

## Lacrosse Equipment Primer

Let's start with a disclosure: The following is based on our experiences in buying lacrosse equipment for boys at the youth level. We are presenting this as, "If it were me..." Certainly there will be other opinions and experiences, but the equipment question comes up so many times, we felt it might be easier to summarize in one place.

The approach is simple; how to get good equipment at a fair price. No one wants to spend \$350 plus outfitting their son for a sport they may not want to play! This is primarily for ages 5-10. Once they hit 6<sup>th</sup> grade, most boys either know if they want to continue playing and know what they like in equipment.

### Here we go...

#### Helmets

Helmets are about size, comfort and most important...safety. Cascade is an industry standard and while there are other very good companies, these fit the bill for our purposes. You can go the Cascade site for details on the different helmets and sizes( <https://cascadelacrosse.com/home/helmet-safety-booklet/>)

*Cascade CS is the smallest helmet you can buy and is good for most boys up until 10 years old.* They are easily strapped in using two Velcro straps in the back. Brand new they are \$109, but you can get them in lightly used for \$30 or less (We'll elaborate where to buy later) There is also a new CS-R which is \$140 new and has advance padding compared to the CS. We typically buy white because it is readily available, it's uniform and generic enough to be used anywhere. We can supply helmet stickers if you ask.

If you need a larger size, you can buy CPVR, CPXR, R and S (S being the latest and greatest). The R & S will fit most boys up until they are in high school. If you buy used, some of these helmets do not have the safety strapping. Other than the CS or CS-R; **DO NOT BUY ANY HELMET THAT DOES NOT HAVE THE SPR SYSTEM IN IT!** It is a ratcheting system that snugs the helmet to the boys head and looks like this.



There are plenty of older model helmets for real cheap and are still usable; but the safety of the newer helmets is far superior.

#### Shoulder Pads

There are shoulder pads and there are liners, the latter being for more advanced players in high school. Shoulder pads run from \$24 to \$175 new. Used are anywhere from \$10-\$35. There are a lot of choices and most offer the ample protection needed at the younger age. They *do* advance in protection as the boys get older. For example, putting a 5 year old in an STX Stinger (all soft padding) is fine, but probably not for an 8 year old (preferably some hard shell in addition to padding).

So this is a purchase that you can expect to only get a few years out of it. Come to think of it, you won't want to deal with the fragrant odor a few years can create, so maybe that's a good thing!

Sizing is pretty generic (chest diameter):

- 28 to 36 inches = XS
- 38 to 40 inches = S
- 40 to 42 inches = M
- 42 to 44 inches = L

We are not outfitting football players! The bigger the equipment does not mean better. Pads should fit snugly and allow freedom of movement. A key point to consider, beginning in 2022, all field players in boys' lacrosse must wear protection for commotio cordis that meets the NOCSAE standards (National Operating Committee on Standards for Athletic Equipment). In layman's term, it is a heart protection pad that is inserted either behind or on front of chest pads. Most pads have these already installed now.

### **Gloves**

Gloves are commonly sized 8"(XS), 10" (Sm), 12" (M), 13" (L) and 14"(XL). They are some 6" (XXS) if you can find them. Most 5-8 year olds are 8" and some start 10" around 9-10 years. If you've been to our clinics, you have seen the gloves we use. Typical brands are Under Armor, STX, Maverik and each one runs a little larger or smaller than each other. New gloves are about \$29.00 a pair. Used can be \$10-\$15. (Be careful...some used come with some odors!) They should be snug to allow for better feel and control of the stick. Do not buy larger gloves thinking your son will grow into them. It will make his catching and throwing more difficult to learn.

### **Elbow pads**

Most "soft" pads will do the trick until the boys reach 5/6<sup>th</sup> grade and stick checking comes into play. From there, some boys prefer hard plastic shells. Elbow pads run new between \$29 up to over \$140. Used or on sale can be \$15-\$25. Some of the real cheaper ones kind of lack in fit and protection.

