

## WAX TIPS

John Reeves, Former Birkie Learn to Loppet Ski Instructor, Personal Fitness Trainer

**A good wax job can make your skiing experience one of the most rewarding physical challenges that you have ever done, a bad wax job can be one of the most frustrating and exhausting experiences that you will have. Let's take a look at the basics of waxing for Loppets and for your regular training sessions.**

Ideally what we want to do is make the skis glide well downhill and on the flat, and still have the ability to be able to climb hills well. Although you can live without superb glide, its tough to live with skis that don't climb well, in fact its damn frustrating.

Waxing is not that difficult if you do not take it too seriously. The center portion of your skis is waxed with grip wax, which is the wax for the temperature and conditions of that day. This gives you the ability to ski on the flats and uphill well. The tips and tails are waxed with glider wax. Glider wax is applied from the heel plate back to the tail of the ski and from about 30-35 cm. in front of the toe piece forward to the tip of the ski. The portion from the heel plate forward (about 40-50 cm.) is where the grip wax goes.

**To apply glider wax**, use a waxing iron or an old clothes iron, preferably without steam holes, and set the temperature to about the polyester control point. The iron should be hot enough to melt the glider wax but not hot enough so that it smokes. With the point of the iron aimed down towards the ski, drip glider wax on to the glide zones (tip and tail) of your skis. Now melt the dripped wax into the ski by moving the iron back and forth over the glide zones. The last pass of the iron over the skis should be quite slow, leaving a glistening surface behind the iron. Don't leave the iron on one spot too long or you will bubble the base of your skis. Let the wax cool indoors for 30-45 minutes then use a plastic scraper to scrape off the excess wax, don't forget the groove(s). Brush off any excess wax with a nylon brush. Glide waxing only needs to be done again under three conditions, first, if the base looks "whitish" or there appears to be no glider left, second, the night before a Loppet or third, if there is a severe temperature change.

On the **kick zone** area we need to initially put a **base wax** or a cold hard kick wax such a "Polar" or "Special Green". Try not to get any glide wax on your kick zone or the kick wax will not stick to the skis. It is best to clean the kick wax zone first with wax remover, at the beginning of the season, but be careful to protect your newly applied glider wax.

**To apply the base wax** or hard kick wax, crayon the wax on to the ski, not too thick, then use your iron to smooth it out. Wipe your iron off each time you use it so that glider waxes and kick waxes don't get mixed together. Crayon and iron the base coat on to the kick zone 2 or 3 times, let it cool for 2 or 3 minutes then cork (synthetic cork) it to a smooth, even surface. We have now protected the base and given ourselves a surface that our wax of the day will adhere to.

The next layer(s) of wax is **your kick wax**. If the snow is new choose a wax that is a bit colder than that temperature recommended on the container. If the snow is old (over 48 hours) choose a wax of the temperature indicated on the container. If the humidity is high (over 75%), the tracks look glazed or are made up of refrozen snow than choose a wax that is a bit warmer than is indicated on the container.

For your first layer choose a wax slightly warmer than you think you need. Crayon it on to the ski, over top of the base wax; then iron it in, if you have an iron available, or cork it in well if you don't. Next, put on two or three thin layers of the wax for the conditions of the day and cork in each layer. Most people do not use enough wax on their skis and or they don't cork it smooth enough. Take a little extra time so that you don't have to stop and re-wax.

***The most important aspect of grip waxing is to get it smooth. Try to get each layer smooth. The smoother the grip wax the better it will grip.***

**What if the wax doesn't work?** Think TLW (Thicker, Longer, Warmer). First add an additional layer or two to the wax of the day you are using. Second, if "T" doesn't work, extend the front wax pocket. In other words, wax further toward the tip of the ski. Never extend the wax pocket behind the heel. Third, try a warmer wax. Remember TLW when your wax doesn't work.

**When do we clean the wax off the kick zone?** Generally we don't unless we need to use klisters or the wax becomes too thick and it impedes your skiing. Let the wax layers build up, it tends to improve during the aging process