

SKATE SHARPENING 101

How often do I need to sharpen my skates?

If you're skating a few times a week, every six weeks to two months is probably frequent enough. For more advanced skaters, an average of *every 24 hours of ice time* is a good estimate for sharpening time. You should get in the habit inspecting them each time you dry off the blades, and when they are dulled or have a lot of nicks, get them sharpened. The usual test for sharpness is dragging a fingernail lightly over the edge - if it planes off a little sliver, they're sharp, if it just slides, then they're dull. It is not unusual for blades to wear unevenly. For example, the inside edges may wear more quickly than the outside edges or the fronts more quickly than the tails.

The real test is in the skating, and you'll gradually learn the clues that point to a dull blade. Your instructor can help you in evaluating blade sharpness. Remember that every time you get your blades sharpened you shorten the life of the blades and there's a bit of a re-adjustment for you to get used to the new feel. It's almost always "better", but you get used to when the blade will slide and when it will grab over the period as it gets dull, and you may be caught off guard by the new behavior.

Where to get skates sharpened at?

Now that you determined it's time to get your blades sharpened, the next step is to figure out where to you get them sharpened in northwest Wisconsin!! Whoever you go with, make sure they are trained in sharpening *figure skates*!!! I've heard too many horror stories of skates being sharpened wrong and even one instance where the toe pick was shaved completely off thus ruining the blade!! Figure skating blades are a softer metal than hockey skates. One hockey sharpening equals 10 figure skating sharpening. Advanced skaters require a precise edge and curve to execute spins. This curve and edge can be ground off by a hockey sharpener. The experienced sharpener will ask what skating level the skater performs at, not their weight. First talk with your skating instructor as they may have some places to try where they have had success. Listed below are local area skater sharpening locations. Call first for hours of operation and wait time.

Pierce Skate and Ski - contact Ted Petroskey at 1-888-SKI-1996. (Call ahead).

Located in Bloomington MN and, in most circumstances, will sharpen skates while you wait.

Barb Keefe - past NFSC member who sharpens skates on the side.

She lives in Shell Lake and can be contacted at 715-468-2388

Riverside Bike and Skate - located in Eau Claire and will sharpen skates while you wait.

Please call 715-835-0088

Finally, if you are going to get your skates sharpened, consider taking a fellow member's skates along. Then next time, hopefully they can take your skates. Saves on driving and frees up time.