

Track Attack Ski Waxing – The Basics

Ski technique and race experience is our priority with the Track Attack group over ski waxing. Wax does protect the ski bases and affect the glide and it is important for Track Attack skiers (and parents) to learn the basics of ski waxing.

Glide wax

Applied to the entire ski base for skate skis but only the tip and tail for classic skis. Glide wax does not go on the 'kick zone' or 'wax pocket' of waxable classic skis.

Based primarily on snow temperature – different colours for different temperatures
warm - yellow, red, purple, blue, green - cold

Humidity and characteristics of snow (new/old/dirty/fresh) are other features that are taken into consideration for more competitive skiers.

Basic paraffin waxes (Swix CH line) are fine for the majority of Track Attack waxing. Fluoro waxes (Swix LF/HF lines and fluoro powders) will repel water better in high humidity situations or with dirty snow but are more expensive. More competitive skiers use these.

Glide wax can usually be chosen and applied the evening prior based on the weather forecast. Any wax is better than bases that have not been waxed in weeks.

Applying Glide Wax

Clean old wax off base and open structure of ski for new wax

~ 10 passes tip to tail with a brass brush

Heat iron to temperature for chosen glide wax (as per wax package)

Drip wax down the length of ski using corner of iron

For classic skis, tape the boundaries of the kick zone with masking tape prior to glide waxing and do not apply glide wax in this area

Iron wax into base from tip to tail smoothly and slowly

Base should not be too hot to touch. Wax should not smoke

Allow the wax to cool. Warm waxes need longer than cold ones.

Scrape the wax from the centre groove and edges with a wax pencil

Scrape the wax from the ski base with a plastic scraper

Brush the ski 3 times with a brass brush

Polish the ski with a nylon brush

Finish the ski with a few passes of a horsehair brush if available

Always scrape and brush from tip to tail

Grip wax

Applied to the kick zone under the boot for waxable classic skis. Allows snow under the ski to form an impression in the wax, which in turn provides friction between the ski and the snow. Waxless skis have 'fish scales' which provide the grip.

Softer waxes (Swix/Rode red/purple) for warmer conditions (snow crystals are duller)

Harder waxes (Swix/Rode blue/green) for colder conditions (snow crystals are sharper)

Chosen based primarily on snow temperature and applied a short time before skiing. Humidity, snow cleanliness, age of snow (freshly fallen vs. old), the distance to be skied and experience also play a factor in choosing grip wax. Different waxes can be combined or layered and the number of layers can be changed depending on conditions.

This can seem complicated but can be kept simple. Try something and if it doesn't work, add another layer of the same or something a little warmer and try again. Too much grip is better than not enough. You should be able to ski up a gentle incline without poles. Some snow should be seen sticking to the wax pocket when the ski is examined.

Applying Grip Wax

Clean old grip wax off (ideally done after skiing) using a soft putty knife followed by a small amount of wax remover and fibrelene paper

Apply a thin layer of chosen grip wax to the wax pocket
Cork in until smooth. Work from tip to tail. Indoors on a wax form is best.
Repeat this process 2 more times. Try to avoid corking the wax onto the glide zone.
When finished the wax should be smooth and thin
Try the skis and add a few more layers or a warmer wax if needed.

The kick zone can be gently roughed up using fine sandpaper and/or a layer of 'binder' wax (something a little harder than the wax of the day) can be applied to the kick zone before applying grip wax to keep the wax on longer. This is not as important for younger Track Attack skiers who ski shorter distances.

Klister

Is used in place of grip wax in icy conditions. Klister doesn't need to be messy and cleanup can be easy if done right away. Type of klister chosen based mainly on temperature. Colours are similar to grip wax. (Universal klister works well most of the time.) Klister skiing can be fast and fun with great grip and glide.

Applying Klister (always use a wax form or bench)

Warm the klister tube with a heat gun or hair dryer
Apply a thin layer to the kick zone in a zigzag or herringbone pattern
Heat the klister on the ski with a heat gun or hair dryer
Smooth with your thumb or the plastic spreader that comes with the klister
Let the skis cool outside, keep the skis clean and don't touch the klister

Cleaning Klister (always use a wax form or bench)

Clean klister off asap after skiing. Do not put skis with klister in your locker or roof box!
Cut a piece of fibrelene the length and width of the kick zone
Place it over the klister and heat with a heat gun
Scrape off the fibrelene and klister with a soft putty knife
Clean the remaining klister off with wax remover and fibrelene
This is easy to do if done right away.

Basic Waxing Equipment

Glide waxes Swix CH Red and Blue
Waxing iron (with temperature control), plastic scraper, groove pencil
Soft Brass brush and a Nylon Brush
A small toolbox to keep your wax kit in
Ski ties to keep ski bases from getting scratched when being stored.

For Waxable classic skis
Grip waxes Rode red/purple, purple/blue and blue/green
Cork for Grip Wax
Universal Klister
Fibrelene paper and wax remover (citrus based)

Wax forms and heat guns are in the wax trailers at Highlands and available for use

Optional Equipment

An adjustable wax form (SkiGo horse or Swix/Toko clamps) which works well for shorter skis
A heat gun or old compact hairdryer
Horsehair brush

Swix CH Yellow, Purple and Green glide waxes
Swix LF Red, Purple and Blue glide waxes
Red and Green klister

A bigger toolbox to keep your wax kit in
A radio to listen to while you wax

There are many different tricks to making waxing easier. It takes some practice but is easier than it may seem at first and can be kept simple. It is important to remember that the goal is not to find the perfect wax but instead to properly maintain your skis so that they grip and glide well. Highlands staff can give you advice on equipment and the many grip and glide waxes that are available and coaches and other parents and skiers are good resources for information or answering questions.