

## **Understanding and Preparing for Competitions**

Understanding figure skating competitions can be confusing at times. There are many things a parent must understand before a figure skating event.

You may first be introduced to competitions through a Basic Skills event sponsored by your rink or a nearby arena. Your child must have a private lesson coach to help you prepare for all figure skating competitions. That coach will give guidance on music choices, which level to enter, your child's choreography, and deciding on a costume.

### **Expect additional expenses related to a competition**

Expect extra costs as you prepare for a competition. Choreographing a skating routine may require extra lessons. There may be additional costs if your coach cuts a piece of music for your child. If your child enters more than one event, extra lessons may be required to prepare.

If you must travel a long distance for an event, expect a travel fee from your coach and also expect there will be costs related to instruction at the event. There may be additional costs for practice sessions at the event.

Even if the competition takes place locally, expect that your coach will charge for the time involved with coaching your child from the sidelines on the competition day. Most coaches charge at least the cost of one private lesson for each event entered.

### **What to wear**

Consult your coach for guidance on competition attire. A skating dress that is beautiful and makes your child shine and dazzle is what you're looking for. There may be a skate shop in your area that carries competitions dresses, or there may be someone at your rink that makes custom costumes. Boys should wear skating pants and a shirt; the shirt can be decorated especially for competition. Boots should be polished, or over-the-boot tights can be worn. Make sure that tights are beige and new, with no runs or tears. Girls' hair should be put up or pulled back in a ponytail and curled. Decorative ribbons or clips can be worn, and hair can be sprayed. Boys' hair should be neat. If your coach allows a sweater and gloves for warm-up, make sure they match your child's outfit and add to the "together look." Wearing make-up is also important.

### **What to bring**

Don't forget to bring your camera! You may also want to bring a warm coat for your child to wear inside the arena before he or she competes and a "good luck" stuffed animal or doll. The arena may sell flowers, but if you want to give your child something after the event, it may be a great idea to bring flowers or some sort of gift.

You should also have a spare copy of the skater's music with you. Extra tights, last minute make-up and hair spray are all good ideas.

And don't forget the skates!

### **Arrive at the event early**

Arrive at the arena at least one hour before your child competes. Once you are registered and have turned in your child's music, turn your child over to your coach. There is usually an area of the arena set aside for competitors. Find a seat in the arena and enjoy watching your child and others.

### **Prepare your child to be a good winner and a gracious loser**

Praise your child after he or she skates. Ask your child to not cry or show emotion in public if he or she is disappointed in how he or she performed. Praise other skaters and have your child congratulate skaters who skated well.

Once results are posted, continue to praise your child for a job well done.

### **Don't criticize judges**

Skating judges are volunteers that have gone through extensive training. Respect their opinion and don't criticize their decisions.

### **Types of competitions**

There are several types of competitions. Basic Skills events will be your first introduction to skating competitions. These competitions can be run on a local level, but can also include skaters from an entire state or several states.

Once your child advances out of the Basic Skills level, he or she will be eligible for both qualifying and non-qualifying competitions.

### **What is a qualifying competition?**

The United States is divided into three sections, and each section is divided into three regions. There are nine regions in the United States. So, when you hear that a skater is training for "regionals," he or she is training to compete in a competition that may include several states.

Certain events that take place at regionals are "non-qualifying" (the lower events), but most events are "qualifying" events. If a skater places in the top four at a regional qualifying event, he or she qualifies to compete in a sectional, and if he or she places in the top four in a sectional qualifying event, the skater advances to nationals!

Winning or placing in any qualifying competition is quite an accomplishment!

**How often should your child compete?**

It is not necessary to compete in every competition you hear about. Remember, preparing for competitions takes time, and you will want your child to do the best possible job. Your child can have one skating routine set to music and use it for several competitions. Doing a program to music will be fun for your child and also help train him or her to be a better skater.

As your child works toward preparing for regional competitions, expect his or her training to focus on the competition season associated with that event. Get your coach's advice on which non-qualifying competitions to enter in order to give your child the experience needed to do his or her best before regionals.