

Ski Fit - how to determine if a ski fits you: Andrew Gerlach

Ski Fit

Any ski, skate or classic, must be properly sized based on your weight and a few other factors. Are you more or less fit than you were when your present skis were new? Do you ski more or less than when you purchased your skis? Has your technique improved or declined. Do you ski more aggressively now than in the past or now do you just go out and cruise? If any of this has changed you may need new skis to match the new you.

When I was racing fulltime I would enjoy and benefit from a much stiffer ski (both classic and skate then I do now). Now I ski a classical ski that closes at only 52% of my body weight. With these skis all I have to do is slightly shift my weight and I get tremendous kick with no compromise in glide. On my skating skis I would have raced on the new SkateCut at 125% of my body weight because I had a much more energetic weight transfer than I do now. I now ski on SkateCuts that are at 110% of my body weight. I transfer the same weight but I do it more gradually now and wish to just cruise through the trails. So my present skis need to be softer to match the softer and gentler me. If your present skis fit you then you need to determine if the new ski technology and fresh ski bases will make skiing more enjoyable for you.

Are my classical and touring skis the correct stiffness for me?

If your classical skis are too stiff for your weight and technique, you will not be able to engage the bridge (kick wax or crown pattern) onto the snow during the push-off phase, and you will constantly slip due to lack of kick. If your skis are too soft for your weight, the kick wax or crown pattern will continually be dragging on the snow, and your gliding will be greatly impaired. If your skis are flexed correctly you will find that you will glide easily downhill and carry your momentum on the flats but with your slightest weight shift onto your kicking ski the bridge will close. This will allow your kick wax (or crown) to bind with the snow crystals and your kick to propel you forward. If you struggle getting kick or glide, your skis do not fit you. Most people have classical skis that are too stiff for them which makes going uphill very difficult and classical skiing very frustrating.

Testing the fit of new or old classical skis

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 too 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 have Fischer testboards and the knowledgeable staff that will help you test your old or new skis.

How to make sure your classical skis are not too soft or too stiff, with a testboard.

1. Place the skis on the testboard.
2. Stand evenly with a flat foot on each ski with the front of your toes at the skis balance point or your ski boots in their bindings.
3. Place the testboard slider under the ball of your feet. Test to make sure the slider can move back and forth under your feet. If it cannot move the slider then the skis are too soft for you and you need stiffer skis and this test is over.
4. If the slider does move feely your skis are not too soft and you need to make sure they not too stiff. Put all your weight on one foot and pretend to kick. For an elite racer this will mean rising to the ball of one foot. For a beginner this will mean a slight weigh shift to the front of one foot.
5. Try to pull the slider out from underneath the ski, if you can, the pair of skis is too stiff and you need softer skis. If you can't move the slider than the skis are soft enough to get kick on.

Determining your wax pocket.

1. Place the testboard slider under the ball of your feet.
2. Stand evenly with a flat foot on the skis with the front of your toe at the skis balance point or in its binding.
3. Move the slider forward until it stops; mark this point on the skis sidewall. Repeat this procedure moving from the balance point rearward. Between these two points is your wax pocket for hardwax (thin cold kickwax layers) conditions.
4. Stand on one foot with pressure on one heel, repeat step 3. This determines your warm wax pocket for thicker sticky (klistor and soft hardwax) wax conditions.