

Derby Skates and Maintenance

Maintenance Schedule

- Every skate - Inspect hard/soft elements
- Every 1-3 months - Rotate wheels and inspect soft elements (wheels, cushions, and stops)
- Every 3-6 months - Clean moving elements (bearings and axels)

Wheels

The goal of your wheels are to allow you to turn, perform cross-overs, and block sideways without your skates slipping out from under you. However, you want a bit of slide available for stops. Most beginner skate packages come with wheels that are too hard, so a softer skate is often the first upgrade.

Rules of thumb:

- Heavier skaters need harder wheels, lighter needs softer
- Newer skaters need softer wheels, more experience need harder
- Cold conditions make wheels harder, hot conditions make them softer
- Blockers need softer wheels, jammers need harder

Options

Hubs

- Nylon - Lightweight...but can deform or slide
- Aluminum - Slightly heavier, but with greater performance.

Width

- Extra Slim (35mm) - Mostly used for jam skating, great turns
- Slim (38mm) - Reduces wheel clipping in derby, good turns
- Wide (44mm) - Faster and more control, ok turns

Recommendations

- Soft wheels (84 - 88 durometer) - Atom Poison and Reckless Envy
- Mid-range (88-92 durometer) - Atom Boom and Rollerbones
- Firm (92-96) - Radar Presto and Atom Jukes

Bushings (cushions)

The goal of the cushions are to allow you to shift your weight from side to side turning without lifting your skates. You'll want to find a balance between stability in the straights and squishiness for turning. Most beginner skate packages come with a hard bushing that is overtightened. So loosening the kingpin and buying softer cushions is often the second upgrade (after wheels).

Rules of thumb

- Heavier skaters need harder bushings, lighter needs softer
- Newer skaters need harder bushings, more experience need softer
- Cold conditions make bushings harder, hot conditions make them softer
- Conical vs barrel shaped cushions is mostly marketing.

Proper installation

- Bring the elements together on the kingpin using the nut. Then do a half turn past that. Adjust from there.
- Can "fake" harder and softer bushings by loosening or tightening the kingpin, but will cause more wear and be less responsive.

Toe stops

The goal of the toe stops are to allow you to stop quickly first and foremost. Additionally, they are a stable platform for your starts and allow you to do quick sideways moves. Low-end beginners skates have a fixed plastic toe stop that need to be replaced immediately with a rubber version. Properly setting the height of the toe stop is key.

Rules of thumb

- Start with 3 fingers and adjust from there... they shouldn't feel like stilettos when walking on the toe stops...but also shouldn't catch when skating normally.
- Try walking comfortably without skates on. Recreate that feeling with skates on.
- Avoid square toe stops, since they have a tendency to rotate and be less effective.

Options

Type

- Plugs, not for derby
- Fixed (bolt-on), for cheaper skates. Can actually work just fine, but no fine-tuning
- Adjustable, most popular in derby skates. Allows for fine tuning on the height and more replacement options.

Stems

- Short stem - Watch out for short-threading (only putting it in a few threads). This will cause your plate threads to wear and possibly to cause your toe stops to come out during use. Thread in a minimum of a half-inch.
- Long stem - Watch out of over-threading...where you're pushing the stem into the boot itself.

Material

- Plastic (throw the mofo out the window...should be illegal to make)
- Naturals - Like an eraser (replace more often). Has a break-in period to get to the most surface area. Gumballs are the most popular brand
- Synthetics - No break-in period. Lasts longer than naturals, but fails more dramatically when at the end of lifespan. Bionic and Sure-grip are popular brands.

Bearings

Wheels don't actually spin on the axel itself, instead it is the bearings that spin. Therefore, when the bearings aren't working their best, you will go slower and have to push harder. Properly cared for bearings can last the lifetime of a skate.

Rules of thumb

- Buy the best bearings you can afford, then take care of them.

Options

Ratings

- ABEC rating - # of seconds of free spinning
- Skate rated – Generally at the high end of ABEC rating (or above)
- Ceramic – The best in the business...expensive.

Cleaning

Tools: bearing puller, gloves, paper towels, jar, bearing oil, rubbing alcohol, and safety pin

1. Remove all wheels
2. Pull bearings from wheels
3. Remove bearing covers & set aside
4. Fill a small jar with rubbing alcohol & drop bearings in it.
5. Lightly shake bearings and soak for 5 minutes
6. Remove from jar and set aside on paper towel
7. Clean bearing covers with towel and a little bit of rubbing alcohol.
8. Clean axel with towel and a little bit of rubbing alcohol.
9. Spin bearings to remove the last of the acetone
10. Push on 1 cover, place 3 drops of bearing oil on each bearing, place on 2nd cover. Spin.
11. Push back onto wheels.
12. Place wheels back on axel, tighten nuts to the bearing, then back off to spin freely.

NEVER USE SOAP & WATER OR WD-40 ON YOUR BEARINGS

Etc

Pivot cups

- Keep trucks from damaging plates
- Reduce wiggle in the trucks when rolling
- Replace when deformed or cracked

Toe Guards

- Goes on between the toe stop and the lock nut
- Leather or duct tape

Laces

- Waxed or metallic to keep in place
- If tongue moves a cobbler can add an extra loop

Socks

- Performance socks past the ankle

Boots

Each foot is unique, so there is no one right boot. The best route is to find a derby-owned skate shop or attend a large tournament.

Items to look for

- Lace to toes
- Method to lock in the ankle
- Method to keep the tongue in place

Height

- High boots - Jam skating (not for derby)
- Mid boots - Ankle stability, harder to turn
- Low boots - Less stable, easier to turn.

Materials

- Leather - Will become a second skin over time. Will remove your skin in the short term.
- Vinyl - More comfortable off the bat. Wears down over time.
- Heat moldable - Conforms to the shape of your foot.

Sizing

- Don't believe anything. Best to try on.
- Usually men's sizes. Each brand is slightly different
- Go to a reputable shop. Or take measurements to a derby-shop.

Plates

Plates are generally the place where you can trim the most weight off of your skate if you're willing to pay. Additionally, they're the element of the skate that can be the most dramatic if it fails. So, purchase a plate that you can have confidence in.

Materials

- Vinyl - Lightest, but weakest material. Flexes so may not be as quick. Not for heavier skaters.
- Aluminum - Stiff but heavier, higher end plates do a better job with this balance.
- Magnesium - Stiff, light, and expensive.

Kingpin angles

- 10-15 - More stable. Best for straight and fast skating
- 45 degree - Better for turning

Awesome weirdo

- Arius plates - butterfly cushions

Sizing & placement

- Go to a reputable shop

Shops

Gravity Sports

126 Rainier Ave S, Renton, WA 98057

<http://www.gravitysports.com/>

Everett Skate Deck (Evergreen Skate)

9700 19th Ave SE, Everett WA 98208

Call ahead for skate shop hours - 425-337-0202

<http://www.evergreenskate.com/>

Unity Skate Shop

944 Bay St, Port Orchard, WA 98366

<https://www.facebook.com/Younityskateshop/>

Evo (helmet and pads only)

3500 Stone Way N, Seattle, WA 98103

<http://www.evo.com/shop/skateboard/helmets-pads.aspx>

Five Stride

2229 NE Sandy Blvd, Portland, OR 97232

<http://fivestrideskateshop.com/>

Medusa Skates (online)

<http://www.medusaskates.com/>