\*\* Tying skates is a delicate task: too tight and the child is uncomfortable, too loose and the child will have difficulty skating. Only the child can tell you if the skate is tied properly. We have a large age range of initiation players. The older players should be tying their own skates to get the right feel. One trick for young players to help get the skates tight is to leave some slack at the bottom loop. Lace the rest of the skate all the way up, then go back and using the extra loop for a hand hold to get leverage, tighten again to the top.

**Stick** – The length of the stick should extend to the players chin when in skate, or nose when in sneakers. Too long is equally as bad as a stick, which is too short. Quality and price vary greatly with sticks so the choice is yours. However, we don’t see great need for the more “exotic” (and expensive) sticks at this age. Sticks should have a small “knob” of tape at the end to assist the child in holding the stick.

### **Optional Equipment:**

**Neck Guard:** It should be tight, without choking the player, and cover the entire throat. Not required until the Pee Wee age bracket.

**Sequence For Getting Dressed:** It may sound silly but for players new to the game there is an order to dressing, which makes the process less contorting.

- \* Cup/supporter
- \* Shin Guards
- \* Socks & Garter Belt
- \* Pants
- \* Skates
- \* Shoulder Pads
- \* Elbow Guards

- \* Jersey
- \* Helmet
- \* Gloves

If you have any questions, or need help dressing your child, please feel free to ask one of the volunteer coaches who are sure to be in the locker before each session.

We hope this guide proves helpful. Please feel free to approach any of us with any questions or concerns you may have, whether equipment related or not.