

## **Testing the fit of new or old classical skis:** Andrew Gardner

If you wish to conduct a rudimentary test of your classical skis place your skis together, base-to-base. Hold the skis on the binding plate. With one hand, squeeze the bases together as hard as you can. If you can force the bridge (kick zone) of the bases to touch with only one hand, your skis are most likely too soft. If the Kick zone remains apart with one hand then the skis are likely not too soft. Now try squeezing the skis together with two hands. If you squeeze the skis together as hard as you can with two hands and you cannot close the kick zone between your hands then your skis are likely to stiff. This is a simple test that will only work to expose skis that are way too stiff or way too soft. If your skis pass this test then they should be tested at a ski retailer with a perfectly flat testing board. All Fischer Race Centers and many other Fischer retailers [www.fischerskis.com](http://www.fischerskis.com) have Fischer testboards and the knowledgeable staff that will help you test your old or new skis.

### Dialing in Your Kick Zone:

Different snow conditions call for different methods of kick waxing. Finding the kick zone and understanding the versatility of your skis for various conditions can aid your racing efforts and help you enjoy pure recreational skiing because you will know how to wax your skis so they perform optimally in a variety of snow conditions. Here we'll cover the Swix method, a variation on the Fischer test board method, the eyeball method and the on-snow method.

The Swix recommended method of finding the kick zone requires a friend, a very flat surface and a piece of normal typing paper (they suggest A4, 60 gram paper, but any fairly normal typing paper will do). Place the paper under the ski and stand with the body-weight equally distributed on both skis. For all these tests you must stand with your feet on the ski where they would be if you were skiing on them on the bindings. Have the friend move the sheet of paper towards the tip. At the point where the movement comes to a stop, mark with a pen on the sidewalls. This point represents the forward front of the kick zone for cold, dry snow conditions (hard kick waxes such as VR 40 or Extra Blue).

Next, fold the paper once and repeat the process. Where the paper stops represents the forward front of the kick zone on freezing point conditions (soft kick waxes such as VR 60 or a red kick wax).

Finally, fold the paper once more so that it is 4 times its original thickness. Repeat the process by moving the paper as far forward as possible. This time the stopping point represents the front of the kick zone when using klister.

The rear of the kick zone normally ranges from under the middle of the foot back to the heel of the boot. Very, very seldom does the kick zone extend beyond the rear of the heel. Often a klister kick zone will stop under the mid-foot while a hard wax kick zone will extend back to the rear of the heel.

Generally the length of the kick zone, using hard waxes, is approx. 55 cm, from the heel.

For klister it is slightly shorter, around 50 cm. Remember these are just initial, though often accurate, guidelines - see the on-snow method below.

All Fischer retail shops are equipped with a Fischer test board. The test board enables the customer to find not only the kick zone but also the exact right ski for their weight. While using the test board is the best way to do these things the way they measure the kick zone can be duplicated to some degree at home.

Again you'll need a friend and a piece of paper and the flat surface (one reason the test board is so good is because few of us have access to a flat enough surface - irregularities in floorboards, tables, etc can lead to incorrectly marked kick zones).

This is not Fischer's exact method, but a variation on it. Stand with your feet on the ski where they would be if you were skiing. First, to determine that the ski is not too stiff for your weight, stand on one ski with all your weight on the ball of your foot (you are standing on one leg) with the paper under the ski beneath the toe. If the paper can be moved, the ski is too stiff. If it cannot be moved it is not too stiff.

Next, to determine the kick zone, stand flat on the ski so your weight is on the whole foot (you're still on one leg) the paper should now move, the forward most point you can move the paper is the shortest possible kick zone - for klister skiing. Repeat for both skis.

Next, stand on both skis with your weight evenly distributed. Move the paper fore and aft marking the furthest points of movement. This is your hard-wax kick zone. Again the rear of the kick zone should be near the heel of the boot.

The on snow method is a necessary step toward finding the right kick zone. Since it is easier to add wax while out skiing than remove it, start by waxing your skis only within the shortest kick zone – if you have used the Swix or Fischer method use those marks. If you have not used them then start with the eyeball method. Holding the skis base to base, grasp your skis on the bindings and give them a squeeze that is hard enough to get them to almost touch in the middle. Sight down the space between the skis and note where the wax pocket appears to be (the space between the skis, where the bases aren't touching). Start by waxing well within that zone - from the mid-foot forward.

For this exercise do not sand the kick zone and do not iron in any binder wax. Simply ski on your skis applying wax forward two inches at a time, until you are satisfied with the kick. Ski on them for a time and check the wax periodically for wear. If there is considerable wear then you maybe waxing too long (at least for those conditions). If there is little or no wear continue adding wax, until you reach the wear point.

All of these methods are only starting points to find the kick zone. Though these methods are often accurate, snow conditions, technique, experience and other variables make experimenting in a variety of conditions necessary. Don't be afraid to bend or break the rules.

A good example of this was at the World Cup 15km two years ago in Heber City. After the race (After!) we learned that all the International Fischer racers, including the winners waxed well forward of their normal kick zones. Conditions were new, loose-in-the-track, cold, dry snow on top of warmer, wetter man-made snow. While many racers scrambled with warmer wax, which was too sticky, the top racers used colder wax layered far forward on the ski (Swix VR 40 was rumored to have been the winning wax that day - but how they used it was more important).

Have patience and have fun playing on your skis.