



BACKYARD RINK - FAQs, TIPS & TRICKS

Building Your Rink

Follow along with these steps to build your very own backyard rink.

- 1. Make a plan before building anything. Map out where the rink is going and figure out your optimal rink size.**
 - I. An important factor to consider when determining the right size of your rink is who will be using it. As a general guideline, about 100 square feet (3.5 sq.-m) per skater will allow for everyone on the ice to have enough space to skate without bumping into each other all the time.
 - II. TIP: Try to find a spot in the shade for your rink, this will prevent the ice melting when the sun is out!
 - III. TIP: Think ahead - consider where your water source is, and how the rink will drain in the spring. Be a good neighbour by not flooding someone else's yard!
 - IV. TIP: Keep in mind the material you're going to use for the framework/perimeter. The most common materials used are plywood and or 2" x 6" lumber. Both materials are readily available in 8' lengths so if your width and length are divisible by 4' or 8' this will simplify your build.

3. Plan out your rink build:

- I. Measure & stake the four corners of your rink. In order to determine whether your yard is uneven, you'll want to run a string line from the high side of your yard to the low. Using a line level, you'll quickly be able to determine if there is a drop off in your yard. Ideally, you want 4" (10cm) of ice on the high side. That means, if your yard drops off by 6" (15cm), your boards on the low side will need to be 6" higher to accommodate the water level.
- II. Once you have your four stakes set and you're happy with the location, you need to square up your rink. The simplest way is to run a tape measure on the diagonal from corner to corner creating an X. At the intersection the numbers should be the same. If not, adjust one corner as required.

2. Make a plan before building anything. Map out where the rink is going and figure out your optimal rink size.

- I. Shovel the snow away before the build - snow buildup underneath will cause uneven ice making
- II. The best time to set up your backyard rink is just prior to when the temperature drops below freezing. This is for two reasons. First, you want to be all set up and ready to fill/flood when the freezing weather arrives. Second, it's a lot easier and more comfortable to be working outside and installing stakes/brackets into the ground when it's 50°F (10°C) and the ground isn't frozen.



4. Assemble the framework:

- I. Create a base layer around the perimeter - this is the part that gets secured into the ground. Pre-drill two holes on each base layer.
- II. Fasten a frame at a 90-degree angle on top of the base layer to act as the vertical support for the rink - the part that keeps the water in the rink.
- III. Repeat to complete the frame around the area you staked out in step 3. Make sure you have enough length to create vertical support around the perimeter of the rink.
- IV. Hammer two spikes into each of the base layer boards to secure them into the ground.
- V. from corner to corner creating an X. At the intersection the numbers should be the same. If not, adjust one corner as required.

5. Rink liner & how to prevent heat absorption:

- I. Use a white plastic or poly tarp to prevent heat absorption from the sun and to save your grass in the spring.
- II. Lay the tarp down and secure it around the framework with a staple gun.
- III. Leave enough slack on the tarp to lessen the tension on the tarp when the ice freezes.
- IV. If you tear the tarp, patch it up with duct tape.
- V. Make sure the outside of your boards are a light colour (or covered with the white tarp) to prevent heat absorption.

6. Rink board installation:

- I. Once the tarp is in, cut down plywood to create boards around the entire rink.
- II. Secure the boards to the framework from step 4 with screws.
- III. Consider using leftover wood from the framework to create braces for the boards as added support.
- IV. Add pipe foam to the top edge of the rink boards to soften the edges and complete the rink build.

Making Ice

Your rink is built. Time to ice it!

1. Optimal ice freezing conditions:

- I. Let the ground cool down before filling.
- II. Wait until nighttime temperatures drop to 18 to 23°F (-5 to -8°C) and daytime temperatures stay below 36°F (2°C) before filling.
- III. Cold nights are key, since you'll build more ice during those lower nighttime temperatures than the higher daytime temperatures which can melt it. You will be gaining thickness each night.

2. Filling:

- I. Fill the rink with ½ - 2 cm layers of water at a time and let them freeze in between. Thin layers avoid air pockets and give you a smoother ice surface. For best results, use a fine spray nozzle on your hose.
- II. TIP: You get the smoothest ice from a light flood of warm water at night when it is the coldest.

3. Testing the ice:

- I. Test the ice by gently pushing down on it. If you can't push it down very easily, then try and step on it. If you hear cracking, STAY OFF, and give it some more time to set.
- II. A good finished ice thickness is at least 4" (10cm). This will give you a solid base to work with and usually enough thickness to maintain ice during the mid-winter thaws that have become increasingly common. We recommend 6"(15cm) of ice if adults will be using the rink.
- III. TIP: Try not to use salt around your rink, as salt will leave bad spots in the ice. Boots can often track salt from the roads onto your rink, so don't walk on it or make sure your boots are clean before you do.

Ice Maintenance

Tips and tricks to maintain your ice.

1. Adding more water.

- I. When adding more water to existing ice, you must make sure the edges of the rink are NOT attached to the tarp on the sides. If the ice is attached, adding new water will raise the ice and the tarp, possibly tearing it.
- II. To prevent this, you can either run your hose along the edges to melt the ice, or break the ice 12-18" from the edge of the rink and remove the broken ice. Aiming the hose down one of the sides of the rink (to create a whirlpool effect around the edges) will help the edges stay free while refilling.
- III. Move the hose to different areas of the rink.

2. Fixing holes, cracks and air bubbles in the ice.

- I. You can do two things to repair and help prevent further cracks:
- II. Scrape some ice shavings or fresh snow, pack them in the hole, wet it and then smooth it over with a puck and let it freeze.
- III. Apply many "thin" layers of water/ice on the rink, letting each layer freeze before adding another layer. This will give you a harder layered ice surface on the top and be less prone to cutting, chipping, and cracking as long as that "layered" ice stays frozen.