

# Let's Skate



**A professional's guide  
to everything you need to know  
about skates, equipment and getting started.**

***By Asha Kirkby***

# Skate Well

# Feel Alive

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*Thanks to Powerslide, Seba & Bauer for equipment images*

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I found my first pair of skates in a rubbish bin on the street at the age of ten. I was soon hooked to the feeling of freedom I felt on skates and became a competitive figure skater on quads in my teens. I represented Great Britain several times in international competitions, but never imagined that skating would remain in the forefront of my life. But it has and that feeling of aliveness and joy has remained the same every time I put my skates on. I want as many people as possible to experience that feeling, but if you are tense or scared then it will elude you.

Since becoming an inline skate instructor in 1999 and launching my skate school Skatefresh in London in 2000 I have received countless questions from people all over the world asking for advice and tips on all things skating. This guide is an attempt to answer the most frequently asked questions. My aim is to share what I think every skater should know. It should help you make decisions with insight and knowledge and enable you to help others.

These are my guidelines and opinions about skates, equipment, tips for getting started and essential measures to increase your safety while skating. It will help you decide which skates to buy, how much to spend, whether to choose inlines or quads and how to fit and try on skates properly.

I hope this book compliments your existing knowledge and fills in any gaps you have in understanding your equipment. It is my gift to you along with the information you can find on [www.skatefresh.com/online-tuition](http://www.skatefresh.com/online-tuition) and I hope it serves you where needed.

**Now, Let's Skate!**

### **Experience & Expertise**

*1999 - present:* Founder and Principal instructor of Skatefresh Inline Skate School

*2015:* Skate Consultant for Disney Latin America

*2013:* Creator of the Skatefresh Apps series

*2003 to 2015:* UK National Director and Examiner for ICP (Inline Certification Program).

*2009:* BBC 'Skate Nation' TV series, Judge and Coach.

*2002, 2003, 2011 & 2012:* Le Mans 24 hour Race. Skatefresh team member and coach.

### **Training & Certification**

*2004 - present:* Inline Certification Program (ICP), National UK Director. Instructor Trainer.

*2012:* HSE First Aid Certificate

*2007:* 'Coaching disabled people in sport'. Sports Coach UK Qualification.

*2005:* 'Coaching children and young people in sport'. Sports Coach UK Qualification.

*1999 - 2003:* ICP Levels 1, 2 and 3

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## CHAPTER 1

# GETTING STARTED

***This chapter highlights what to consider when researching and deciding what types of skates to buy: cost, skate style and where you want to skate.***

There is a bewildering variety of inline and quad skates available for sale in sports shops, specialised skate shops and on the Internet. Which skates you buy is the most important decision you will make in your skating life, so make sure you research your choices and buy what suits you best. The following questions will help figure out the skating route you want to take and which type of skates you should therefore purchase:

*“One of the first questions I ask my new students is: Why do you want to skate? This helps me understand their deeper motivations. Ask yourself the same as it will help you make more informed decisions right from the start.”*

Are you certain you will ‘get into’ skating, or will you just ‘try it out’ before committing?

How much do you want to spend?

Do you want to skate indoors or outdoors? If outdoors where (parks, trails, streets..)?

Do you already know which area of skating you want to pursue (slalom, speed skating, fitness skating, street skating, dance skating, Derby)?

If you are wanting to take up skating mainly for fitness and recreational purposes then you are after a fitness, recreational or Freestyle inline skate. These usually come with laces, one or two ankle straps, a supportive plastic ankle cuff and a heel brake.

If you are interested in a particular area of skating such as slalom, speed, hockey or dance skating then it makes sense to buy skates that are specifically designed for the purpose.

## CHAPTER 2

# TYPES OF SKATES

***This chapter introduces the particulars of the different kinds of skates and what skating style they are made for: recreational & fitness, speed, hockey, slalom, aggressive, freestyle, quads and roller derby.***

Whichever skates from the list below best suit your needs, we cannot overemphasise the importance of trying them on before you buy any pair of skates! Incorrectly fitting skates can result in pain while skating, which then negates all your carefully made purchasing choices.

*“I once had a student who came to a speed skating class with aggressive skates. This really hindered his progress as inappropriate equipment choices makes for unnecessarily frustrating skating experience.”*

### Recreational & Fitness Skates

These are the most common types of skates available. They are designed for efficient stride and speed, with wheels usually 80mm-90mm in diameter. They have one or two supportive ankle straps, laces and a heel brake.

*Manufactured by brands such as Powerslide, Rollerblade, Fila and K2.*



*Powerslide Phuzion Gamma 2015*



*Powerslide Phuzion 6 2014*



*Powerslide FSK Khaan 2015*

## Speed Skates

These skates are designed for the specific purpose of speed skating. They either have a lower ankle cuff than a recreational skate would have or none at all. The wheels are 90mm-110mm in diameter or even larger and sit in a long frame. They have no heel brake.

Manufactured by brands such as Powerslide, Bont, Luigino, Marianni, Rollerblade, K2.



*Powerslide XTrippleX XXX 2015*



*Seba Marathon 110*

## Hockey Skates

Hockey skates' boots are solid and hard and they have no heel brake on their short frame designed for tight turns. The wheels are no larger than 80mm.

Manufactured by brands such as such as Bauer, Mission, CCM, Koho. Reebok.



*Bauer RH X70R*



*Mission Hockey Skate DS2 Inhaler*

## Slalom Skates

These often have hard boots with solid ankle cuffs for support and short frames (without a heel brake) that can be rockered (see chapter 7.2) for manoeuvrability.

Manufactured by brands such as Seba, Powerslide, Rollerblade, Roces, Fila.



*Powerslide Hardcore Evo 2015*



*Seba High Deluxe 2015*

## Aggressive Skates

Large padded cuffs that support the ankles upon landing. The skates feature thick, durable plates for sliding and usually have small wheels set up in an anti-rocker (see chapter 7.2).

Manufactured by brands such as Razors, USD, Remz.



*Razors SL Brian Aragon 6 Pro Skate*



*Seba CJ Wellsmore*

## Freestyle Skates

Designed for jumping, sliding and street/urban skating, these are a great all-round, supportive skates.

Manufactured by brands such as Seba, Powerslide Hardcore Evos, Rollerblade



*Powerslide Hardcore Evo 2015*



*Seba Igor 10 White*

## Quad Skates

These skates are best suited for indoor skating, roller disco, freestyle dancing and jamming on skates. They have toe stops at the front of each boot and their four wheels come in pairs of two creating a rectangle rather than one straight line.

Manufactured by brands such as Supreme, Riedell, Rock (sure grip), Bauer, Powerslide.



*Powerslide Melrose Black Quad 2015*



*Powerslide Quad Black 2014*



## Roller Derby Quads

Designed for the full-body contact Roller Derby, which requires skaters to work tight indoor tracks, these skates have no ankle support and look a bit like trainers on four wheels.

*Manufactured by brands such as SFR (Stateside), Vestro Pro, Roller Derby.*



*Powerslide Boxer 2015*



*Sure-Grip Rebel Derby skate*

## Triskates

The latest advancement in inline skating are Triskates, swapping the 4 wheels (4x80mm) of a traditional inline skate for 3 larger wheels (ranging from 90-125mm). Triskates are entering all the skating disciplines - from Fitness and Speed Skating to Freeskating, Off-Road and even Hockey. Larger wheels are traditionally used by speed skaters but usually they have 4 large wheels on a very long frame, suitable only for high level speed skaters. The new 3 wheel set-up means recreational skaters can enjoy the benefits that larger wheels offer, which include:

*More speed and efficiency*  
*Maintain speed more easily*  
*Smoother over rough surfaces*

The 3 wheel set-up means a much shorter frame length than on older speed skates. This retains maneuverability and allows for tight turns, sliding stops and Street Skating.

