

Helpful Hints Guide  
to Help You Get Started

Forming a High School  
Figure Skating Club

## How to Form a High School Figure Skating Team

Are you a parent, skating coach or skating club official who has requested time off for a competition and/or athletic credit for figure skating from your high school, only to be told it is not possible due to the lack of high school competitive opportunities and the individual nature of the sport? U.S. Figure Skating sanctions high school competitions and supports the formation of high school teams. There is now a school-affiliated club membership available for high school teams. These competitions are the first high school-specific figure skating events of their kind sanctioned by U.S. Figure Skating. We are beginning to achieve recognition of figure skating as a legitimate high school team sport in the United States. Interest in this program is growing exponentially. If you are a parent or coach of an elementary- or junior high school-age skater, think about their future. By the time these children reach high school age, this effort could result in providing these skaters with the opportunity to choose figure skating as a high school team sport. This program is being developed for the benefit of our skaters, and it will help them to gain recognition for their sport in school.

### Helpful Hints to Get You Started

There is ***no one way*** to handle each step of the process. Many high school affiliated clubs (HSACs) have been established in the United States, and lots of information has been collected. In general, there are two main considerations regarding club formation: “What are your school’s policies governing high school clubs?” and “What are the needs of your high school club membership?”

**Note:** High school figure skating clubs will be called HSACs in this document to differentiate them from U.S. Figure Skating clubs. HSAC stands for “high school affiliated club.”

#### Keep It Simple

You may want to make student participation in a high school competition the first goal of your HSAC. Keep in mind that *this is the first step in a long-term process*. By keeping your requests regarding club formation simple, you will most likely avoid delays or a negative response.

Public high school athletic directors who reviewed a sample HSAC proposal made it very clear that they are supportive of HSAC formation and student participation in this upcoming competition ***as an extracurricular high school “club” activity***. However, they cautioned that any request for “official” high school skating athletic recognition at this time could result in complications and delays in establishing an HSAC at their particular high schools. Private/preparatory high schools may be more flexible.

High school participation in competition is important. Participation in this aspect helps to not only cultivate more awareness of the HSAC concept but also serves to foster greater growth within this program.

#### Will You Need to Draft a Formal Proposal?

Who will approve the formation of your HSAC: athletic director, principal, activities committee or school board?

Ask if you will need to submit a formal written club proposal to your high school official or if a discussion and submittal of your U.S. Figure Skating high school affiliated club (HSAC) application is enough to form your club.

- If it will take time to get club status, what are the requirements in the school so you can get started right away?
- In order to participate in this first event scheduled in the spring, could the school grant affiliated status similar to other clubs (i.e.: horse-back riding, Bible club)?
- Would this temporary status allow the skaters to meet at the school, put articles in the paper, post on the bulletin board, etc.?

A sample club proposal letter and club charter is included for your use. Edit them, or you may wish to design your own if need be.

### **Skaters—How Will You Identify Your Team?**

Identify high school skaters already involved with U.S. Figure Skating clubs to determine if there are enough interested skaters (usually three, but even one may be acceptable) to form a team from your local high school. Skating coaches are invaluable in this effort, as their encouragement of their students to participate is important to program success.

Skaters are capable of forming and running their own teams, presenting it to the school and using this as an opportunity to show leadership qualities. Remember, the team will be counting on you.

Post sign-up lists at the rinks for skaters interested in high school figure skating.

Contact with other local U.S. Figure Skating club secretaries may also prove beneficial in determining local skaters in your school. Hold a meeting of those interested in high school skating. Club open houses or other functions are a good time to share information. Local high schools may allow you to submit an announcement to your school for presentation over their PA system or at an assembly for sports events. You might request that the announcement poster be placed on the student bulletin board and add your name as the contact. Ask the school newsletter to include some information regarding possible club formation. In some cases, athletic directors already know of student skaters and might be able to identify them for you.

Due to the fact that some schools include both senior and junior high school students in one facility, questions have been raised regarding the participation of junior high school students (seventh grade and up) as members of the HSAC in order to fill out a team. This may be allowed, depending on the high school district and/or competition. There are also districts where high schools may combine to form a team if the numbers of participants are not large enough for separate teams. All team members must be listed under one HSAC membership, and any trophies awarded during a competition will be given to the high school team as noted by the HSAC name. A suggestion for this team name may be “School Area” Regional Figure Skating Team, with each school displaying winning trophies for a proportional time throughout the school year.

### **What Are Your School’s Rules Governing Clubs?**

Discuss the rules governing the formation of extracurricular clubs with your school

officials prior to submitting a proposal. These rules will provide guidance regarding who may volunteer to be the leader for your HSAC, if regular club meetings will be held during or after school and what your club's agenda will be during meetings. Based on your school's policies, your HSAC leader might be a skater, parent, skating coach, teacher, U.S. Figure Skating club official, team captain or someone who has the energy, time and enthusiasm to volunteer his or her leadership.

