

MPA Nordic Equipment Buying Tips

Purchasing Nordic equipment can be an overwhelming endeavor for the new skier. There are a number of options out there and you don't have to break the bank to get good equipment. Many of the local Nordic shops have special deals for high schoolers and have knowledgeable staff able to assist you in finding the proper gear. I will be setting up a team equipment purchase session at one of the local shops, so there is no need to rush out and buy anything yet. I have put together some general guidelines so

Fit

Proper fit is the single most important factor in choosing equipment. Poorly fitting skis, boots, or poles can take much of the fun out of the sport and can be extremely frustrating, especially for a beginner. An improper fit in any area (skis, boots or poles) helps to promote bad technical habits that can take a long time to overcome.

Because fit is so critical, I recommend going to one of the following Nordic shops:

Finn Sisu – 1841 University Ave. W. in St. Paul (www.finnsisu.com)

They have a wide selection of equipment specifically for high schoolers and the staff is superb.

Pioneer Midwest - 415 County Rd 81 in Osseo (www.pioneermidwest.com)

Renee skis on the Pioneer Midwest team. Pricing is competitive and the staff is knowledgeable.

Joe's Sporting Goods - 33 County Rd. B in St. Paul (www.joessportinggoods.com/)

Jon works at the St. Paul store. Make sure to stop in when he's working.

One Set or Two?

There are two styles of skiing – skate / freestyle and classic / diagonal. All Minnesota high schoolers compete in both skate and classic races and the MPA race schedule is evenly divided between the two techniques.

The equipment for each style is slightly different. For the beginner, the difference between a classic ski and a skate ski is pretty subtle. On looks alone you will find that classic skis are a little longer and usually will have a distinct pointed tip compared to skate skis. While it is ideal to have two sets of skis, boots, and poles, there are special skis and boots designated for both, called "combis." Combi skis are just "ok" for each technique, but do the job and may be a good option when considering your budget, especially for the kids who are expected to grow quite a bit in the next year.

Classic

Skate

Pole Height	- To the skier's underarm - Typically 10 cm shorter than skate poles	- Between the skier's chin or "moustache" - Typically 10 cm longer than classic poles
Skis	- Longer (I am 5'5" or 165 cm tall. My classic skis are 190 cm long.)	- Shorter (My skate skis are 173 cm long). - Slightly curved tip

- More curved tip
- Flex is designed differently for skate
- Flex is designed differently for classic
- Flexible like a shoe
- Stiff like a rollerblade

Boots

Poles

I highly recommend buying two sets of poles. “In between” height poles only help to reinforce bad habits and are frustrating to use. This is the first piece of equipment you should “double up” on and, fortunately, is also the most inexpensive addition. Also, when the a skier outgrows their poles, the old skate poles can be used for classic, so only one new set of poles needs to be purchased.

Skis

Again, the most important thing about buying skis is the fit. It is especially important if you are buying combi skis that they fit properly because of their design. No matter which shop you go to, a staff member should have the skier stand on several pairs of skis and run a piece of paper underneath to check fit. If the staff member just hands you a pair of skis without checking the fit in this manner, go somewhere else. The shops listed above should all have staff that are properly trained to fit skis.

Boots

Boots are the last thing to buy two pairs of. Combi boots are not ideal, but they work fairly well for most skiers. Personally, I have two pairs of boots - true skate boots for skate and combi boots geared toward classic (I like a little extra ankle support for classic).

Waxed vs. Waxless Skis

Avoid waxless skis! The majority of waxless skis are designed for backwoods skiing, so they are longer, wider, and heavier than normal skis. Trying to learn on waxless skis facilitates the use of improper technique, which ends up being extremely frustrating for the skier. The additional length and weight of waxless skis makes them clunky and slow. Waxing is an important component of skiing. We have wax and waxing equipment at MPA and all skiers will learn how to wax.

Outgrown Your Equipment From Last Year?

If you have outgrown your equipment and will be purchasing new equipment this fall, consider donating your used stuff to MPA or giving / lending something to a teammate (assuming the equipment fits). It would be great to have some extra equipment around, especially in case someone forgets something (but of course THAT never happens!). I believe any donations are tax deductible so if you're considering donating, let me know and I will find out the details.