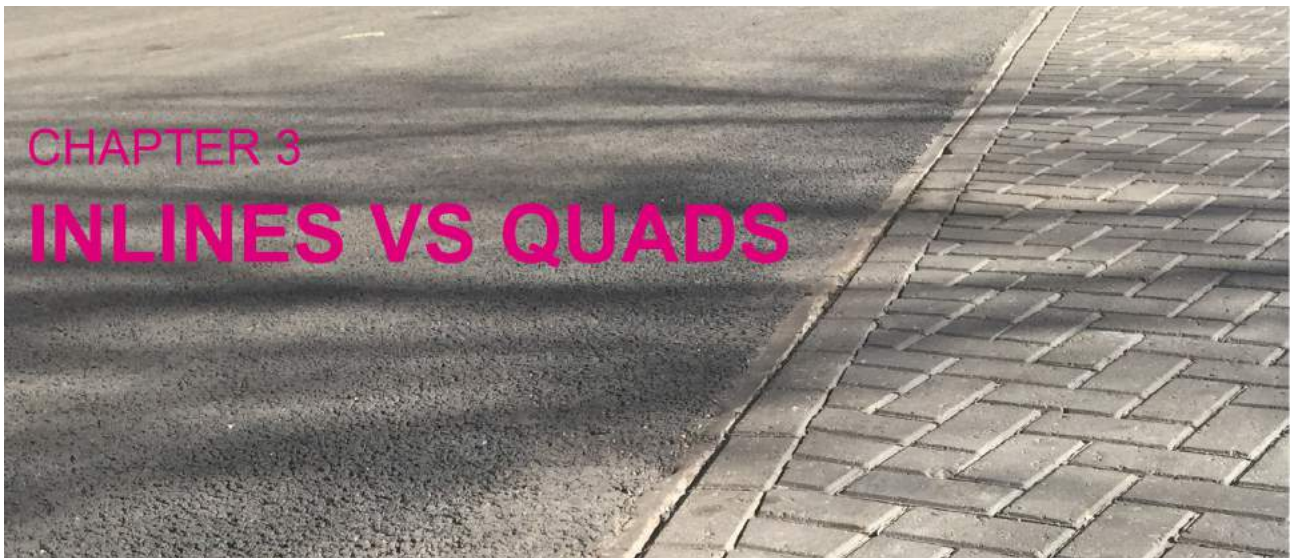
[Powerslide led the way with the Triskates](#) and have now been joined by other brands. The most innovative development in Triskates is the new Powerslide Trinity Three Point Mounting System, which allows the wheels to sit even closer to the boot, thus lowering the centre of gravity substantially and creating a more solid platform with increased energy transfer efficiency.

I have been wearing Hardcore Evo boots with a 3x110 Pleasure Tool frame since 2015 and won't be returning to 4x80mm any time soon! Having taught many new skaters wearing Triskates I can confirm that they learn just as well as 4-wheel beginners.

It's less important how many wheels you skate on and far more important how good your technique is. So invest in good quality tuition from the start and you'll be able to then skate on any skate you want.



*2017 Powerslide Kaze Trinity Supercruiser 110*



## CHAPTER 3

# INLINES VS QUADS

***This chapter will look at the differences between inline and quad skates and help you decide which are for you, depending on where you will be doing most of your skating.***

If you have an indoor skating facility or rink on your doorstep and will be mainly skating there, then quad skates might be the thing for you. However if you are mainly going to be outdoors then we encourage you to buy inline skates with a brake as they allow you to safely navigate changing outdoor surfaces and slopes.

*“I love my quads as they remind me of my childhood but I only wear them for dancing. For everything else I wear my inlines which I also love because I adore speed, street skating and skating backwards really fast.”*

Make sure you think this decision through very carefully, as too often the move to stick with familiarity is one that ends up being a costly decision in the long run. Many people buy quad skates for the wrong reasons and a few months later find themselves also purchasing inline skates as they better suit their purpose.

### **3.1 More stable?**

It is a common misconception that ‘quads are easier than inlines’. Although a quad skate is easier to balance on than an inline skate when standing still, quad skates do not offer support like the solid ankle cuff of an inline skate.

New skaters tend to overlook that the wheelbase of a quad skate is MUCH shorter than an inline skate, making the skater more prone to falling over backwards if using the wrong techniques.

### **3.2 Is stopping harder on quads?**

Quad skates and inline skates differ significantly when it comes to stopping as inline skates have a brake on one heel and quads have two toe stops.

Learning to stop on any skates is a lot more difficult than learning to move forward. For beginner quad skaters this is even more true as toe stops are harder to create efficient stopping than heel brakes.

### **3.3 Quads are better suited to indoors**

Quads were designed and are still best suited for indoor skating, roller disco, dance/jam skating and Roller Derby. The large surface area of the wheels makes skating outdoors more difficult and surface debris such as twigs and gravel are way more problematic for quad skaters than inliners.

### **3.4 Inlines are better suited for outdoors**

Inline skates are designed for the outdoors and speed. It is much easier to skate fast and deal with different surfaces on inline skates than quads. Pavement and street skating is not recommended on quads unless you are an advanced and experienced quad skater.

## CHAPTER 4

# HOW MUCH TO SPEND

***This chapter will help you figure out how much money you should be spending on skates. It will specify three different price ranges and what features you can expect in each.***

Deciding what to buy depends on your commitment. If you are just looking to give skating a try, a model in the cheaper range will do the trick. If however you are absolutely certain that skating is something you will pursue then making more of an investment will pay off. Skating equipment in the higher price range does offer better quality material, increased comfort, better padding and speed.

*“Spend as much as you can on a new pair of skates and make sure they fit. There is no greater misery than an expensive but uncomfortable pair of new skates.”*

### **4.1 Cheap Range £0 - £80 (\$0 - \$130)**

Skates with a price tag below £80 (\$130) are a cheap way to give skating a go if you are unsure whether you will commit to the sport. If you do you can invest in better skates later.

Typically they have a lower ABEC bearing rating (see Chapter 7.3) meaning the wheels won't spin freely for very long. At the bottom of this price range the wheels might be plastic, which is not ideal as rubber wheels offer a much better skating experience for all skaters. The same goes for the frame which is most likely made of plastic instead of a metal composite, causing higher levels of vibration.

The boot, no matter if it is hard or soft, most likely has quite flimsy padding and won't offer maximum comfort. There may only be one ankle strap and the foot bed is unlikely to be moulded and so making the fit less comfortable.

### **4.2 Medium Range £80 - £150 (\$130 - \$245)**

The largest variety of models and styles is found in this price range making the choice somewhat bewildering. The ABEC ratings (see chapter 7.3) here are 5 and higher and with rubber wheels for good grip. The frames are made of metal, giving support and absorbing surface vibrations. The boot can be soft or hard, but the padding inside will be designed for a comfortable fit around your foot and ankle.

Above all else make sure your skates are comfortable. Pay close attention to how each pair feels when trying it on. These skates usually have two ankle straps allowing for greater versatility of fit. The boot will be supportive and the foot bed might be fitted with some support in the insole. There

may also be the option to 'heat mould' skates, customising the fit to your foot. Definitely make use of this option if available, as having a skate that fits well will ensure a positive skating experience.

#### **4.3 Top End Range. £150 and Above (\$245 and above)**

These skates are an investment which needs careful consideration and time to ensure the perfect fit. They are kitted out with ABEC 7+ bearings so the wheels have an impressive spin to them. Frames are made from a lighter kind of metal than in the medium range. The skates themselves weigh less and sport features like moulded carbon fibre foot beds (like in Asha's Powerslide Hardcore Evo's). They have two ankle straps, usually with strong adjustable buckles for a perfect fit. They are usually 'heat mould' skates, customising the fit to your foot. Make use of this option as having a skate customised to your foot makes for a much better skating experience.

Often these skates do not come with a heel brake as some are designed for slalom skaters. Make sure you check and if you are a beginner or intermediate skater starting out on top end skates buy a separate heel brake and ask the shop to fit it for you.

## CHAPTER 5

# TOP BRANDS REVIEW

***In this chapter Jake Eley who runs LocoSkates.com and writes skate articles on SupercoolBlading.co.uk compares and gives an overview of the various inline skate brands available.***

Stick to the brands who know what they are doing. Don't be tempted by an unsuitable skate just to save a few pennies. Here I've listed the brands which are most relevant and suitable for Recreational and Freestyle inline skating.

*“Let your feet make the final decision on which skates to buy. I wear Powerslide Hardcore Evos because they have been the most comfortable skate for me. Remember all skates have a 'breaking in' period which you do need to go through.”*

**Rollerblade** The first company to successfully market and sell an inline skate. Still going 30 years on and the technology is better than ever.

**K2** Involvement in the snow sports industry has meant great engineering and advancements of inline skate products.

**Powerslide** These German skate junkies are pushing product development in an awesome and innovative way. Choose from their diverse range which is all fully suitable for your skating needs.

**Seba** Hugely popular in the Freestyle / Slalom skating circuits. Their large range of inline skates now includes choices for Slalom, Recreational, City Commuters and Aggressive Skaters.

**Fila** This sports giant are mainly popular outside of the UK and their range includes recreational, freestyle and speed skates.

**Bladerunner** The sister company to Rollerblade. They are their budget range, but still using all the suitable materials and manufacturing techniques.

**SFR** Another budget brand but the product is great for the price. Their range includes Inline skates and Quad skates. Avoid the lower end of the range though (under £45).

