

# Selecting Kickboxing Equipment

## Physical Therapy in Merced & Atwater for Kickboxing

Welcome to Yosemite Physical Therapy's guide to selecting kickboxing equipment.

We recommend a few general considerations for selecting your kickboxing equipment in order to protect yourself and minimize injury while kickboxing.



The mandatory use of protective equipment in kickboxing varies. Some equipment is considered mandatory, some recommended, and some simply not allowed. Which equipment is used depends on the style of kickboxing that is being done, the organization that is governing the kickboxing matches, the level of skill of the kickboxer, and the age of the competitors. If you are already a kickboxer or are keen to start, it is recommended that you check with the competitive governing body in your area to clarify which equipment listed below is mandatory and which is optional. In regards to preventing injury, it usually holds that the more protective equipment, the better. However, one needs to consider that some equipment on the body can itself cause serious injury when used as a weapon in sports such as kickboxing, therefore it is often not allowed at higher levels of competition.

### Headgear

As with any sport, headgear protects the brain, skull and face from impact and can seriously lessen the impact of any blow to these areas.

Most kickboxing sanctions require junior or amateur competitors or those under a certain age limit to use protective headgear when kickboxing. Professionals in competition may or may not be required to wear headgear depending on the governing federation rules. From an injury perspective, headgear is always recommended when it is an option during competition, and is highly recommended during sparring.

Kickboxing headgear is thickly padded and variations involve designs that extend out to protect the cheekbones as well as designs that provide more protection in the front of the face making it more difficult for a glove to make contact directly with the facial bones. Unfortunately these designs, although offering superior facial protection sometimes have the disadvantage of limiting the boxer's visual field.

### Gloves

Kickboxing gloves are designed to both protect your hands and to absorb some of the impact of the blow being delivered. Using a good quality glove that is designed for the purpose you need it for (sparring, competition, or bag/focus pad work) is very important so engaging the assistance of a kickboxing sporting

expert when choosing your gloves is recommended.

Kickboxing gloves are measured both by their glove size, but also by their weight, which is generally between 8oz-16oz. The heavier the glove, the more protection it provides. Bigger sized gloves are not always heavier, so be sure to take this into consideration when choosing your gloves. Heavier weighted gloves are used mainly for practice (sparring) and with more junior or amateur boxers whereas the lighter gloves are used in professional competition.

Gloves should fit snug but comfortably to offer the most protection. Gloves that are too loose allow a greater potential for injury as will those that are too snug. Keep in mind when choosing a size that the glove will stretch with use. Most kickboxing gloves used now have the thumb insert attached to the main glove so as to avoid thumb ligament sprains. Don't forget to put your hand wraps on (see below) when trying on any gloves you plan to wear wraps with!

### **Hand Wraps**

Hand wraps are used to protect the small bones in the wrist and hand from injury. As with gloves, the use of wraps protects not only yourself, but also your opponent by absorbing some of the energy of the punch. Wraps come in different materials as well as different lengths. Which material you choose depends on what is most comfortable. These days most wraps are made with an elastic component that increases comfort. Smaller hands should use shorter wraps to avoid extra material being cumbersome.

Learning to put your wraps on well will take practice so be sure to have someone experienced teach you how to properly do it in order to maximize protection for your wrist and hand.

### **Mouth Guard**

Mouthguards are designed to absorb some of the impact from blows to the jaw and teeth and are mandatory to be worn when kickboxing. Standard mouth guards are available in most sporting stores, but they tend to be bulky and do not provide good protection due to their inability to mold to individual teeth configurations. A moldable plastic mouth guard is also available in sporting stores and is a superior alternative to the standard mouth guard. These types of guards are made from a soft moldable plastic that can be melted in hot water and then placed in the mouth so that they mold to the shape of the teeth. These guards can still feel bulky and therefore may interfere with breathing, however, they are recommended above the standard guard. If you are an avid kickboxer it would be worthy to get a custom fitted mouth guard to provide maximum protection. These guards are made by a dental professional and molded from a special shock absorbing material. Custom mouth guards mold exactly to the fit of the individual boxer's mouth anatomy and therefore provide maximum protection.

