

through USA Luge, although the inventory may vary depending on international availability and time of year. Racing suits are a very size-specific, customized item and can be obtained directly from the manufacturers.

INSPO

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USA Luge may also have a limited supply of used equipment available in various conditions.

Q: How much does luge equipment cost?

A: Prices for used luge equipment can vary depending on condition. A price guideline for new equipment is as follows:

- Sled: \$800-\$1,000
- Racing suit: \$100-\$350
- Luge Shoes: \$165-\$250
- Racing gloves: \$25-\$50
- Spikes: \$30-\$45
- Face shield: \$35-\$45
- Helmet with face shield: \$250-325

Q: Do I need to buy my own equipment?

A: Generally, it is recommended that beginning athletes do not buy their own equipment. USA Luge has a supply of sleds and helmets to use for athletes that are just getting started in the sport. Once an athlete determines that they want to pursue a competitive career in luge, they can begin to think about purchasing their own equipment. Before any purchase; however, a coach should always be consulted first to assure proper sizing.



U.S. National Team Sled

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Luge Equipment and Costs

The equipment used in luge is very similar from athlete to athlete, but it is also very "customized" for each athlete to ensure proper fit and optimum performance.

Q: **What equipment is a luge athlete required to wear?**

A: Technically speaking, the only piece of equipment that an athlete is required to wear, according to the international rules, is a helmet. There are several other pieces of equipment that sliders wear during training and competition that must meet a specified set of criteria, but nothing else is actually stipulated in the rules as "required".

Q: **Where can I get a sled?**

A: Luge sleds are very specialized pieces of equipment. There are only a precious few manufacturers around the world that sell sleds on the "open" market. Most internationally competitive nations construct their own sleds for use by their National Team athletes, including the United States. In their attempt to gain a competitive advantage over the competition, these sleds generally contain state-of-the-art technology developed by each nation. Of course, these sleds are never available for sale to the general public because of the secretive technology involved.

The main source for sleds on the "open market" is a company in Latvia, one of the former Soviet states. As you can imagine, the logistics of purchasing and shipping a sled from there can be cumbersome. Typically, an order for a sled should be submitted to this company in the spring in preparation for the coming season. In any event, beginner athletes should always consult with their

coach before planning to purchase a sled. Most of the time a coach will recommend that first year athletes use USA Luge equipment before making the relatively large investment in their own sled.

Sled Distributors

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Q: **What other equipment do athletes wear when sliding?**

A: There are several pieces of equipment/clothing that luge athletes wear that are very specific to the sport of luge. Some of them are as follows:

Helmet: In international competition, all athletes are required to use the same standardized helmet manufactured by the company UVEX. These are constructed of a combination of a kevlar/fiberglass shell and foam padding and provide a great deal of protection in the event of an accident. They are also extremely light weight as there is no headrest on the back of the sled to support the head under the heavy "G" force load in curves.

Face Shield: Attached to the front of the helmet is a form fitting face shield. It is constructed of a polycarbonate material and is virtually shatter proof. Over the course of a normal run, the face shield helps protect the athlete from the extremely cold temperatures and wind chills. In the event of a crash, the athlete's entire face is potentially protected from possible contact with the sled or ice, reducing the risk of injury. Finally, the face shield provides a certain degree of aerodynamic advantage in that it allows for smooth air flow over the athlete's face and head.

Racing Suit: Racing suits are constructed of a lycra-type, textile-based material with a plastic membrane on the inside to improve its aerodynamic properties. Each suit should be

custom fit to the athlete to assure optimum fit and performance. Racing suits, also known as "speedsuits", are manufactured by only a few companies around the world. Built strictly for speed and aerodynamics, the racing suit provides little in the way of comfort and warmth.

Gloves/Spikes: Racing gloves are also specialized for the sport of luge and tend to be tight and form fitting to the athlete's hand. They are made of a thin material, usually leather, and have limited stretching properties. Spikes may be worn on the gloves to help maximize grip on the ice during paddling on the start. After an athlete pulls off the start handles, he/she may "paddle" on the ice to help accelerate the sled. This consists of reaching forward and striking the ice surface with the spikes, then stroking backwards while the spikes are embedded in the ice to propel the sled forward. Spikes may be a maximum of 4mm (.157 inches) long and can be attached to the finger tips or the knuckles, based on the athlete's preference.

Racing Shoes: The luge racing shoe, also known as the "bootie", is a lightweight, aerodynamic piece of equipment worn by all competitive sliders. Weighing just 3.9 ounces each, they have a smooth outer sole and the newest version from adidas has a small amount of anti-slip rubber on the bottom. Booties are extremely light weight, which makes it easier for the athlete to hold his/her feet and leg up on the front of the sled (there is no support for the feet and leg on the sled), during the 4-5 "G" forces attained in some curves. Athletes sometimes also use a "training" bootie, which has a treaded surface on the bottom to help them maneuver safely on slippery surfaces. The major manufacturer of luge booties in the world is adidas.

Q: **Where can I obtain luge equipment?**

A: Luge equipment is very specialized and most is not used in any other sport. USA Luge aids athletes by stocking some of the more difficult to find luge equipment and selling it at cost. Generally, athletes can obtain helmets,