

Guide to selecting snowboarding equipment

Physical Therapy in Central Illinois & Western Illinois for Snowboarding

Welcome to Advanced Rehab & Sports Medicine Services guide for selecting snowboarding gear.

We recommend a few general considerations for selecting your gear in order to stay comfortable and help minimize injury while snowboarding. A lot of gear is required for snowboarding, so if you only snowboard a couple of days per season, you prefer not to cart excess luggage to your snowboarding destination, or you are a beginner or want to try different gear before you buy, then renting snowboarding gear is a good option.

Snowboards:



If you are a beginner, rent your snowboard with bindings already attached. A snowboard technician at the rental shop will help you select the right snowboard and will fit your boots to your snowboard, based on your body weight, height, skiing experience and plans. Beginners will usually be fitted with a shorter, flexible snowboard that is easier to turn at slower speeds than longer and stiffer snowboards. This snowboard will usually reach from the floor to somewhere between your chin and nose. Make sure you know how to fasten and adjust your boots and get your feet (in the snowboard boots) in and out of the binding before you leave the rental shop.

If you want to purchase a snowboard, you will probably have rented first until you are familiar with the snowboards that suit you, and to try out different brands. Look out for shop demo days where you can test run new snowboards. Once you have some snowboarding experience, your choice of snowboard will largely depend on your snowboarding style, but also your weight, height, and budget. The variations (length, width, flexibility and depth of the snowboard) are endless, so speak with experienced snowboard technicians at specialist snowboard retail shops when buying your first board, or if you aren't sure what you need. Don't forget to take your snowboard boots with you when purchasing a snowboard, so that the bindings can be fitted and adjusted for you by the snowboard technician.

Snowboard Boots and Bindings:

Snowboard boots are the key connection between your body movement and your board. Snowboard boots also protect your feet and ankles from the cold and the pressure created during turns.

Snowboard boots should fit snugly all around the foot. There should be just a little toe wiggling room when the boots are fastened and your knees are bent. Loose boots will reduce your control over your snowboard. Boot lining packs down during snowboarding, so make sure you don't have excess space in your boots, especially if you are buying new boots. Boots can usually be modified to give you extra space later, but it is difficult to make boots smaller. If you are renting boots, point out any foot anomalies you might have, so that the snowboard technician can adjust your boots to make sure you are comfortable. You may need to try on several different boots and different brands to get a good fit. To test for a good fit, fasten your feet into your boots, strap into the bindings on the board and transfer your weight from side to side and forwards and backwards as though you are turning your board. Your feet should not move within the boot and you should feel comfortable.

If you have the option to rent boots at the ski hills this is a good option. If your boots get uncomfortable you can have them adjusted or swapped during the day.

Don't tuck your snowboarding pants into your boots, it will create an area of pressure that will likely make you uncomfortable.

If you are purchasing snowboard boots you will need to select a type of boot based on your boarding style. Soft boots are most comfortable, allow the most movement and are suited to freestyle and freeride snowboarding. Hard boots allow little movement and are best for precise riding control at high speeds. Between these two extremes, hybrid boots combine a soft upper with a hard sole, making them a good compromise between comfort and control. Hard boots and hybrid boots need to be bought with matching bindings.

Socks:

For comfort wear only a single pair of socks, preferably socks that extend above the top your snowboarding boots. If you snowboard often technical snowboarding socks are a good investment. Snowboarding socks are thin and made of material that wicks moisture away from your skin. Some cushion key areas of your foot to help prevent blisters.

Helmets:

Snowboard helmets reduce the risk of head injury by at least 29%. (Ref: <http://www.csa.ca/cm/ca/en/search/article/alpine-helmet-standar-make-skiing-and-snowboarding-safer>). They have become popular with expert snowboarders and children. Keep in mind that while you wear a helmet your hearing may be reduced.

Snowboard helmets are insulated and provide impact protection, but only if they fit your head. Once fastened, your helmet should not move around your head when you turn your neck. Don't buy helmets to grow into.

