

Adult Fitness Program and Skate-a-thons

What is an Adult Skating Fitness Program?

The adult skating fitness program is a unique and fun opportunity developed for the adult skating population to give adult skaters the capability of incorporating a measurable on-ice physical activity into their current exercise regimen. This fitness program is developed around the concept of encouraging participants to actively skate and track the total number of continual laps traveled/skated during a session in an effort to ultimately determine the total miles traveled/skated per workout.

To calculate laps skated in terms of miles, the following calculation should be used:

- On a standard ice sheet (200 x 85), it takes eleven laps skated around the perimeter, in close proximity to the barrier to equal one mile.

Over a set period of time, adult skaters calculate their accumulated miles skated and earn incentive rewards within their individual skating programs and facilities in accordance to the specific mile markers they skated (50, 100, 150, 200, etc. miles). This reward incentive and lap program are modeled loosely after public library summer reading programs that encourage and reward participants for the minutes/books they read during a set period of time.



Why is This Fitness Program So Enjoyable and Beneficial?

Adult skaters that made the decision to actively participate in a lap skating program comment that this is not only a great exercise activity, but is ultimately much less expensive than joining a health club. In addition to the cost benefits, ice skating fits better into many individual's busy schedules, fosters better social interaction among participants and is a terrific way to encourage adult skaters (of all ages and abilities) to become more physically fit.

Of the adult skaters that utilize lap programs and ice skating for physical fitness, common remarks and success stories are often heard. They include the following:

"I came for the exercise and stayed because it's the only exercise I have ever loved, look forward to doing and hate missing. It's exciting!" – Glenda, adult skater

"So far I've lost 35 pounds by skating it off over lunchtime. Skating to me is much more fun than jogging!" – Diane, lap program participant

Health Benefits of Ice Skating

The physical actions required to skate laps (pushing, gliding and crossovers) collectively are great forms of low impact exercise and activity. Skating is an aerobic exercise just like walking, running, and swimming and offers many positive effects for overall cardiovascular health. As with other sports activities, ice skating and lap skating also improves ones endurance. Other health benefits of skating include improvements in strengthening leg and core muscle groups, improved muscle tone, balance, agility and flexibility.

Lap skating for adults can be a terrific exercise utilized to aid in weight loss as it can burn up to 250-810 calories per hour with just recreational skating. For example, a 150-pound man skating continuously for an hour burns as many calories as when he is running five miles in an hour.

In addition to the physical benefits skating has to offer, there are also numerous mental benefits recognized by participants as well. Skating is distinctive in that its participants often recognize their improvement following each practice session; therefore the desire to continue skating is greater and results in many becoming participants for life. Ice skating also teaches important skills such as building self-confidence, goal setting, hard work, determination and goal achievement.

When to Offer a Lap Program

Lap programs tend to be the most successful when they are held during

public skating sessions, especially those that occur over the lunch hour as they are normally least crowded and allow lap skaters to continually skate laps with the least amount of traffic or public skater interference. It is beneficial to the success of the lap program if the ice times and sessions are scheduled consistently if at all possible. Consistent scheduling is helpful as it allows participants the opportunity to schedule their day to day life and work calendars around their ice session times.

Create a Log Sheet

This type of adult fitness program is a fun, participatory-type program that works exclusively on the 'honor system'. Many programs create a simple log sheet for participants to use in tracking their laps and miles skated. These log sheets are kept at the rink in a card file or on a spreadsheet in the rink's computer. If people skate at multiple rinks, some have created wallet sized cards they can carry with them to fill out.

Important information to include on the card is:

- Name and contact information
- Start date
- Blank lines with the following information to be filled in - date, number of laps skated, miles skated (multiply by 11 = total miles skated that day)
- Time per mile (use this information for additional incentive rewards and contests)
- Incentives: 50 miles, 100 miles, 150 miles, 200 miles, etc. – with the date of completion for them to submit to earn their prize(s)

Prizes

Prizes are an integral piece of the lap program as they not only entice individuals to participate in this program initially, but also encourage them to continue striving for the next milestone and prize achievement. Keep in mind, it is essential to offer prizes that are incremental and tied to distance/speed/milestones achieved. You can have the participants post their times and create contests among them for fastest mile skated, etc.

The best types of incentive based prizes are those prizes that people can not commonly purchase in stores. These prizes should be given at specific achievement points and will work to unify the participants who receive them as they signify the unique experiences/milestones it took to earn them.

Giving t-shirts when people sign up or as a first prize is a great idea because it helps to promote the club/rink and lap program. Skaters who wear the t-shirts have a tendency to be asked by others about the t-shirts meaning or significance and therefore help to market the lap program or recruit new skaters. If is often helpful if programs can find local business in the area to help sponsor the t-shirts, the program itself, or perhaps even donate prizes.

Skate-a-thons - skating laps to raise funds for charities

Skate-a-thons are fundraisers in which participants secure pledges in the hopes of earning money for a nonprofit organization by skating laps around the ice rink. During Skate-a-thons, skaters are often given either a set amount of time in which to skate as many laps as they can, or a set maximum number of laps to complete, for example: in a one hour time frame/maximum 100 laps skated. Prior to the Skate-a-thon, participants are encouraged to secure pledges from businesses, family, friends, neighbors as either per lap pledge, or straight dollar amount pledges.

In addition to the fundraising aspect of Skate-a-thons, events such as these give figure skating clubs the opportunity to combine skating with a fun, social event that ultimately boosts club spirit. Skate-a-thons that are designed to raise funds for charities boost club spirit, offer a tax deduction for the donors and at the same time increase community awareness of the club, cause and ice skating itself.