### **Jockstrap & Cup/Athletic Supporter**

An athletic supporter is an important piece of equipment for males in any contact sport and kickboxing is no exception. The jockstrap and cup provide solid protection to the genitalia which in turn reduces the number and severity of injuries incurred due to impact to this area. It should be well fitted and feel comfortable when kicking and moving. If possible, wear similar underwear when training as to those you would wear in competition just to ensure the athletic supporter always feels comfortable.

### **Chest Protectors**

Chest protectors are worn by women but are not mandatory in all styles of kickboxing or under every federation's rules. Chest protectors should fit snug but not rub or irritate the skin when punching or kicking. Again, the assistance of a sports equipment specialist familiar with kickboxing is crucial to choosing chest gear that provides adequate protection while at the same time feels comfortable for you.

### **Shinguards**

Shinguards, or sometimes called shinpads, protect the sensitive bony area of the shin. The use of shinguards in kickboxing varies with the different styles of the sport as well as with the rules of the different sanctioning bodies, however for many styles of kickboxing shinguards are mandatory. Unlike shinguards for other sports, kickboxing shinguards are made of a different material and are designed for a different purpose so be sure to buy those made specifically for kickboxing. Most shinguards also offer protection down over the front of the ankle and onto the top of the foot which greatly assists in decreasing injury to these bones, particularly the small bones of the foot.

Generally you will choose your shinguards depending on the style of kickboxing that you are partaking in as this relates to the types of kicks you will be delivering and receiving. Pads may have thick or thin padding and may be held on by velcro straps or by a velcro sock. No matter which pad you choose you should ensure that they are comfortable, allow you to move freely, and stay fastened to your leg when kicking. Once again, the expertise of a sporting goods representative knowledgeable in kickboxing is very useful when choosing your shin pads.

### **Clothing**

The clothing you will need for competitive kickboxing depends on the rules of the organization you will be competing under as well as the style of kickboxing you are partaking in. Either long pants to the ankle or shorts are required for male kickboxers however no shirt is worn by male kickboxers. Female kickboxers also wear either long pants or shorts, but will also wear a form fitting long or short tank top.

When training, it is recommended to wear similar clothing as that used in competition. Breathable material that is not too loose particularly for the upper body will allow you to punch and kick freely.

### **Footgear**

No shoes are worn for kickboxing.

The use of footguards or pads in kickboxing varies with the different styles of the sport as well as the different sanctioning bodies. Some rules allow for amateurs but not professionals to use foot protection.

When used, foot guards should fit snugly and securely stay on your foot. Both full and open sole designs are available. Practicing a few kicks in the store with the footpad in place can be extremely helpful in choosing both a comfortable fit and one that stays securely in place.

Some kickboxing sanctioning bodies or styles alternatively allow foot and ankle taping instead of foot pads. Tape obviously offers some protection to the ankle joints but does not provide as much protection during a kick as a footguard provides. Therefore, if allowed, foot pads are recommended.

**Hydration Gear:** Keeping hydrated will help you stay energized and active while kickboxing. It may also help to prevent muscle cramps and will help your post training or fight recovery.

We recommend that you drink about 300-400 mL before you train or compete ([http://www.ausport.gov.au/sportscoachmag/nutrition2/pre-event\\_nutrition](http://www.ausport.gov.au/sportscoachmag/nutrition2/pre-event_nutrition)).

These are just general guidelines as fluid requirements will vary depending on the environmental conditions and your body size. Remember, the more fluid you lose through sweat, the more you will have to replace. To check that you are adequately hydrating, you can weigh yourself before and after your training or fight. If your weight remains the same then you are likely to be well hydrated. Also, remember that by the time you feel thirsty, your body is already dehydrated, so drink frequently and don't let thirst alone determine your fluid intake.