**Rio Roller** A subsidiary of the SFR brand, focusing purely on disco style quad skates. Funky!

**Moxi** High end quad skates inspired by the California lifestyle, bright colours and lots of feminine attitude. Can be hard to find in shops outside the USA.

**Supreme Skates** Supreme took over the Bauer quad skate factory moulds and stamped their mark on it. If you are looking to re-live your glory days in Bauers then these are the answer.



***This chapter points out the skate designs you should absolutely avoid and why, no matter how good a bargain you are looking for.***

There are some skates available that are potentially restrictive and/or dangerous for you. Some of them are simply quite old designs, but the skates are still being bought, sold and used and others seem to have been designed without much skate expertise in mind.

### **6.1 ABT Braking Technology**

This cuff activated braking system was launched in 1994 and is no longer in production. But beware in case you come across a pair. This skate brake is engaged automatically when scissoring forward or doing a parallel turn as it is attached by a lever to the back of the cuff. The design was thought to be an alternative, easier brake for new skaters learning the heel brake stop. The disadvantages however far outweigh the benefits. To be avoided if possible.

### **6.2 Decathlon's Oxelo Diabolo Inline Skates**

These skates are a modern version of the ABT and the same disadvantages prevail. When a skater scissors, the wheels of the skate in front will slow down and stop. Not at all what you want to happen if you are trying to do a parallel turn or go over rough surfaces in a Scissor Position. The Diablo braking system can be deactivated, but this leaves beginner skaters without a heel brake or the possibility to learn the heel brake stop. Decathlon manufacture some good starter skates, but you want to avoid this model and instead opt for skates with a normal heel brake..

### **6.3 Gas Powered Inline Skates**

These are hardly 'skates' as you stand in them, press a button and the wheels start turning. There is little technique needed and no exercise achieved by using these skates. Stopping is precarious at best as there are no brakes and as soon as the motorised power is shut off the speed quickly slows down, often throwing the skater's upper body forwards and off balance. Don't go there!

### **6.4 Very Old Skates**

Avoid skates that look really old, they probably are. As a basic guide check the wheels. Give them spin. You want a minimum of about 3 seconds of free wheel spin. Also if they are very worn and have an unequal profile the skates are probably not worth buying. If the boot, cuff and inside padding are still in good condition it could be just a case of replacing the wheels and bearings. Take a close look at all those skate parts, before deciding whether you have yourself a second hand bargain or should opt of a newer pair.

## CHAPTER 7

# SKATE EQUIPMENT GLOSSARY

***Without getting too technical this chapter looks at each part of a skate and the protective gear you need. It also outlines the maintenance you can do yourself to make your equipment last longer.***

### 7.1 Skate Wheels

Wheels come in different sizes, durometers (the level of hardness), materials and shapes (profiles). The selection on offer can be overwhelming, but there are a few facts that aid you to narrow it down and avoid confusion. It will also ensure you purchase the wheels that best fit your needs and avoid frustrating skating experiences.

*“Every skater should know someone who knows more than they do about equipment. There is lots of information on the internet but having someone to ask is useful and important.*

*For me it has always been David, the manager of Club Blue Room skate shop in London. What he recommends, I trust and usually buy if I can.”*

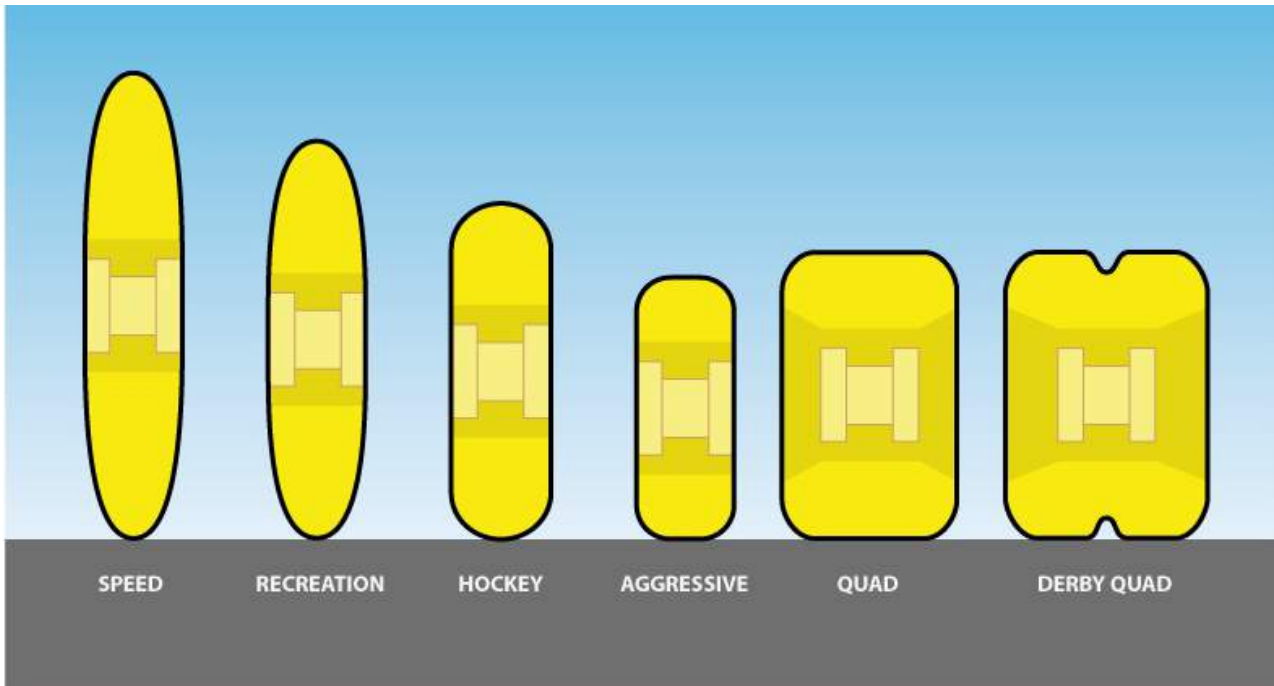
Recreational, hockey, speed, fitness, aggressive skating... there are wheels for all of them. One way to spot the difference is their size. The diameters range from very small, about 45 mm, to very large ones, 125mm. Speed skaters fit their skates with larger wheels as those can reach higher speeds. The smaller wheels make for faster acceleration and deceleration, so wheels on most other skates are of the smaller variety. Aggressive and hockey skates have especially small durometers as quick acceleration is essential for them.

The hardness of your wheels, known as the durometer, is the next thing to consider. It affects the durability of your wheels. The harder they are, the longer their road life. However the softer the wheel the better its grip. The surface on which you intend to skate will also affect your choice of durometer. Soft for indoor, harder for roads.

A wheel's durometer is measured in the numbers 0-100 and written onto the wheel followed by the letter 'A'. The lower the number the softer the wheel. They usually range between 72A and 93A.



Wheels also come in different shapes. Yes they are all round, but their profiles differ:



*Graphic by Nick Grant*

Again it is the different types of skating that determine what wheel shape you will need. Aggressive skaters use wheels which look almost flat. These provide them with more tarmac contact which they need for safe and stable landing after jumps and tricks. Recreational skates allow for easy turning and gaining speed, while simultaneously offering stability. Hockey skates are somewhat more rounded, due to players having to perform a high number of turns. The rounded surface ensures they have contact with the ground no matter their position. Speed skates on the other hand are designed with almost pointed wheel edges. These ensure the least possible resistance due to the limited surface contacted by the wheel. This also makes for very little grip.

Most wheels are made from a durable plastic called polyurethane. Cheaper kinds of rubber and plastic tend to wear too fast or have too much rolling resistance. Spending a bit more will ensure your wheels last longer.

Once you have the correct wheels on your skates it is important to know a thing or two about maintenance. Yes you could just replace them once they are too worn, however you will have to do this less often if you look after them properly.

You need to make sure that your wheels wear evenly. Every time you skate you leave a little of your wheel behind on the tarmac and eventually the wheel surface will become thinner in places where more pressure was applied. Depending on their position your wheels wear differently. You should therefore rotate them once in a while to keep them even. Skating on unevenly worn wheels makes everything less smooth and can even create technique issues.

All you have to do is remove all the wheels and reattach them in a new order. It is also a good idea to flip the wheels as you will find the wheels wear differently on the inside and the outside edges. You need an Allen key to unscrew the wheels, flip and change their order and replace all the bits you have taken out and screw the wheels back on. Make sure this is done properly. You do not want to be skating with a loose wheel. The easiest thing to do is to number your wheels 1,2,3 and 4 from front to back. Then rotate them in the standard way which is to swap wheel 1 with 3 and wheel 2 with 4.

