

# Winter Tools and Equipment

Use of the tools won't necessarily increase confidence on slopes as using them is relatively complex, practice and annual revision are essential. Crampons increase any trip hazard, and an ice axe can be a lethal instrument if not used correctly.

An ice-axe should be T rated, though a good B rated one will be fine for occasional use. Ideally not too long, up to 65cm is probably best. Anything longer is a bit of a handful in use. They should be walking axes and not climbing axes, which are curved and really ice-climbing tools, usually about 50cm long (also a lot more expensive than a plain walking axe).

Crampons will require a suitable boot as well so the combination can be expensive. A Grivel G10 or similar will be fine but will need a B2 or B3 graded boot. Crampons are available for flexible boots but not easy to find. Boots are graded in terms of flexibility. B0 is generally a walking boot that bends readily on the sole, while B3 are fully stiffened and do not bend. A B1 boot is a bit of a compromise and there are flexible bars available as most crampons would be used on B2 or B3 boots. Unless it is anticipated that any serious steep icy slopes are to be encountered then crampons may be an expensive investment, especially as most of the time when walking they will not be needed. A good stiff boot and if ice on the flat is anticipated then supplementing them with a walking aid such as the Grivel Spider is probably sufficient.

An ice axe is more useful as a self-rescue tool even if you don't have crampons. Any surface that you can kick your feet into will not need crampons, and if you do slide then they can cause more problems!

Though as usual being a purist means having the gear means not being caught out!

In addition to the tools an extra couple of pairs of good winter gloves with leather palm protection, a balaclava, goggles (untinted and double lensed), a man-made-fibre filled belay over-jacket, thicker trousers (salopettes) and a 40l rucksack to get it all in are really a good idea.