HOW DO YOU LEARN TO SKATE?
Learning to skate is actually quite easy and fun. It requires a little determination, a lot of practice and no fear of falling down! Before you know it, you will be gliding around—forward and backward—able to show your family and friends what you can do on the ice. Whether your goal is to learn to skate backward, spin really fast or even land an Axel, we’ve got the place for you to start! Remember, every champion had to begin with a few easy lessons—just like you!

WHERE DO I GO?
The U.S. Figure Skating Basic Skills Program is the learn-to-skate program of the national governing body of figure skating. Visit www.usfigureskating.org to find a skating program near you. Contact your local facility and ask about its Basic Skills group class schedule, registration information and public skating times. With more than 990 established skating programs across the country, U.S. Figure Skating is the best place to begin. Start learning to skate, earning colorful badges and having fun with friends and family on the ice!

NECESSARY EQUIPMENT
Being a successful skater does not require fancy equipment, but it is important that you have well-fitting skates; warm, comfortable clothes; a hat or safety helmet; and a pair of gloves or mittens.

SKATES
Skates must fit properly! Skates that are uncomfortable or too big will become a frustration to a beginner skater. Please take the time to find a pair that offers adequate support and fits comfortably. Take the time to walk in your skates before taking the ice.

FITTING
Find a pair of skates in which your feet do not move around the inside of the boot, especially in the heel area. Your heel should be as far back in the boot as possible and should feel snug.

Support is another important feature in finding the right skates. Skates that lack adequate support cannot hold you up and cause you to use a lot of muscle power just trying to stay upright. The boots should feel snug, but your toes should not be pinched. The closer the fit, the more control you will have. 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.

Keep trying on skates until you find a pair that fits. Rental skates are made to fit everyone; therefore, they fit no one precisely.

Finally, be aware that your skate size is not the always the same as your shoe size.

LACING
The way your skates look when they are laced up can offer a clue as to how well they fit. To get started with proper lacing, tap your heel back into the boot as far as possible. Pull the tongue completely up, giving it a gentle pull, and try to secure it straight up and down before tucking it beside your foot. Starting with the second or third set of laces from the bottom, begin to pull the laces tightly, one pair at a time, so the boot closes well over the front of your foot. It is important that the laces do not slip. The laces should be snug through the ankle area and the bottom two sets of hooks. The top two can be a little looser to allow for some flexibility. If extra lace remains, try to cross it over the hooks neatly. Do not wind the extra lace around the skates if possible. Beware of loose flying bows, as they can cause accidents. When skates are laced properly, there should be enough room, with ankles flexed, to stick a finger down between the back of the boot and
your leg. If your foot hurts or doesn’t feel right, spend time re-lacing and adjusting.

TAKING CARE OF YOUR SKATES
Never walk on hard surfaces or concrete with uncovered blades—this will ruin them. If you own your own skates, purchase a pair of hard guards for walking around in your skates off the ice to protect your blades. Always dry off your blades with a towel before storing them in your bag or taking them home. Wet blades may rust, and rusted blades will not glide very well. Also, keep your blades sharp. Sharp blades grab the ice better than dull ones, especially when stopping. Ask your director or instructor for the best local places to have them sharpened.

PROPER ATTIRE
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. Comfort and the ability to move freely are also important. We suggest close-fitting but not tight pants. Sweatpants or warm-up pants are ideal. As you get warm, you may wish to discard a layer.

SAFETY HELMETS
U.S. Figure Skating strongly recommends the use of helmets for beginner skaters of all ages. A helmet should be both comfortable and snug. Be sure that it is level on your head, not tilted back on the top of the head or pulled too low over your forehead. It should not move in any direction. The chin strap should be securely buckled so that the helmet doesn’t move or fall off during a fall or collision. The individual who will be wearing the helmet should be present when purchasing a helmet so that it can be tested for good fit.

DO
• Wear helmet low in front to protect forehead
• Fasten buckle and check strap adjustment often
• Replace your helmet immediately if it shows any visible signs of damage
• Clean helmet with mild soap/water only
• Store helmet in a cool dry place

WHICH HELMETS WORK FOR ICE SKATING?
A hockey, skateboard or ski helmet (multi-sport) will be suitable for using during beginning ice skating lessons. These helmets are designed to withstand more than one moderate impact, but protection is provided for only a limited number of impacts. They should be replaced if visibly damaged. Consult the manufacturer’s instructions for guidance on when the helmet should be replaced.

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, check with the rink’s lost and found, and borrow a pair.

HOW TO FALL AND GET UP
Even the best skaters in the world fall, so it’s important to know that falling is a necessary part of learning to skate, and it doesn’t need to be scary. Always remember to fall to one side, not forward or straight back on your tailbone.

• Begin by practicing a few times off the ice before getting on the ice.
• Lower your center of gravity, slide onto one hip, relax and collapse all the way to the ice.
• Protect your head from snapping back and hitting the ice by tucking your chin.
• Do not use your hands to break your fall.
• To stand up, roll over onto your hands and knees, and place one foot beneath you on the ice between your hands
• Place your other foot beneath you and slowly push to a standing position, keeping your knees slightly bent.
• As you stand, be sure to maintain your balance.

SAFE SKATING RULES
• Skaters are required to observe all ice rules, demonstrate courteous behavior and be considerate of other skaters at all times.
• Safe skating will be rigorously enforced.
• No carrying children
• No hockey sticks or pucks allowed on the ice during public skating
• Entry onto the ice surface must be made through specified access points in the barrier.
• Always skate in control and at a comfortable speed at all times.
• No food or drink is allowed on the ice.
• No more than three people may skate together during a general session.
• After a fall, the skater should get up as quickly as possible to avoid injury to or from passing skaters.
• Look out for other skaters. Always be alert to the moves of skaters and professionals.
• Skaters should leave the ice in order to make adjustments to skates.
• Make sure the ice re-surfacer entry doors are closed while you are on the ice. Once opened, please leave the ice surface immediately.

Skate safe and, most important, HAVE FUN!