

## **Bridge Program- Figure Skating 101**

A national Bridge Program from Basic Skills Programs to member clubs

The role of the Basic Skills Program is to introduce to the public the joys and fun of skating but also to feed the other “next step” programs such as the figure skating club. A successful full service facility offers programs at every level up the chain. A learn to skate is a feeder program but in order to be successful in its role, the next step needs to be defined to new customers from the beginning so they can have a clear vision of where they are presently and what comes next. This will keep them in the rink, learning to skate, and will show them the benefits and opportunities offered to them through club membership, **retaining** beginning skaters in the sport.

The Bridge Program is designed to teach skating skills at a faster pace in a group lesson environment and to introduce the benefits of club membership. Offering an affordable package program is the best way to entice new skaters to participate. Every club and Basic Skills Program must custom design the curriculum to meet the needs in their specific area. These programs have been successful in 6-8-10 week sessions, week long camps, day programs or sold as individual free skating hours for junior members.

**Membership:** Participating skaters should be a member of U.S. Figure Skating; either as a current Basic Skills member or full member. A one year ‘introductory’ club membership category is suggested to help families make the transition to club membership. This way when they are ready to test their Pre-pre moves and FS, they will be eligible.

**Suggested Schedule:** The Bridge Program concept is best delivered as a packaged program with a set fee. Remember these are still beginner skaters looking to become more invested in the sport of figure skating. A session should be no longer than 8 weeks in length consisting of all lesson time. If this is not possible due to ice time restrictions, this format could be run in a mini-camp situation or as a special program offered at the end of each session of lessons, one day seminar, on free skating ice time, or within Basic Skills group lesson times.

Skaters should be encouraged to attend at least one other time during the week to practice on their own and/or have a private lesson. It is suggested that groups be kept to no more than seven skaters each allowing for group and individual instruction periods. Evaluations should be done every session in each of the disciplines. Feedback should be given to the skaters immediately regarding their progress. U.S. Figure Skating test level perfection is not expected in this program.

**Ability divisions:** After all of the skaters are registered, sort them into smaller groups by ability. Be sensitive to how you do this to ensure that everyone will have a positive experience in the program. Sort first by ability and then age, if possible. Try to have no more than seven skaters per instructor.

**Off ice discussion topics:** Schedule an introductory meeting before the first class to discuss the goal of the program, policies, and to introduce the coaching staff. Include other meetings if possible and invite special presenters if you can like the local club president, a boot and blade expert and a certified judge to explain these topics in more detail. Parent education sessions are essential to the success of a Bridge Program.

Sample topics include but are not limited to:

- Proper equipment fit/purchase and attire- where to shop in local area
- Ice etiquette
- Ice utilization and good practice habits

- U.S. Figure Skating testing and competitive structure
- Joining a figure skating club
- Club functions
- Volunteering
- Preparation for their first competition
- How and when to select a private coach
- Good eating habits
- Goal setting and positive thinking

**On-ice skating curriculum ideas:** The skating curriculum is specific to the ability of the skaters enrolled. The emphasis is on their badge curriculum so they can officially pass those classes and earn their badges. At the conclusion of the session the skaters who are ready can test their Pre-pre Moves if desired.

The on-ice skating curriculum includes:

- Proper stretching techniques
- Warm-up and cool-down
- Stroking, edges and power skating
- Introductory Moves in the Field
- Introductory ice dance
- Spins
- Jumps
- Artistry in Motion – beginning choreography and style

**Fees:** The fees for the program should be higher than the group lesson fees in your area but not high enough to discourage people from participating. The average fee could be around \$12.00-15.00 a class (multiply by number of weeks/classes).

**Bridge Program Director’s Notes:**

The program content includes a variety of free skating, Moves in the Field, ice dance, off-ice warm-up routines, stretching, and Artistry in Motion, synchronized as well as off-ice educational sessions. When a skater enters the Bridge Program, they enter at the level they just passed. When time permits, incorporate special workshops where the concentration is on one specific element or discipline. It has been the experience of some clubs that over half of the Bridge Program participants stay in skating; either free skating, dance or become a member of the synchronized team.

This program introduces skaters to a “training program” and offers them an introduction to all of the elements in skating and what is required if they choose to continue to skate recreationally or begin a competitive career. Parents will be eased into the expense involved with the sport. Parent meetings are necessary for the success of this program to educate them about their future involvement in figure skating. Encourage a mix of Basic Skills skating school staff and Club professionals to instruct this program.

A Bridge Program administration manual is available from the U.S. Figure Skating Membership Department with lesson plans, off ice training information, parent education materials and much more.

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