A goal for the school club should be to find a permanent faculty advisor who will assist the team and ensure its future as the years pass.

HSAC members may wish to develop a team philosophy, i.e., team cheers, team warm-ups/uniforms, develop a team name, make up a team slogan, create a customized 5x7 banner, take field trips to see skating shows, etc.

Encouraging "team" behavior is an important lesson these skaters may carry with them through college and into the business world, where working in a team environment has become necessary to success.

### **Applying for Annual U.S. Figure Skating HSAC Membership**

U.S. Figure Skating member skaters may not participate in figure skating events unless they are sanctioned by U.S. Figure Skating. All HSACs can obtain a U.S. Figure Skating school affiliated club membership in order to participate in this upcoming event. All skaters must be a member of U.S. Figure Skating. Application for U.S. Figure Skating affiliated membership will not only ensure that U.S. Figure Skating judging standards, scheduling and competition accounting

standards are upheld and maintained during high school events but that the eligible status of those participating in this event are protected. All questions regarding membership should be directed to the U.S. Figure Skating Program Development Committee. This membership must be renewed annually to participate the following year.

A major issue raised by several athletic directors has been whether the HSAC will be covered by insurance. U.S. Figure Skating affiliated club membership will provide insurance coverage during participation in U.S. Figure Skating-sanctioned competitive events. However, each high school should have its own insurance to cover regular club meetings just like any other extracurricular club activity.

U.S. Figure Skating HSAC membership applies to the school and will not affect the regular U.S. Figure Skating "home club" membership. It will allow the HSAC team to represent its local high schools during high school events sanctioned by U.S. Figure Skating. As such, the high school name should be included in the HSAC club name, i.e. The Smith High School Figure Skating Club/Team. Skaters would then be introduced during the competition as, "Jane Smith, representing the Smith High School Figure Skating Club." A note on wording: An unofficial club may prefer to be called high school figure skating TEAM.

It is recommended that school contacts/leaders maintain a list of HSAC members for each season. This list does not need to be submitted to U.S. Figure Skating with the application at this time.

Per U.S. Figure Skating affiliated club membership rules, a "formal" club board of directors is not necessary since the athletic

director is responsible for managing the school's athletic department. However, it is beneficial to have someone who is connected with the skating community to be involved.

### **How Will HSAC Expenses Be Financed?**

How club finances will be handled is up to each HSAC to determine based on school policies and membership needs. The intent of this pilot program is to keep HSAC expenses at a minimum. Since extracurricular club activities are not financed by most school systems, you may wish to make it clear that there will be no financial obligations to the school. For example, once the competitive team has determined the competition events they will enter as *singles* skaters, private/group coaches could prepare them for competition using the skater's existing ice time. Another option for handling expenses such as the competition registration fees and U.S. Figure Skating affiliated membership might be to ask the HSAC team members to split the annual fees. Be creative and make use of whatever resources you have available in your situation. Draw upon other clubs within your school to determine successful ways to fundraise and defray the costs.

### **Resistance to Your Proposal — What Can You Do?**

If you reach a roadblock, it might be a good idea to call a competition contact person before taking any other action. You might need your school official to speak with other schools that are supportive of this effort or have a U.S. Figure Skating official call to clear up any issues. *Do not give up right away—ask for help.*

There are always those individuals who do not like change or have strong convictions

regarding upholding a traditional system or posture. If you find yourself in this situation, you may wish to take the extra step of submitting a petition of involved skaters, parents and other members of the figure skating community to prove the seriousness of your request. An appearance by the team with their contact might also be in order. With enough support, even the most traditional of officials may come to see the importance of this worthwhile endeavor. Becoming active and soliciting the help of parent-teacher organizations may also prove beneficial.

### **Your Proposal Has Been Approved**

Congratulations! Now it is time to fill out your competition application forms and ensure your team is prepared for participation in its first high school skating competition. Hand deliver or mail the competition announcement packages to the high school contact at each school.

A list of the current high school competitions can be found on the U.S. Figure Skating website.

## Sample Proposal Cover Letter

(Feel free to use/edit this sample or design your own if needed)

(Your name)

(Your address and phone #)

Date

High school official and title (principal, athletic director or activities committee chair)

High school name

Street address

City, state, zip

Dear \_\_\_\_\_

Based on the interest from the student body to promote the recognition of figure skating, this letter is a proposal to form a high school figure skating club, like a ski or drama club, at the (high school name). The goal of this high school figure skating club is to provide a vehicle whereby high school figure skating students may participate in the sport of figure skating as an extracurricular “club” activity. As such, the proposed club’s members would like to participate as the (high name) Figure Skating Team in a new program under development with U.S. Figure Skating.