The biggest issue we see are pads that are so big, it restricts the arms from moving. Again like gloves, a snug fit that properly bends at the elbow will allow for a better range of motion. This link shows how to fit elbow pads : [How to Fit Elbow Pads](#)

Like gloves, manufacturers sizes run different, but most are in the chart below:

Lacrosse Elbow Pad Sizing									
	Youth			Junior			Senior		
Size	S	M	L	S	M	L	S	M	L
Inches	7.5	8.5	9.5	10.5	11.5	12.5	13.5	14.5	15.5+

## Lacrosse Stick (aka "Crosse)

Aside from the helmet, this is one of the most important pieces of equipment, so let's spend a little more time on it.

According to US Lacrosse; boys 6 yrs. and under "should" not have a stick that stands higher than their waist. We have yet to see a stick cut that small, but suffice it to say, the stick is shorter than most.

Until they reach 5<sup>th</sup> grade (10 yrs.), all players sticks must be between 37"-42" (end to end including head) From there, defense sticks are introduced from 54" to 72". This focus is on the shorter "attack" stick. If you need a shorter shaft, you can always cut it down to size. (Before you do that, you might want to check if anyone has an older shaft they are willing to get rid of)

Do NOT buy anything that says "Mini" ...it's cute, but impractical.

New sticks run from \$35 to \$275, depending on the brand, design of the head as well as the shaft. Used can be anywhere from \$5 and up.

At the 5-10 age group, wider heads prove easier for catching and lighter sticks are better for control. That being said, just about any stick will work...*if it is properly strung!* A good stringing job has a pocket that catches and throws well. The majority of new youth sticks are strung overseas by line workers who have never seen a lacrosse game or even know what a pocket is! Unless specified by the manufacturer, the mesh and stringing materials are sub-par and will not last a season before they "bag out", meaning stretch to the point where they can no longer throw a ball correctly. When a stick cannot throw correctly, the boy has no fun and that means he loses interest. That is why we have been restringing our rental sticks and so that the players will have the proper equipment to play with.

So buying a new affordable stick with a good string job can be difficult. But there are options:

If you want new:

- Go to a pro store like Lacrosse Unlimited and have them set you up. Yes, you will pay more, but you will get a stick he can use for years. If you buy from them and want to restring, many times they will do so just for the cost of the stringing materials (anywhere from \$15-\$25)
- You can buy a stick new anywhere (Dicks, Ebay, etc.) and go to the stringing section of the Ocean Youth Lax and ask one of the high school boys to restring (usually \$10-\$15 plus cost of stringing materials)
- Buy a stick and ask one of the coaches to restring (you pay cost of materials). This could be risky as we are a little out of practice!
- Or...

There are companies out there that, for a little bit more, sell very good youth equipment for \$20-\$30 more that have excellent stringing. This is relatively new to the lax world and to touch on a couple:

- Stringking Complete-\$69-\$99 depending on the model. Stringking is a major mesh manufacturer who has come out with a youth stick that is properly strung with the right materials to provide kids with years of enjoyment.
- Warrior EVO Warp-the \$99 one, has a specially designed pocket which throws perfect every time. It has a wide head which is great for catching. I could see a kid up to about 10 years old using this before its time to move on. They have a Warp Mini \$39 and a Warp Jr \$69, but I don't see them being used much past 7 years old.

Now with used sticks...you can get superb equipment for a bargain and then have it restrung. For example, SidelineSwap.com had a 1 year old Brine head (new was \$75) with some scrapes in it for \$9.00 including shipping. Take it to a shop to restrung and you have a magnificent head for about \$40!

**Quick side note on mesh:** Depending on the abuse a stick takes (mud, rain, snow) and whether or not the stinging is being maintained, it is not uncommon to have to restrung a stick every year or two. Again, this also goes back to the quality of mesh you start with. Most kids use what is referred to as "Soft mesh". (Hard or waxed mesh is a little more difficult to learn with). Some are coated, some are made from a waterproof material and some are just cheap garbage. Take the advice of the pros when getting restrung. They want your business back and pretty much steer you the right way!

