

Skate Great and Have Fun at Competitions

By Choeleen Loundagin

There are many things you can do to make competitions a fun and rewarding experience. Using mental skills to bring out your best physical skills is one valuable method. The following key strategies can help you use the power of your mind to skate your best and enjoy competitions.

Goals

Write down your goals for a competition in your skating journal at least one month before the event. Make sure your goals are under your control and describe exactly what you want to do in a positive way. Examples of helpful goals are giving your best effort, skating a clean program, staying focused on one element at a time, having fun and sharing your love of skating with all those watching. Remember that your placement is not under your control, because you have no power over what the judges think or how other skaters perform. Read your goals the day of the competition to help keep you focused, motivated and feeling confident.

Use your imagination

Use your imagination to pretend you are competing each time you practice your performance. Imagine skating your best at the competition site at least once a day starting a month before the event. Try to feel how you want to feel and think what you want to think. Ask your coach to explain what will happen at the competition so that you can include as many details as possible. On the day of the competition, imagine skating your best while you wait to perform.

Self-talk

Be your own best friend before, during and after your competition by talking to yourself like you would to your best friend if he or she were competing. Keep your thoughts encouraging and focused on what you want to do. Tell yourself to **STOP** if you have any doubts or distracting thoughts, and immediately think of something positive about yourself. When you are announced, think *I can do this*, *Have fun* or something encouraging as you skate to your starting place.

Relaxation

Check in with how you feel before you get on the ice. Feeling a little bit of extra energy is a sign that you are ready to perform, but too much or too little is not

helpful. If you feel like you need to relax, try taking a few deep breaths. Fill yourself up with calming confidence while you breathe in and let go of worries or nervousness as you breathe out. Remind yourself of how ready you are and why you love to skate.

Focus

Keep your focus on your own skating. Change your focus if it is on anything besides what you have control of at that moment, your strengths and what you want to do. If you have friends in your group remember you are skating with them, and not against them. Enjoy their company while you try to skate your personal best.

Celebrate and evaluate

Celebrate, no matter how you place, after every competition. If you skate great and place low, remember how wonderful you felt when you got off the ice. Don't allow the opinions of the judges or the skills of other skaters to take away that feeling. If you don't skate your best, try to learn all you can from the experience and move on. It is important to realize that you can ask yourself only to give your best effort. Getting a medal is an extra reward, but not the only reward in competing. This article only briefly describes how you can use the power of your mind to skate your best and have fun at competitions. Each time you compete, you will get a better idea of what works best for you. Now go skate great and have fun!