

Lacing skates

As mentioned, first tap the heel way back into the boot. Gently pull the tongue up and secure it straight up and down before tucking it beside the foot. Pull the second or third sets of laces from the bottom tightly to close the boot well over the front of the foot.

Laces should be snug through the ankle area and bottom two sets of hooks. The top two hooks meanwhile can be looser to keep the ankle flexible. Cross extra laces over hooks neatly. Avoid winding it around the skates as loose flying bows often lead to accidents.

Now test it. Stick a finger between the back of the boot and leg to show skates were well laced. If the skate hurts or feels uncomfortable, relace and adjust. Practice walking in skates before entering the ice arena.

Make the most out of every group lesson.

Express preferred learning styles

- Ask instructors to break down skills to a few steps that apply to the skater's most comfortable style of learning.
- Visual learners need to see the skill demonstrated.
- Auditory learners need to hear the skill described.
- Tactile learners need to perform the skill to properly execute it.

Be patient

Group classes are great for building a solid foundation for developing skills. There are no shortcuts or fast tracks. If skaters do not feel comfortable with a particular skill, they need to speak up and tell the instructor to go at a slower, safer pace.



Be polite

Think about the safety of other student skaters in the class. Stay in control and within boundaries of the class to avoid interfering with others.

Skaters should:

- Maintain a smart, safe distance from other skaters.
- Stay close to the wall to wait for help and instructions.
- Maintain a safe speed.
- Stay with the class and instructor in their designated 'classroom' area.

Recognize class and session expectations

Parents can observe classes of all levels, skills and ages from the stands or designated areas. You should avoid standing in doorways or near the players' benches.

For beginners, marching across the ice is the first skill taught. Some skaters push and glide with ease. Others will play the cautious card by taking baby steps, and that's good. Learning to fall and stand right back up will also take precedence. Instructors will spend several minutes on day one perfecting this skill.

After session one, all beginning skaters should gain confidence and demonstrate the ability to skate reasonably well on their own, get up from falling, attempting to stop while moving slowly, and navigate a public session well.

Repeating a class is not unusual for skaters. All skills need to ladder up to one another in order to move skaters up the next level, so mastering skills first is necessary. Instructors should provide written feedback on skater's progress. This should include accomplishments, opportunities to improve, and recommendations on which class to register for next. These evaluations should be given on one of the final classes of the session.

Makeup policy

Ask the director about the program's makeup policy, should the skater miss a lesson. Many group programs offer a makeup session if a similar class is offered on a day shortly after. Special accommodations may be permissible.

Set up supplemental private or semi-private lessons

For those seeking more attention, you may hire a coach for a private or semi-private lesson. A booster lesson may be a good thing if assistance is needed to master a specific skill. If interested, inquire about private lessons with the skating director.

Set up extra practice time

Practicing is the road to improving. After each lesson, skaters should practice the skills taught at least once.

Use public skating sessions or ask if there are club-sponsored or skating sessions open. Obtain a list of things to practice from the instructor, or bring a record book to write down what needs improvement.

What About Skates?

The boots should provide a snug fit. A skate needs to be an extension of the foot, fit snugly, and be laced up properly. Look for these three factors in picking out a skate that fits you properly: your size and weight, skating ability and how many times a week you plan to skate. If the boot does not fit properly or is too "broken in," it will not provide adequate support. Proper fit is essential for success in skating!

Basically, the fit should be snug, with the lacing pattern constant from toe to ankle. When you push your foot forward to touch your toe to the end of the skate, if you can put a finger inside the skate between the back of your foot and end of your skate, it is too big.

It is not always necessary to buy new skates, especially when first learning to skate. Used skates can be a great bargain...if you know what to look for. If you are unsure of the quality of a pair of used skates, please ask the skating director or your instructor for some tips.

When purchasing new equipment, go to a reputable pro shop or sporting goods store and take the time to find a pair. Skates, like most sporting equipment, get more sophisticated as your ability increases. Most manufacturers produce a beginning boot that comes with a beginning blade.

If you choose not to invest in your own skates, rental skates will do just fine, too. When renting skates, ask for a pair of firm boots with adequate support and sharp blades.

What Do I Wear?

Whether skating indoors or outdoors, dress for warmth by layering your clothing. Most indoor arenas are kept between 50 and 60 degrees, so jackets are recommended. As you get warm, you may wish to discard a layer. Comfort and ability to move freely are also very important. We suggest close-fitting but not tight pants. Sweatpants or warm-up pants are ideal. Your feet will feel best if you wear one pair of lightweight socks or tights. Bulky or thick socks may limit the support provided by your skates and create "bumps" inside your boots, making them uncomfortable. Make sure when fitting your skates that your toes can wiggle but your heel does not slide up and down or around once your foot is properly laced in the skate.

Protective head gear is recommended for children under the age of 6 and all beginner skaters. Contact a local sporting goods store for proper fit and information regarding safety helmets. The Consumer Products Safety Commission offers guidelines for the type of helmet to wear for different activities. Although a helmet standard does not exist specifically for ice skating, until such standards are written, wearing one of the listed types of helmets may be preferable to wearing no helmet at all. For ice skating, the recommended helmets are: ASTM F1447; Snell B-90A, B-95, N-94. When buying a helmet, check the fine print for certifications.

Remember gloves or mittens! Learning to fall is an important part of ice skating, and your hands will feel much better if you are wearing gloves or mittens. If you forget to bring them along, check with the rink's lost and found and borrow a pair.