### **Starter Packages-**

There are quite a few good complete start packages available on line and in local stores like Lacrosse Unlimited or Dicks. For example, Lacrosse Unlimited has a CS helmet, gloves, elbow and chest pads combo for \$159 on sale. Not bad considering the helmet alone is \$109 new. SportStop.com has a complete set of STX, with the new CS-R helmet, PLUS a stick for \$179. These are good solid starter packages that you should be able to use up to 10 years old. You may have to restrung though but the equipment itself is very good (starting to see a theme?)

**Mouthguard**-get one that has a thin tether to attach to the helmet. Once you find one he likes, buy another one, maybe two more...trust us on this!

**Protective Cup**-Oh the dreaded protective cup discussion. Well...it's not that hard as it used to be (no pun intended). Cups are now sold as soft slip in units or built into shorts and a lot more comfortable than the dinner plates they had when we were kids. Getting your son to wear one is still a battle!

### **Equipment Bag-**

There ARE lacrosse specific bags and mainly to advertise, so any duffle bag will also work as long as the equipment fits. Many of the lacrosse specific backpacks have special hooks to store your crosse and the kids love walking into practice with their "gear bag" having their stick holstered.

### **Cleats:**

Honestly at this age...Any old cleats will do for now.

### **Where to Buy?**

**Used/Lightly used** equipment of all sorts is available everywhere. These are some of the top choices:

- Letgo.com (local buy/sell like Craig's list)
- Mercari.com (like Craigs List but easier)
- SidelineSwap.com (Craigs List for sports only...real simple)
- Ebay.com

Quick side note...the program has bought a dozen CS helmets, nearly all one season old, for \$30 or less including delivery. There is a lot of great used equipment out there, especially at the youth level. Have patience and know what you want, pull the trigger when it comes up.

**New equipment** is on line or in person. Sign up for the sites and you get wind of the specials before they are all gone. A lot of times they sell old stock for a bargain price, letting you get better equipment for the dollar.

- All of the above auction sites sell new stuff too. SidelineSwap.com had 3 brand new, excellent youth shoulder pads for \$10 each!
- **Dicks Sporting Goods**-one of our sponsors. You will generally pay retail price.
- **Lacrosse Unlimited**, Red Bank (and online)-Prices are retail but mention you're from Ocean and sometimes you get a % discount. They can custom string a stick as well. If you get a good used stick for cheap, paying them \$35 to restring is sometimes better than buying new!
- [Lax.com](http://www.lax.com)-first and foremost, this site has a lot of advice on buying equipment <https://www.lax.com/complete-lacrosse-guides>. Second, they have a lot of sales
- [LacrosseMonkey.com](http://LacrosseMonkey.com)-great Black Friday Deals. Sign up for this one.
- [LacrosseBallStore.com](http://LacrosseBallStore.com)-Actually located in Freehold but does not have a storefront. Good deals come up from time to time, but shipping from Freehold is not worth it. Order and take the drive.
- [Sportstop.com](http://Sportstop.com)-online big box store that has some good deals, especially in bundled equipment

### **In closing**

There are a ton of options out there and quite frankly, with a little patience and searching; one could easily outfit a 5-10 year old for \$80 (Lightly used Helmet \$30, Brand New Gloves/Shoulder Pads/Elbow Pads \$30 and a Lightly used stick \$20). You could even get it down to about \$50 if you search enough. It really comes down to how long you think he will be playing vs the investments. On the other hand, one could avoid the wait and buy a new complete outfit for \$160 and it will last quite a few years. But hopefully this has provided you with some guidance as to what and where to go. We want nothing better than an enthusiastic group of boys playing well!!

A last thought is that once your son has outgrown a piece of equipment and it is still in good shape, consider donating it to the program. There are some players who cannot afford anything and we rely on donations to keep players coming back!

If you have any questions of course, please don't hesitate to ask!