If you feel unsure about this, have someone at your local skate shop show you once and you'll be good to go from then on. The frequency with which you have to rotate your wheels depends on a number of factors. To ensure you are doing it often enough just make a habit of checking the wheels' profile and keep an eye on their wear.

There will come a time in a wheel's life, when it is so worn you have to replace it. When a wheel is too worn to skate on it will impact on your skating, make you more wobbly and less able to turn, accelerate, maintain speed and you may find you are standing at an uncomfortable angle when on skates.

That's when it is time to buy new wheels. Detach your old wheels, take out your bearings and spacers and put them into the new wheel and back on the skate. Always carry an Allen key with you when you skate to deal with any slowly loosening wheels (especially after maintenance).

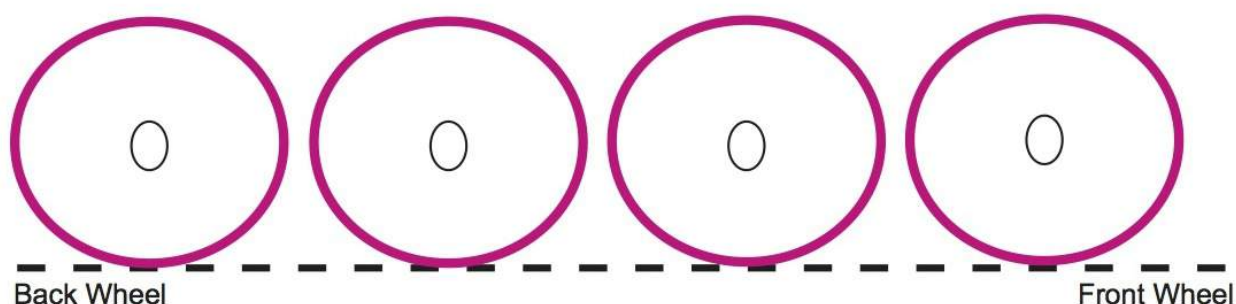
## 7.2 Rockering

Rockering, that is changing the set-up and length of your wheel base by attaching different size wheels to your skates, can increase manoeuvrability and allow you to do slalom, circles, pivots, fast turns, sprints etc. Like with most other things in skating, the rocker your skate needs has to be appropriate to what you are trying to achieve.

Rockering can be achieved by changing the size of the wheels, but some skates come with a rockering predisposition. Do check this when you look at buying new skates and ask skate shop staff about the rockering options on each skate.

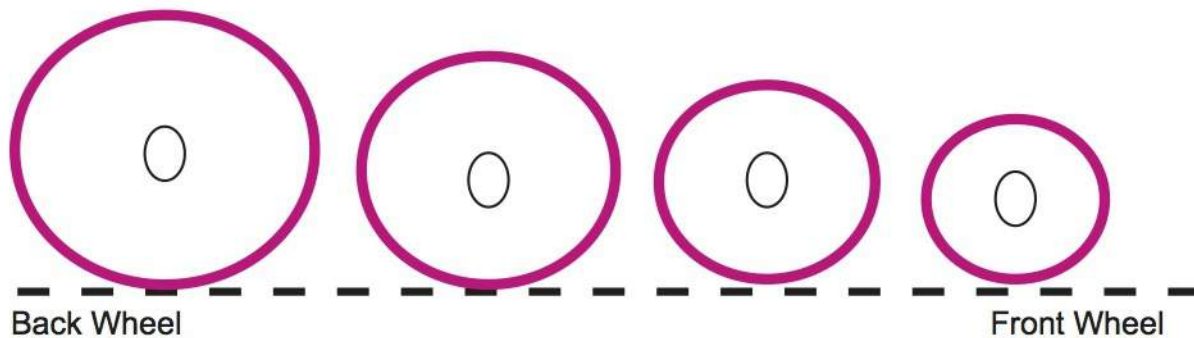
The only skaters who never need to look into rockering are speed skaters. For them the most important thing is to be able to get a good push to produce speed. This is best achieved with larger wheels all touching the ground. However if you want huge manoeuvrability for slalom or dance skating, then rockering adds a whole new level of fun and ease. If you are skating outdoors for fitness, fun, transport and general skills then keep the flat set-up. If you want to specialise in slalom skating or aggressive skating different rockers will improve your ability to make turns tighter, as fewer wheels touch the floor creating a shorter wheel-base and therefore less friction.

### Flat Rocker



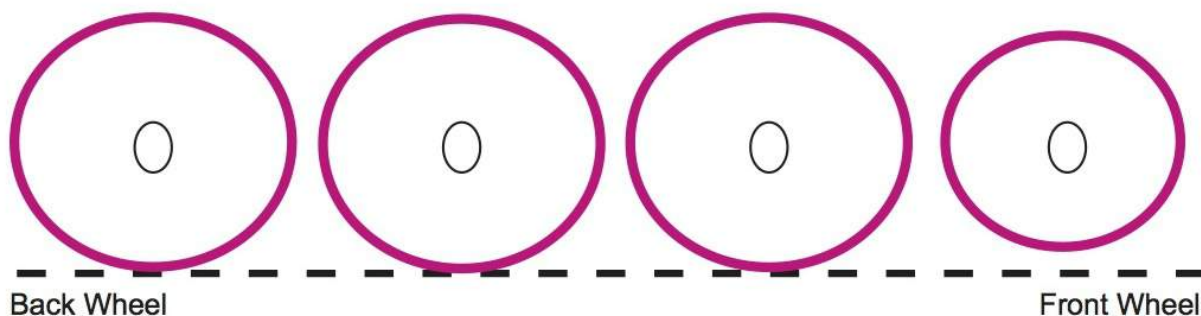
Recreational skates are equipped with eight same sized wheels, all of which touch the skating surface equally. This is the most stable option to start with. It allows maximum contact with the ground, retains your speed easily and is the ideal way to learn all the main skills.

## Hi-Lo Rocker



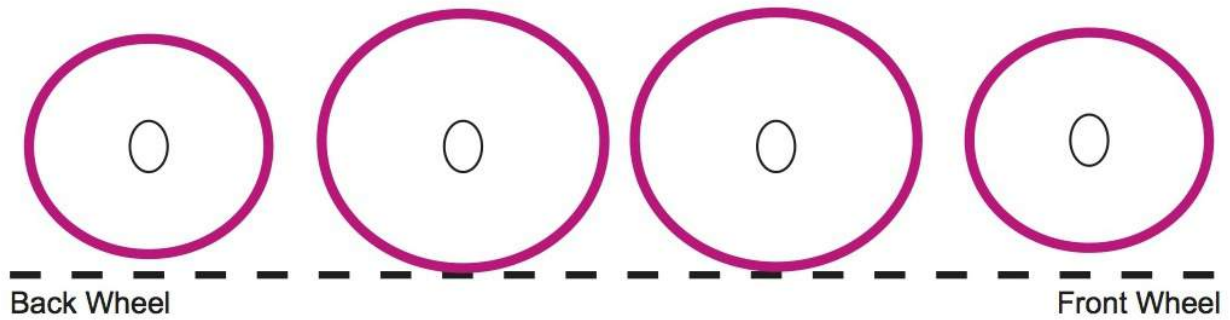
Here your back wheel is the largest and the other three decrease in size respectively. All wheels still touch the ground, however because your weight is automatically shifted forward you are automatically in a sprint position. This is useful for hockey skaters, who need to stop and go throughout their games, rather than maintain speed. This rocker may feel more comfortable for skaters who have difficulties shifting their weight and are fearful of falling backwards. The Hi-Lo Rocker can also be achieved with two large same sized back wheels and two smaller front wheels.

## Front Rocker



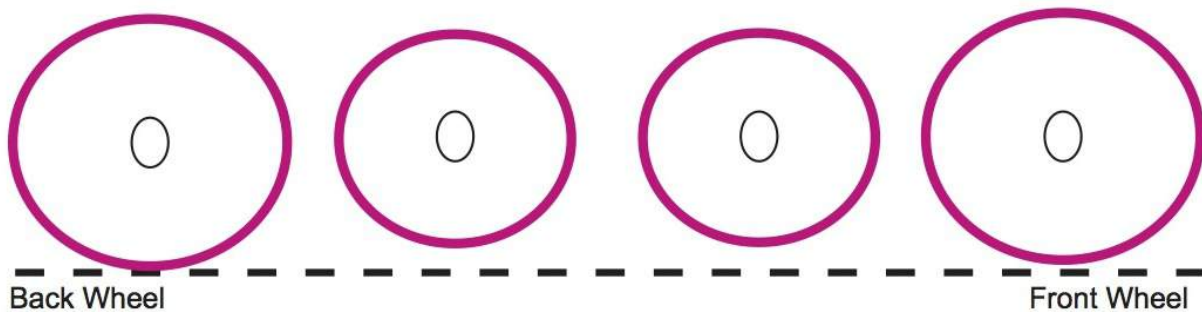
The front wheel here is smaller than the other three. This is a good rocker to start with, if you are interested in trying out various set-ups. It reduces some of the ability to keep speed in exchange for greater ability to deal with obstacles when street skating or playing recreational hockey. Because the front wheel does not touch the floor it does not trip up easily and guides the rest of the wheel base over tricky bits. The Front Rocker is perfect for street and hockey skating as it allows more manoeuvrability when it comes to turns without taking away your stability.