The \_\_\_\_\_ High School Figure Skating Team would like to meet on a \_\_\_\_\_ basis and compete on behalf of \_\_\_\_\_ High School at officially sanctioned U.S. Figure Skating high school team competitions.

These are the first U.S. Figure Skating-sanctioned competitive figure skating opportunities offered in the United States for high school skaters. High schools in several states have participated in these competitions. In addition to participating in this upcoming event, there are several other reasons why the establishment of the high school figure skating club is so important:

1. To keep high school students active and involved during their sometimes difficult high school years in a year-round activity they enjoy. This enriches their lives by maintaining a healthy lifestyle of regular athletic exercise, instills self-discipline required for practice/competition and builds self-esteem through attainment or goals.
2. To develop the skills necessary to be part of a team and to form the positive relationships that develop during extracurricular and high school club-based activities
3. To reduce the drop-out rate of high school-age skaters from figure skating due to the inability to receive athletic recognition in the school system even at the extracurricular level
4. To heighten high school officials’ awareness regarding the demanding athletic nature of the sport. We hope to reduce practice/competition scheduling conflicts between parents and school officials.

5. To begin the process of gaining recognition of figure skating as a legitimate high school team sport within the United States. We are looking forward to opportunities for scholarships and awards over the next five to 10 years.
6. The potential to qualify and compete in the National High School Team finals. TBD

It is a well-known fact that the lessons of self-discipline, self-esteem and concentration learned by students during figure skating participation spill over into their academic and daily lives. Most figure skaters have maintained high academic grades and honors on a consistent basis even though they participate in their sport year-round sometimes as often as six days per week.

Enclosed are a proposed Figure Skating Club Charter, the U.S. Figure Skating affiliated membership application (HSAC – High School Affiliated Club) and a list of interested students for your review. This proposal has been reviewed unofficially by \_\_\_\_\_ (athletic director, activities committee chair, etc.) to ensure it meets the \_\_\_\_\_ High School's requirements for an extracurricular club activity. It is our hope that this proposal will be approved by (date) so we have time to prepare our team to participate in its first team figure skating competition. Please feel free to contact me with any questions you may have. Thank you for your prompt attention to this very important matter.

Regards,

\_\_\_\_\_  
(your name and title)

Enclosures: Club charter, competition announcement and membership list

## Sample Club Charter

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### High School Figure Skating Club Charter

Note: High school figure skating clubs will be called HSACs in this document to differentiate them from U.S. Figure Skating clubs.

#### I. Goal

The goal of this HSAC is to provide a vehicle whereby high school students may participate in the sport of figure skating as an extracurricular “club” activity.

#### II. HSAC Membership Criteria

HSAC members must meet the academic grade requirements established at the \_\_\_\_\_ High School. These standards are: (list here)

- i. Academic \_\_\_\_\_
- ii. Attendance \_\_\_\_\_

HSAC members may be interested students or figure skaters involved in skating programs from beginner to advanced levels enrolled at the \_\_\_\_\_ High School.

#### III. HSAC Structure

The HSAC is a nonprofit club whereby any and all fees paid by its members will be used for promotion of figure skating.

Leadership and guidance for the HSAC and its membership will be the responsibility of \_\_\_\_\_ and/or \_\_\_\_\_ (who, based on your school’s policies, will oversee your club) on a volunteer basis.

HSAC meetings will be held \_\_\_\_\_ (depending on school policy).

The HSAC can apply for U.S. Figure Skating affiliated club membership to provide the following benefits:

- i. To encourage participation by U.S. Figure Skating member skaters
- ii. To provide U.S. Figure Skating judging standards, scheduling and official accounting procedures at U.S. Figure Skating-sanctioned interscholastic competitive events
- iii. To provide insurance coverage at U.S. Figure Skating-sanctioned high school competitive events

- iv. To provide high school representation of the HSAC membership during high school events
- v. To provide protection of those U.S. Figure Skating HSAC members' eligible skating status. U.S. Figure Skating provides its members with General Liability and Sports Accident Insurance for all sanctioned U.S. Figure Skating events.

#### **IV. HSAC Expenses**

All expenses will be the responsibility of the HSAC's membership, with no financial obligation to the high school. The club's participating members will split these expenses. All training and ice time to prepare for figure skating competition will be paid by the membership on a per-person basis.

#### **V. Code of Ethics**

- i. U.S. Figure Skating Code of Ethics
  - a) As published in the most recent U.S. Figure Skating Rulebook under Code of Ethics and Code of Conduct
  - b) Pertaining to but not limited to GR. 1.00, and Rules 3571 and 3575**
- ii. \_\_\_\_\_ High School Code of Ethics
  - a) Reference source

*(The code of ethics is clearly stated in the U.S. Figure Skating rulebook; however, your school may have specific policies regarding this area, which may need to be included.)*