Buy a helmet that has been accredited by the Canadian Standards Association (C.S.A.) as shown by a sticker on new helmets. Prior to the 2009-2010 snow season the C.S.A. accreditation program was not in effect for snowboard helmets. If you own an old helmet, check if your helmet is designed for single-impact

use, or multiple-impact. If it is designed for single-impact and you've had a crash, it's time for a new helmet. Damage to the interior of the helmet may not be visible.

Goggles or sunglasses:

Whatever the weather, you'll need some kind of eye protection. Even on overcast days, you'll be exposed to UV light, not only from above, but also reflected from the snow. For snowboarding in mild conditions sunglasses with 100% UV protection are usually adequate. For colder conditions or in snow, wind or rain, goggles offer better eye protection. Select goggles with 100% UV protection for daytime snowboarding and untinted goggles for night skiing, so you can see the bumps and icy patches.

Clothing:

You'll need a minimum of 3 layers of clothing for snowboarding - a base layer such as thermal underwear (top and bottom), an insulating layer such as a wool, fleece, polypropylene or fibre-pile sweater, and a protective layer (top and bottom) that is wind and waterproof. Weather conditions can change quickly and so can your body temperature - one minute you are hot from the exertion of snowboarding, the next minute you are cold in the wind on a chair-lift that has stopped. Even in dry snowboarding conditions, chances are you'll end up with more than your snowboard in the snow - making waterproof gear necessary at all times.

Snowboard jackets and pants are made from material that keeps water out and allows your skin to breathe. These outer garments are sometimes available for rent. Snowboard pants tend to be a little looser fitting than ski gear to allow for extra movement, particularly for snowboard tricks.

If you are not wearing an insulated helmet, most snowboarding days you'll need a hat (touque, or beanie). Select a hat made of fleece that covers your ears.

Gloves or mittens:

Snowboard gloves or mittens protect your hands during a fall and keep your hands warm. Select waterproof gloves or mittens that wick moisture away from your skin. Mittens may take away some dexterity, but they tend to keep hands warmer in cold conditions.

Wrist guards, hip, knee and elbow pads:

Beginners are especially susceptible to snowboard injury. While learning to balance on a snowboard you are likely to fall, landing on outstretched hands, your hips and bottom and/or your knees. Wearing pads may reduce the amount of bruising from falls onto hard-packed snow. Hip, knee and elbow pads can be worn over your base layer of clothing. Hip pads are pulled on like bike shorts.

Snowboard wrist guards provide some protection against wrist sprains and fractures (Russell et al, 1997, in Clin. J. Sports Medicine. 17(2): 145-150), and are recommended for all snowboard riders, but particularly beginners and those who like to challenge themselves with new skills and snowboarding conditions. Snowboard specific wrist guards are designed to protect against forces that the wrist is typically exposed to during snowboarding falls, and differ from wrist guards designed for other sports such as skating.

Sun and wind protection:

Apply sunscreen and lip balm before you head outdoors for snowboarding. Keep sunscreen in your pocket to reapply as directed on the tube. Even if the day is not windy, you will be traveling at high speeds in cold

weather and a wax based skin protector can help protect against frost bite and wind burn. If you choose not to wear a helmet or hat, wear a cap in mild conditions.

Hydration

Keeping hydrated will help you stay alert while snowboarding, may help to prevent muscle cramps and will help your post snowboarding recovery. The easiest way to meet your hydration needs is to use a hydration backpack. We recommend that you drink about 300-400 mL before you snowboard (ref: http://www.ausport.gov.au/sportscoachmag/nutrition2/pre-event_nutrition), and 250mL (1 cup) of water or sports drink every 20 minutes of snowboarding and for one hour after you snowboard. Your fluid requirements will vary depending on the environmental conditions and your body size. To check that you are adequately hydrating, you can weigh yourself before and after you snowboard. If your weight remains the same then you are likely to be well hydrated.

If you are a beginner and don't want to purchase a hydration pack, you can keep a regular back pack with drinks in a central location, or take cash to purchase drinks and make sure you stop for regular drink breaks throughout the day.