## Banana Rocker



This set-up is modelled on ice skate blades and is also known as a Full Rocker. The two middle wheels are the same size as are the front and the back wheel. The two latter are smaller, creating the banana shape. Only two of your skate's wheels are on the ground at all times. It is the set-up that allows freestyle, artistic and slalom skaters to weave through cones, twirl and generally just look effortless on very tight turns. It is anything but effortless though as this rocker is not easy to control for complete beginners and can feel very unstable at first. Going fast is not recommended with this set-up as 'speed wobble' is a common consequence when trying to accelerate.

## Anti Rocker



Being the direct reversal of the banana, this set-up has the two larger wheels at the front and back and the two smaller ones in the middle. It is most commonly used by aggressive skaters, as they need their frames for sliding on rails or grinding ledges. The two middle wheels do not need to roll at all and aggressive skaters often replace them with small hard wheels or attach plastic blocks instead. This rocker is quite stable when skating on flat ground as the front and back wheels touch the ground equally making for a levelled skate.

There are various versions and levels of extreme with all the above rockers. The best thing to do is to start with the basic set-up and recommended wheel size, before experimenting with more options.

If you are looking into seriously taking up a skate specialty it is worth looking into buying skates specifically designed for that style of skating.

## 7.3 Bearings.



Bearings ensure your wheels turn smoothly and without resistance. They come in pairs and are placed in the core of each wheel. They consist of small metal balls inside a round metal casing and are protected with rubber side shields.

Knowing which bearings to buy, what to pay attention to and how to navigate their rating systems can be confusing. The following outlines what you need for your ability level, which bearings will actually affect your skating and when paying more simply isn't necessary for you.

Bearings are most commonly graded with the ABEC (Annular Bearing Engineers's Committee) system. This measures the precision and tightness of a ball bearing. The higher the bearing grade (graded in odd-numbers) the tighter the tolerance and the better the precision.

This may sound rather confusing, that's the reason why it's important to know what you are searching for. Although bearings were originally designed for machines where the precision of a wheel can cause the rupture of heavy machinery, how speed is affected in skating has more to do with how the bearing is adjusted to the wheel's core or which lubricant is used.

Back to ABEC. To get a basic idea of what the different rating numbers mean consider this simplified table:

**ABEC 1** they last long, are cheap, but have the least precision.

**ABEC 3** a common bearing that is often found in skates in the lower price ranges.

**ABEC 5** perfect for beginner and recreational inline skates which are usually kitted out with these.

**ABEC 7** this is where the price rises and their extra smoothness will enhance your performance, ideal for intermediate and advance skaters

**ABEC 9** even more of a price hike and only interesting for pros who are looking for every last itty bitty detail to enhance the performance of their skates.

For a beginner skate the least pricey ABEC 3 or ABEC 5 will suffice. Though ABEC is the most common rating system, there are also some others you might encounter:

**Precision Bearings** these are 608 sizes and go by titanium, Swiss or ceramic bearings. As they don't fall into a formal rating system it is more tricky to compare them. Usually the ceramic ones are the best of the lot, though really you can't fault any of them.

**Manufacturer Bearings** some skating equipment manufacturers have started using their own systems to rate the bearings they produce. Rollerblade (SG), Bones Bearings (Skate Rated™) and TwinCam (ILQ) are among the ones that do this. Information about how their rating systems work can usually be found on their websites.

**Micro Skate Bearings** this is technically not a rating system, but rather a slightly smaller, lighter kind of bearing. They are either not rated at all or with one of the above systems. What distinguished them is an extra ball bearing in the housing which distributes the skater's weight evenly and allows for maximum efficiency of the bearing.

There are a few points to consider when purchasing bearings: Ability to perform when slightly dirty, a trustworthy manufacturer (NTN, SKF,... ), bearing seals that are dirt-proof and waterproof and are removable. Having a removable seal, makes it easier for you to get up close to the bearings and give them a good clean.

The lubricant you use may stop your bearings performing at their best no matter the rating. It is one of the things you want to get right. Too much of the wrong kind may cause leaking and more dirt attaching itself to your bearings. Too little may cause more friction and therefore overheating and possible damage. A few drops of an oil-based lubricant applied as a coat to the ball bearings should suffice.

You will be able to purchase value bearing packs that sell all the handy tools and lubricants you need to do a little self-maintenance. You will be able to tell that it is time to clean or replace your bearings when you hear your wheels making scratchy noises and they no longer run smoothly.

To clean your bearings follow these steps:

**Get your kit ready:** tools to take your wheels off the frame and the bearings out off the wheel, some soapy water, cleaning solution, rubber gloves if you are using any material that can damage your skin, a lint-free cloth, a small pin or needle, a few drops of light oil.

**Now to the fiddly part:** remove the bearings from your wheel and using your pin, gently pry away the rubber side shield. Be careful not to bend them, as if you do, they won't fit properly anymore, which allows more dirt entering in the future.

**The cleaning:** clean the side shields with the soapy water and wipe them with the lint free cloth. Let them dry. Do not reinstall them until they are completely dry and clean. Put your cleaning solution in a jar or bowl, place your bearings inside and let them soak. Move them around gently and then replace the dirty solutions a few times. Do this until the solution stays clean and the bearings are back to their smooth clean condition. Remove the bearings and let them air dry. As with the side shields, do not replace them until they are completely dry.

**Reassemble your skate:** Pop the dry side's shields back in place and lubricate your bearing with a few drops of oil, then attach the other side shield. Put the bearing back into the wheel and the wheel onto the skate. This is a good time to rotate the wheels and make sure the fatter bit of each wheel is on the inside of either skate.

Be patient with this procedure as it takes some time and rushing the steps will only result in the effort not being worthwhile. You should not have to do this very often if you do it properly.

If the bearings really are unsalvageable you will have to purchase new bearings and replace them. Follow the same steps as above, only instead of cleaning the old ones you pop in the new ones. Make sure you salvage and keep the spacer from between each set of bearings as spacers do not come with new sets of bearings.

## 7.4 Inline Boots

Inline skate boots vary in design depending on the type of skating they are designed for. Whatever the type, make sure they fit properly and are very comfortable.

Most inline recreational and fitness skates have a boot that is attached to the skate and the supportive cuff. The fitting and dynamics of the boot will decide if your skates are comfortable, durable and will assist you in skating better. There is nothing worse than badly fitting boots. It is one of the main causes of foot pain while skating, which makes for an incredibly frustrating skating experience.

### Soft Boots



There are hard and soft inline boots. Soft boots are most common. They look like soft trainers with laces attached to the hard supportive ankle cuff. The laces need to be tightened well in order for the boot to offer the support needed.

*Powerslide Phuzion Epsilon Woman 2014*

### Hard Boots



Much like a ski boot, hard boots are a hard plastic shell which contains the boot liner. Buckles are often used instead of laces but if they have laces they do not need to be tightened as much as on soft boots (eg SEBA skates). Some hard boots are not encased in plastic and though they resemble soft boots they are in fact made of much stronger materials that offer great support (eg Powerslide Hardcore Evo).

*Powerslide Imperial Evo 2015*

### Hockey Boots

Hockey boots protect the feet from the aggressive stick work and are very durable.

### Speed Skating Boots



Speed skating boots have no ankle support which demands a high level of edge control and general skating ability. Many skaters switch to speed skates looking for additional speed without having the necessary skill to handle an unsupported ankle. If this is the case, there are semi supported speed skate boots which have some ankle support and are ideally suited for beginner speed skaters.

*Powerslide Speed XX 2014*

## Quad Boots



*SFR Rio Roller Passion*

Like inline boots, quad boots have a soft and hard boot version made from different materials. Most quad boots are attached to the skate and are not removable.

Soft quad boots with laces are made from fabric or leather. The laces are used to provide stability and attach the boot to your foot firmly. Quad boots should be laced tightly around the foot and to varying amounts up the ankle, depending on personal preference and ability level.

Hard quad boots are available with or without removable liner options. Many old style quad skates use hard plastic shell boots with buckles. As with inline boots, comfort is the most important factor to consider when choosing quad boots.

