

🎵 These boots are made for skiing 🎵

I promised a review of ski boots in the last Newsletter, so here goes. I will only be looking at track skiing boots (not off-track ones), and prices are approximations only. Also, there are many boots out there on the market, and the fact that particular makes or models don't appear in this article says nothing about whether they are good or not; I've simply made a choice amongst boots which are fairly widely available and which I know something about. The boots reviewed here can be used equally on roller skis and on snow; specific roller ski boots are not covered by this article, although there are several models of these on the market. Finally, don't be put off by the word "racing" in a boot's name, these are equally suited to non-racing.

Before we come to specific models, let's look at the three generic types, namely:

- classic shoes,
- combi boots,
- skate boots.

Classic shoes do not offer any ankle support and, consequently, can feel unstable for beginners and novices, and they are not generally suitable for skating.

Skate boots, at the other extreme, offer good foot and ankle support but are specifically intended to be used for skate only; they are not suitable for classic skiing, even if some people claim that they are if you keep the ankle support loose or undone.

Combi boots fall between the two and they can be used for both techniques.

Assuming that you're thinking about investing in footwear, we're faced with a similar conundrum as buying roller skis which we considered in the last Newsletter. It's easy to address the two extremes: beginners and advanced skiers and the answer is similar as for roller skis. Firstly, for beginners/novices, don't buy anything until you're certain that skiing is for you and, instead, use Club boots (we have a good collection now, as a result of recent investments!). If you're an advanced skier, you will certainly have two pairs of boots: dedicated boots for skate and dedicated boots for classic.

For intermediates, the choice is between one pair of combi boots, one pair of boots for your preferred style and hired boots for the other, or one pair of classic boots and one pair of skate boots. There's no easy answer to this; you will undoubtedly have a better skiing experience with two pairs of boots (especially if you have your own rollers skis/snow skis and want to practice away from Club




sessions), but this comes at higher cost. Buying one pair and renting the other is cheaper and gives you a good experience, but makes practicing classic on your own, if you opt for skate boots, impossible, while owning combi boots is the cheapest purchase option but might not give you the best skating experience.


There are two other pieces of advice which you might find helpful:

1. If you can, try the boots on before you buy them (not always easy if buying from the internet, but you can try Club boots). Different manufacturers use slightly different lasts for their boots, and it is worth taking the trouble to ensure that the boots you opt for properly fit your feet and are comfortable. This is even more important for skate boots, which these days can be rather rigid, and there's little more miserable than trying to ski for any length of time in poorly-fitting boots, especially if they are too tight.
2. Secondly, do not listen to people who say that, for classic skiing, you *must* use classic shoes. I've used combi boots for classic skiing for many years now, mainly because they give me that little bit of extra ankle support especially when down-hilling and cornering and, in my opinion, there's no compromise in performance.




As I said above, the specific models which appear below are only examples. How they are described needs to be taken with a pinch of salt (no manufacturer is going to admit that their boots offer almost no support whatsoever and are 'bottom of the range'!). In general, there's a good correlation between price and 'quality' but, equally, if you're a novice/ intermediate skier, the need for and benefits of having top-of-the-range boots is perhaps questionable. Finally, all of these boots are compatible with Salomon ProLink and Rossignol NNN bindings.

Skate boots




 A high-performance skate boot with a black and red color scheme. The word 'ALPINA' is printed in large white letters on the side, and '3.0 elite' is visible near the heel.	<p>Alpina Elite 3.0 Skate</p> <p>Well yes, one of the best skate boots on the market. Described as precise, rigid and ultra-efficient, it offers fantastic sensations to the most demanding skaters. Definitely not to be bought without trying them on, and they come in at £650! Let's be a bit more realistic, shall we?</p>
 A black skate boot with white 'ALPINA' branding on the side and a red accent on the toe area.	<p>Alpina Racing Skate</p> <p>At £170, these are more than adequate for general skating and racing. The design gives good rigidity for ski control, but the body and collar are more forgiving than fully rigid skate boots. My skate boots are an earlier version of this model.</p>
 A black and red skate boot with 'ROSSIGNOL' printed in white on the side.	<p>Rossignol X-ium W.C. skate</p> <p>A popular, high-performance boot with a lot of carbon to provide good rigidity and power transfer. Can be found for £250, and have thermo-adjustable liners which can be heat-moulded around your feet for a customized fit and comfort if bought in a shop.</p>
 A black skate boot with red accents and 'ROSSIGNOL' branding on the side.	<p>Rossignol X-10 skate</p> <p>Described as having solid performance for skating, but with more comfort than racing boots. Also benefit from mouldable liners if bought in a shop and, at as little as £132, these would be a good first boot.</p>
 A black skate boot with blue accents and 'salomon' branding on the side.	<p>Salomon S/Race Carbon Skate</p> <p>Salomon has a range of skate boots which are all of similar design and, apart from the S/lab (which is top of the range and expensive), they are all in the same broad price range. This model is described as delivering the most precise foot envelopment you have ever felt, they are completely PVC-free (so good for the environment) and highly waterproof. They cost about £250.</p>

	<p>Salomon RS10</p> <p>A cheaper version of the above, these boots offer reliable edge grip, enhanced stability and easy access to long gliding phases. Salomon describes them as suitable for a wide range of abilities, from novice to upper advanced. They retail for £200</p>
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Combi boots

	<p>Alpina Race combi</p> <p>My favourite boots for classic skiing, and I've been using versions of this boot for many years now. Alpina describes them as specifically designed for beginners (<i>How very dare they? Ed</i>), and they are a better fit for wider feet. Although suitable for both styles, they are geared a little more towards classic (i.e. more flexible) than skating. They retail for about £165.</p>
	<p>Rossignol X-8 SC combi</p> <p>An earlier version of this boot used to be my favourite, when I had a pair! Described as suitable for both training and racing, and for racers and tourers, these boots are good for both techniques and claim to offer excellent temperature regulation, comfort and warmth. They can be found for about £190, and I happily wore mine for so many years that they eventually fell to bits!</p>
	<p>Salomon Pro combi SC</p> <p>As with skate boots, Salomon has a range of combis which are all of similar design but different prices. This model is new, good for both techniques but aimed slightly more towards skate and popular for beginner roller skiers and skiers. This model even has Kevlar laces, to save those few milligrams, and retails for £180. Earlier models are still available for about £140.</p>

Classic shoes

	<p>Rossignol X8</p> <p>Shoes designed for intermediate skiers, these offer a good compromise between performance and comfort, and they keep your feet warm and dry for about £130. As with all classic shoes, though, don't be fooled by the high cuff; this is for watertightness but there's no support above the ankles. Classic shoes are therefore better for snow skiing than roller skiing.</p>
	<p>Alpina ECL Pro</p> <p>A few years old now, this model remains a popular choice, offering a snug but comfortable fit and high performance. The technology in this shoe is very close to World Cup shoes, but for a very reasonable price. At £150, this would be a fine investment.</p>
	<p>Salomon RC8</p> <p>At just £110, this is a good entry-level model with soft flex and medium width, aimed at touring skiers and occasional racers. The zip design ensures watertightness.</p>

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