



Instructor's Corner

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What kind of equipment should I buy to improve my game?

Shoes

There is no question that the first investment you should make as a new curler is in a pair of good curling shoes. Dedicated curling shoes will help you get a better, longer, more effortless slide that will allow you to deliver the stone more easily. We recommend that new curlers start with shoes with a teflon slider with at least 5/32" thickness. Thicker sliders are faster than thinner sliders. It is possible to buy "beginner" shoes with thinner sliders, but we find that new curlers quickly outgrow these. If you find your shoes too fast to handle initially, apply sturdy clear packing tape or duct tape to the heel of your slider until you get more comfortable with your shoes. Most folks can remove this tape after only a few games and enjoy the full benefits of the thicker slider.

We don't recommend any particular brand—we have curled on Asham, Goldline, and Balance Plus shoes—but can give advice about which shoes fit wide or narrow feet, and are durable. As of this writing, top-of-the-line shoes like the Balance Plus 500 are going for \$229. You can get more basic shoes for around \$140. If you have hard-to-fit feet, you can purchase a pair of good-fitting, flat-soled shoes and have Balance Plus attach grippers and sliders for around \$150.

Don't forget to buy a pull-on gripper to cover your slider when sweeping, and also a spare if you curl more than once a week. Toe-coating is an option for some shoes as is recommended to get a faster slide.

Brushes

The second item to consider purchasing is curling brush. Most competitive curlers use brush with an articulating head. There are a plethora of models to choose from. You can purchase a good quality curling broom from \$70-\$160. The less expensive brooms have a heavier fiberglass handle, while the most expensive have lightweight carbon fiber handles. Composite brushes fall somewhere in between. The lighter models are highly recommended. Although it doesn't seem like it would be that important, if you ever use one of the super-light carbon fiber brushes in a game, you will never want to go back to a heavier model. Handles come in two sizes and a plethora of finishes: most men purchase the 1 ½ inch diameter handle; the 1 inch diameter handle is favored by many women and those with smaller hands. BalancePlus also makes a tapered handle that is 1 inch in diameter at the top and 1 ¼ inch in diameter at the bottom. The Hardline broom is tapered in reverse. As of this writing, the lightest models available are the BalancePlus LiteSpeed, the Hardline, and the Goldline Air. Don't forget to order one or more additional brush heads. The Hardline brushes come with a replaceable fabric cover that is extremely waterproof and durable. These will last 1-2 years. The other model brushes have replaceable heads that will have to be changed 2-4 times a year depending on how often you curl. If you intend on curling in competitive events, you should purchase at least one brush cover that meets World Curling Federation requirements. Conforming brush heads are embossed with a special code to indicate that are certified for competitive use.

Stopwatch

As you become more experienced, you may benefit from carrying a stopwatch to time stones. (There is a whole 'nother article on Timing in Instructor's Corner about how to use a stopwatch to improve your game.) All the major curling retailers carry curling stopwatches. However, if you are over 50, or visually challenged like so many of us you might want to seek out a model with large numbers. Accusplit makes a very rugged stopwatch with a large display for about \$20. I attach mine to a belt loop using a carabiner clipped to the lanyard, drawn up to the appropriate length for ease of use but not so long it drags on the ice during delivery.

If you want to know more about these topics and more, check out the Instructor's Corner archive on the [Instruction Page](#) at the Utica Curling Club web site.

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Good curling! Have a question or suggestion for Instructor's Corner?

Send an email to curlingschool@uticacurlingclub.org