## 7.5 Frames

Inline skate frames attach the wheels to your boot and create the length of the wheel base. A number of materials are used to produce frames and they vary according to price range and the type of skate. The frame of the skate is where the power of movement is generated. The stiffer the frame the more easily the energy from the pushing of your legs is transferred to the wheel by way of your boot and frame. The three main things to take into consideration when thinking about changing frames are weight, durability and stiffness.

Most recreational skates use polyurethane (a high-class plastic), though the quality of the plastic worsens the further down the price range you descend. Intermediate level inline skates and speed skates most commonly sport various aluminium frames, which are lighter and stiffer and therefore last longer. Lighter materials like carbon fibre are being introduced to the market. They are usually more pricy and aim at making the overall skate lighter.



*Generic Powerslide Frames*

Frames need to be accurately positioned on the boot. Ensure that yours are attached and adjusted with precision and accuracy. If you are not sure, ask at a skate shop for assistance.

The length of frames varies depending on the style of skating. Most inline skates have a wheelbase of about 23 cm. For speed skates they can get as long as 32 cm, whereas the aggressive skaters use short frames.



## 7.6 Protective Gear

The need for protective gear has nothing to do with how well you can skate. You need it. Protective gear does not simply protect you from getting hurt. It actually prevents you from falling in the first place and is designed to make you fall more safely if you do.

Protective gear usually comes in a set of three unless you are playing hockey and need extra protection for face and shins.



*Powerslide Schutzer-Set Phuzion Man*



*Powerslide Standard Women Tri-pack*

The knee pads gently encourage you to bend your knees, which is an essential position in skating. If you fall they encourage you to fall forwards onto your knees and hands and their plastic protection. You can practice falling this way on a patch of grass. Put on your protective gear and reach forward with both arms and fall onto your knee pads and then your hands. Reaching forward this way often results in regaining balance and not falling at all. Your protective gear can thus prevent a fall, which explains why the day you decide to remove your knee pads because you haven't fallen on them in months is the day you wipe two new holes in your trousers.

Protective gear is sold at all skate shops and it is a good idea to try on a few different brands as you want everything to fit comfortably. Make sure you put everything on correctly, with wider parts of the pads going higher up the arms and legs. The long part of the wrist guard goes up your arm and there is always a hole for each thumb. The round part of a wrist guard should be in the palm of your hand, not the back of your hand.

## 7.7 Helmets

There is a variety of helmets out there that are all suitable for skating purposes. If you have a bicycle helmet at home, then there is no need to buy a skate specific one (this of course works in reverse, you can wear your skate helmet when cycling).

The most important factor here is that the helmet fits the size of your head and the straps are comfortable. You don't want to be readjusting and tugging and pulling at things when skating.

Your helmet can be where you advertise your business if you are an instructor, or express your personality and there are a few skate specific helmet designs:

### Classic Skate Helmet



*Powerslide All round  
Stunt helmet 2015*

These look a bit like an inverted muesli bowl and are most commonly seen on the heads of urban sportspeople like skateboarders, BMXers, inline skaters, roller derby players.

There is a range of useful accessories available, like covers and ear warmers for the wintery months, baseball cap shades for summer, stickers, funky colours and fun straps.

## Hockey Helmet

Close relatives to the classic skate helmet, they are more boxy in shape and usually come further down the back of your head and over your ears. Some of them sport a detachable face guard, which you only need for playing hockey.

## Speed Skating Helmet



*Powerslide Protection Fitness Pro Helmet Man 2015*

These look like aerodynamic bicycle helmets. The ones worn by professionals have an elongated, pointy back-end at the neck and are similar to those worn by track cyclists. There is some variety in terms of shape, all designed for various speed levels and good ventilation.

## 7.8 Skate Bags



*Powerslide Pro Backpack 2015*

These clever backpacks come in very handy as lugging bulky skates around can be a pain. Walking, cycling and riding public transport to get to and from skate areas is part of a skater's life. Throwing your skates over your shoulders like ice skates or those funky 80s kids' quads at the roller rink gets annoying very quickly.

The shape of inline skates does not lend itself to storing them inside most rucksacks easily. Plus, after hours of skating a fair amount of filth collects on your skates which you'd probably rather not have inside your bag.

Skate bags offer a simple solution. Most of them look like standard backpacks, but have a lapel, or some straps on the outside, with which you can attach your skates to either the sides or the front. There is plenty of space for the rest of your kit, snacks and water in the bag part of the backpack. They look inconspicuous and if you don't have your skates attached they function as normal sport bags.

## CHAPTER 8

# BUYING SKATES

***This chapter highlights what to check, look out for and pay attention to when buying skates and what to do to be comfortable in your skates.***

### 8.1 Size and Fit

Make sure your skates fit PERFECTLY before you buy them. Spend as much time as possible in each pair so you can really feel the differences between brands and skates.

*“I’ve seen people give up skating because of foot pain caused by badly fitting skates. Foot pain can also be caused by incorrect technique (straight knees creating ‘clenching’ toes), but the signs for badly fitting skates are; blisters, hot spots, rubbing and numb toes.”*

### 8.2 The Size Test

Start with your shoe size. Many skate shops recommend you go one size up from your shoe size, but this can lead to buying skates that are too large. Put both skates on, stand up with both feet parallel, hand-width apart and bend your knees until your knee caps cover your toes (Ready Position) and your shin bone is supported by the ankle strap. This will push your foot to the front of the skate, where it would be when you skate correctly. Wiggle your toes and check if any of them touch the front or side of the skate. The little toe and the one next to it are the best indicators and if you feel pressure there, then the skates are too small and you should test the next size up.

### 8.3 Trying on Skates

It’s best to keep stationary, especially if you are a beginner and focus on your feet and how they feel. Stand with both feet parallel so you don’t roll around. If you roll forwards at all then you have your skates in a slight V-shape so go back to completely parallel. Buy the most comfortable pair you try. Skates that don’t fit well result in painful feet, which is a real killjoy for skating. Try on different brands and see how the fit changes. Different brands offer similar design features, so focus on COMFORT!

Try on at least three or four pairs to compare the various fits. You may be a size 6 with one brand and a size 7 with another brand. The thickness of your socks can also make a difference so try the skates with a thick and thin pair. If you have one foot much larger than the other then using a thinner sock on that foot can be the solution. Sock thickness is one way of adjusting the fit and can make a big difference.

## 8.4 Doing Skates up Properly

99% of ALL skaters regardless of ability level or age do not do up their skates properly. Make sure you are not one of them.

Start tightly pulling your laces from their lowest point. Then work your way up pulling the laces so that you feel your skate 'embracing' the length of your foot and snugly fitting your skate to your whole foot. Then pull the laces tightly at the top and tie them.



*Tying up laces properly*

[CLICK HERE TO WATCH VIDEO](#)

If you are in quads, the same thing applies - tight laces from the bottom up. Quads usually do not have ankle straps so you need to tie the laces tightly as this is where all your support comes from. Advanced quads skaters often skate with very loose or undone laces, because they have the skills to not need the support. Start with support and only give it up slowly as you increase in confidence!

## 8.5 The Strap Tightness Test for Inline Skates

Stand with your feet parallel, a hands-width apart and bend your knees until you feel your weight on the balls of both feet. You should feel the ankle straps making contact with your shin bone when your knees are fully bent. If you do not feel your shin bones pushing into your ankle straps then you need to tighten them by a few clicks. Start with three clicks and then redo the test and keep adjusting until they are as tight as they should be.



*The ankle strap test*

[CLICK HERE TO WATCH VIDEO](#)



***This chapter outlines what the ideal skate surface looks like and what to consider depending on where you are skating.***

### **9.1 Flat**

It is obvious that a beginner skater should not start on a downhill slope. This may be easier said than done though, as in the real world of tarmac and concrete, something that appears flat may not be. Even a slight slope can create unwanted acceleration.

*“My top 3 skating places are:  
Rio de Janeiro for its beach roads and views,  
Barcelona for its variety and street skates  
Fleming Skate near Berlin for its perfect  
smooth tarmac and countryside tranquility.”*

Ideal places for a beginner skater are:

- Tennis and basketball courts
- Beach front promenades and lake shores
- Car parks when they are not being used
- Parks and cycle paths which allow for more uninterrupted rides

Skaters should only venture onto streets and roads in countries where this is legal and if they have excellent stopping and accelerating skills. Pavements are one of the most challenging and difficult places for skaters due to the uneven ground, pedestrians and frequent road crossings.

### **9.2 Smooth**

Smoothness is probably more important than flatness. It is THE thing you are always chasing, loving, talking about and remembering. Smoothness influences the feeling of your skating more than anything else. The smoother the better, but when wet, super smooth instantly becomes super slippery so watch out if it's damp. Rough surface is the bane of every skater as it can literally stop you in your tracks. You must develop some specific rough surface techniques much like the fast steps used for acceleration, and having an excellent Scissor Position will be invaluable for helping you deal with rough surfaces and obstacles.

### **9.3 Free from Obstacles**

Make sure your super smooth and flat surface has none of the following obstacles; sand, water, oil, debris like twigs or traffic. It can be a challenge to find good safe skating areas, especially for beginners to practice their basics, but keep your eyes open, ask other skaters in your area where they skate and go online to see what's happening near you.



## CHAPTER 10

# FALLING & STANDING

***This chapter guides skaters how to fall and stand correctly and safely and how to practice both.***

### Falling

The fear of falling that most beginner skaters have is valid. You are strapping wheels to your feet and your body may react with apprehension at best and terror at worst.

*“Many instructors and skaters believe that you have to fall in order to learn how to skate. I 100% disagree. I think learning correctly from the start is essential. Only then will you learn without falling regularly, and if you do fall, you will know why and be able to correct the mistake. Otherwise it's just painful and embarrassing and deters you from skating.”*

One of the best ways to overcome fear is to practice in a controlled and safe way. That is falling onto your protective gear, on a patch of grass. Have a go at this as it will help identify your body's fear levels. This is great pre-rolling preparation. Put on your skates and protective gear (knee, wrist, elbows) and come to a kneeling position on some grass. Now try and 'jump' and bang your knee pads into the ground from kneeling. This should feel surprisingly protected and comfortable. If you do not test your knee pads this way you are less trusting of falling on them from higher up and in a real life fall you are more likely to choose your butt or hands to touch the ground first.

Get into Ready Position (skates parallel, hand-width apart) to prepare for your first proper fall. Bend your knees more and feel your weight go forwards in your boots. Lift your hands to make sure your knees hit the ground first. This is really important, so hands up! Bend the knees even more and feel your heel wheels lifting off the ground as you start to roll over the front wheels. Bend more and hit your knee pads onto the ground. Your hands will follow and you are safely down. This can feel terrifying the first time but do it several times and it starts being quite fun.

After years of teaching these grass falling methods, it is worth noting that very often the people who were too apprehensive to try this on grass, end up being those who fall over (often backwards) once on concrete. If you can muster the courage to do this part first you will be highly reducing your incidence of falling later on. Reverse psychology perhaps, but this is a HUGE fear-busting exercise. Only miss this step if you have knee or back problems.

## Standing

From your kneeling position stand up by lifting one skate to the ground and putting your hand on that knee. Then push up with both legs and bring the instep of your skate in so that it creates a T-shape with the front skate and stand up.

If you are on a slope when you stand up, make sure the first skate you place on the tarmac from kneeling position is perpendicular to the slope so that when you stand up you do not immediately begin rolling.

## CHAPTER 11

# BASIC STANCES & POSITIONS

***This chapter defines the various positions and stances you will be using while learning to skate.***

Skating positions are easy enough to execute statically, but when rolling it is very common for subtle changes in weight taking you out of the optimal position. You should practice at home on carpet or outdoors on grass first as getting to know how the positions feel beforehand will help you recreate them accurately.

*“Every student who masters the basics properly ends up further ahead in skill level than the skater who rushed ahead to the flashy difficult stuff and then got stuck. Nail the basics first, before moving on to the harder skills and drills. You will then progress faster and steadier.”*

### 11.1 Ready Position

This is both the most important position for beginners to learn and every skater's departure point for mastering a new skill. The Ready Position ensures your knees are properly bent and your skates are the correct width apart, about one hand-width.



*Ready position: hand-width apart*

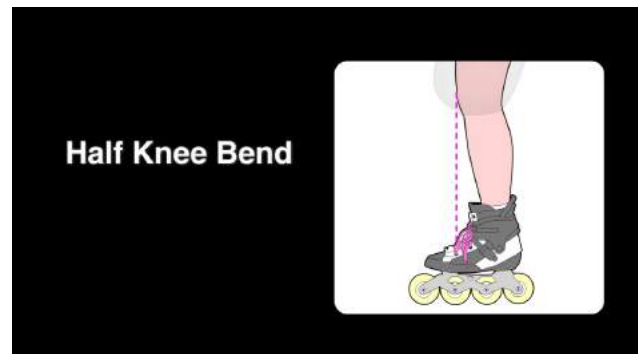
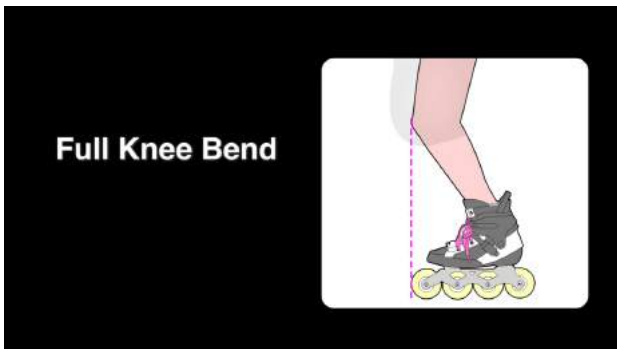


*Shins supported by ankle straps*

For the correct knee bend you want your skates perfectly parallel. With a straight body look down at your toes and bend your knees, move your shins forwards into the ankle strap of your boots and keep bending until you feel your weight through the balls of both feet. Your heels should feel lighter and in fact, the only purpose of the lower ankle strap on inline skates is to prevent your heel from lifting as you bend your knees. Your knee caps should cover your toes when looking from the side. This is what we call a 'full knee bend'.



Compare this to the 'half knee bend'. Here the knees are bent but the front of the knee cap covers only half the skate and therefore your weight is now mid foot or at the beginning of your heel, rather than on the balls of your feet where it should be.



Graphic by Nick Grant

The difference between weight on balls of the feet and weight mid-foot is very subtle, but being able to differentiate between these two positions and 'tuning into' the balls of your feet is crucial. Ask yourself this question continually: "Am I on the balls of my feet?" This ensures you learn any skill safely and quickly. The correct Ready Position will also be THE place you go whenever you want to relax between skating strides, chill out or roll out your speed before you can stop well. It's basic, but it's important. It should be your 'happy place' to go on wheels.

If you have a wobble and feel like you are losing balance then the Ready Position with arms stretched out in front of you is the place to go. You will regain your balance, but only IF you can get your weight from your heels back onto the balls of the feet. All problems on skates begin with weight shifting backwards from the balls of the feet towards the heels.

## 11.2 V-Position



Basic skating movement starts with this position, heels slightly in and toes slightly out. Notice whether your V-Position is slightly more turned out on one side. This is quite common, but you are trying to make it as centred as possible. Keep both knees bent with your weight on the balls of your feet. If you are doing the V-Position on tarmac your skates immediately start rolling. The V-Position means 'GO' so make sure you are ready to move.

Try not to roll your skates outwards at the ankles and onto your outside edges of your wheels. This does not feel stable or comfortable and you can overbalance sideways if you aren't paying attention. Notice how even standing still on skates takes some engagement of your 'core' muscle groups. Slightly sucking in your lower abdomen to engage them helps your skating stability, as does gently pulling your knees towards each other.

### 11.3 T-Position



Standing still on tarmac, is best done in the T-Position as it is stable and safe when not moving. The heel of one foot rolls into the instep of the other, 90 degrees, on both centre edges with knees bent. Use your inner thigh muscles to gently pull in your skates.

### 11.4 Upper Body Position



Your nose, knees and toes should create an imaginary line down the front of your body. Imagine your body upright with just your shins pushing forwards. There is a hint of a forward lean, but don't bend forwards from the waist but instead push your nose forward. A few moves like the Lunge Turn and Backwards Powerslide deviate from this and have a pronounced forwards body lean, but the majority of skills need an upright upper body position.



## CHAPTER 12

# BASIC MOVEMENT

***This chapter is the definitive guide to your first skating steps if you are ready to roll on tarmac or if you are moving but it feels scary or you are falling and don't know why.***

### 12.1 Practicing Steps

Start on a patch of grass with static marching in the V-Position (see chapter 11). Now march up and down lifting each skate for a moment. DO NOT straighten your leg at any point but stay low on the support leg. The tempo of your marching is extremely important, it has to be quick - Nearly 2 steps per second. After several static steps in the V-Position step into the Ready Position and pause your marching. This will be your cruise and roll when you do it on the tarmac.

*“If I had to pick just two of the causes of most beginners’ skating problems they would be lack of sufficient and correct knee bend and too slow a cadence. There are other problems but these two are the bane of any instructor’s life. If you fix these two, everything else will fix itself.”*



*Practicing steps on grass*  
[CLICK HERE TO WATCH VIDEO](#)

Repeat this practice several times and check if your weight stays on the ball of each foot for each marching step and if you finish in Ready Position with weight on the balls of both feet. This is very important as you cannot fall over backwards EVER if your weight is on the balls of the feet.

When this starts feeling comfortable and your stepping pace is fast, you are ready to do this on tarmac or concrete. It's fundamental that your first steps are on a smooth and completely flat surface (see Chapter 9) so that you can take a few steps and then cruise in Ready Position.

### 12.2 Stepping off the grass onto tarmac

Align yourself parallel with the edge of the grass, step onto the tarmac and then take small sideways steps in the Ready Position. Keep walking sideways in Ready Position until you are at least 1.5 metres from the edge of the grass.

Begin your static marching steps in Ready Position, at the fast pace you practiced. It is natural to want to take it easy and start marching at a slower pace than before. This is not the worst thing you

can do, but slower steps mean you have to balance on one skate for longer, which can be difficult for beginners. After a few marches, start to turn your toes out into the V-Position and notice how you automatically move forwards.



*First skating steps*

[CLICK HERE TO WATCH VIDEO](#)

March four steps in the V-Position and then step straight ahead into Ready Position and roll with your skates parallel to each other. You will roll to a stop. Very slowly increase the number of marching steps each time which will slowly increase your speed. If you want less speed, take fewer steps and roll longer in Ready Position to slow down. Keep practicing this and when you can do the whole sequence without your weight shifting from the balls of the feet to your heels or mid foot, then you are doing it right.

### 12.3 Controlling Speed

You need to know what causes acceleration and how to control it. Each V step creates acceleration which increases with each skate hitting the ground. There is something unsettling about acceleration and your body does what it can to 'sabotage' the acceleration and slow down. That's when common mistakes happen (see below).

You can control your speed by decreasing the number of skating steps you take. Start slow with 3-5 steps and slowly increase to 6-8 steps as you start feeling comfortable. You may still not be able to stop well or at all so rolling in Ready Position is your only option for now. Get really comfortable with these basics before pushing for more speed. Speed will come when you are ready and when your body knows you can stop safely.

### 12.4 Edges in basic movement (inline skaters only)

Your inline skates have three edges; the inside edge, the centre (or top) edge and the outside edge. Beginners are naturally inclined towards inside edges which are very safe and stable, but you should aim for your centre edges as often and consistently as possible. Never the outside edges for beginners! The centre edge is the easiest place to balance but it can feel risky unless you have the proper 'full' knee bend to support it. If you bend your knees correctly you will be more likely to skate on your centre edges.

### 12.5 Common problems with Basic Movement

#### Stepping Forwards

When you march on the spot you don't move your feet forwards. But as soon as you V your skates and experience movement the body might resort to what is familiar and start 'walking' on skates.

This can turn into the habit of stepping forwards with each change of skate, which will lead to not mastering the proper skating stride. A V-ing step should move forward about 3cm, but not half a foot or more.

Ask someone to film your skating from the side and check if you are stepping forwards too far. The problem lies in what this does to your weight.

Compare the following two photos:



*Basic Movement: Correctly stepping forwards*



*Basic Movement: Incorrectly stepping forwards*

In the left photo the new step starts with the knee covering the toe and the shin cuff is closed. In the right photo there is a step forwards and the shin cuff is now open so the weight will not fall on the ball of the foot but near the heel. This feels unstable and uncomfortable. This is how many beginners skate, not knowing they are actually contributing to the feeling of imbalance by stepping too far forwards.

To fix this, go back to the marching exercise in Ready Position. When you start V-ing be aware that you are about to step forwards and stop yourself from doing it. Allow the propulsion to come from the natural V-ing of the skates, not from your stepping forwards as if you are walking. This is skating and the rules are different. Try to take fewer steps and decrease the speed. This will help you not to self-sabotage the process.

### Lack of sufficient knee bend

Straightening your knees can happen when stepping forwards but it is also often an unconscious response to feeling the acceleration and your body deciding to sabotage this speed by straightening the knees and 'putting the brakes on'. Skating with straighter knees is both less efficient and unstable and you run the risk of potentially falling over backwards, unless you can find the Ready Position mid-wobble and reach forwards with your arms.

The best way to know if your knees are straight is to have a friend film you from the side. Watch each shin and check if it's squeezed into the ankle strap of each skate when you step. Freezing the video in the positions above is a good way to tell where you are at. Almost all new skaters have the tendency to walk on skates with slightly straight knees, instead of the low knee march in a V-Position.

### Inconsistent V-ing



*Uneven V-Position*

It is extremely common for one side of your body to be more responsive to instructions than the other side. This leads to one foot over V-ing and the other foot under V-ing. This means that the space between your skates might be correct, but you are pointing more to the right or the left.

To check if you are doing this try to skate along a straight line and ask a friend to video you skating from the front. Most beginner skaters have this tendency so do check it.

To fix the problem you need to identify to which side you are over V-ing and consciously over V to the other side.

When you do correct your V direction it will probably not feel correct, it will feel strange at first as familiarity is what the body calls 'correct'. Yet this is the reason for many skating errors of self-taught skaters. The technically 'correct' thing can and probably will feel 'wrong' but it's simply unfamiliar.

### Tempo / Cadence (too slow)



*Basic Movement: Correct tempo*  
[CLICK HERE TO WATCH VIDEO](#)

Every beginner skater has in their mind's eye an image of a good skater using a powerful stroke and gliding effortlessly and wants to emulate that style. However, this is not the way to get started for a beginner. Fast and quick marching steps will create acceleration more easily and also means you don't yet need to balance too long on each skate.

The ideal for a new skater would be nearly two steps per second, but most beginners will do one step per second. They want to take it nice and easy and

not go too fast. To go slower however takes FEWER steps rather than slower tempo steps. This is very often misunderstood and makes a HUGE difference. Fewer but faster steps will be the best way to 'take it easy'. If you want more speed, then take more steps. The tempo however is always quick!

### Conclusion of Basic Movement

This guide to basic movement reinforces correct skating technique for complete beginners who do not have access to a qualified instructor. Learning to skate for some people is a natural and easy process, but this is not the norm and most people do struggle at first, as the mechanics of skating are so different from walking. Also interesting to note is that the correct skating technique is not usually adopted intuitively by most beginner adult skaters. Often a new skater will try to copy what they have seen others skaters do, but end up making some or all of the common mistakes.

We have looked at the four of the most common problems beginner skaters struggle with. You may have recognised some of these tendencies while reading this guide, but in most cases it is a combination of mistakes and this can make it more difficult to identify and fix the problems. Focus on each of the four problems in turn and ask yourself these questions:

- Am I stepping forwards?
- Do I have a full knee bend and is my weight on the balls of my feet?
- Is my V equal on each side?
- Is my tempo almost two steps per second?

Asking a friend to video your progress is the best way to actually see what's happening. Film from the side so you can see if you are in the desired knee over toe position. Film from the front in order to see if your V-ing is centred. Watching these video clips in slow motion or pausing the footage can show you exactly what you are doing and this often creates a better understanding of your own skating and the areas where you need to improve. It also creates a record of your improvement and you can look back in a few months time and be proud of your progress.



## Translators

### *Spanish*

**Natalia Santamaria** - Natalia started skating in 2010, and two years later in 2012 together with her husband, Antonio Rico ICP level 1 instructor too, they opened Backflip House – [www.backfliphouse.com](http://www.backfliphouse.com) a skate shop and now also a skating school in their hometown Burgos in Spain. Natalia is a level 2 instructor and is training to become an ICP Examiner for Spain with Asha

### *Portuguese*

**Amit Breda** - Amit has been skating since 2009 and in 2014 became one of the first ICP Level 1 instructors in Brazil. He owns an online skate shop [www.kambota.com](http://www.kambota.com) and lives and teaches inline skating in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

**Simone Ravanini** - Simone has been skating for 10 years in Sao Paulo. She started training with the Skatefresh Apps and SkateFresh Youtube channel. She participated in workshops with Asha in Brazil in December 2014. Currently she is training for taking ICP Level 1 course in November 2015 and hopes to become a qualified instructor.

## Editor

**Fabiola Buchele** - Fabiola has been with Skatefresh since 2009. During her studies for a journalism degree in London she also became Skatefresh's communication manager. She has since moved to Vietnam where she works as a freelance journalist and co-founded the arts and culture magazine [& Of Other Things](#). She continues to work with Asha on her writing projects, as though not a skater herself she has accumulated an extensive knowledge on all things skating that comes in handy when editing blog posts and books on the topic.

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