Don’t Forget the Fun in FUNdamentals!
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For many skating coaches teaching group lessons is fun, challenging and rewarding. Yes, it is much more difficult than teaching a private lesson as you have different ability levels, ages, learning styles and attention spans to juggle all at the same time. However, as skating instructors, we need to be aware of the impact a strong group lesson program brings to the facility, local club and the community as a whole. It is the backbone and feeder system to all of our other skating programs. A skater’s experience with their first group lesson will determine whether they come back or drop out of the sport.

Group classes are about skill development and giving the skaters a solid foundation on which to build their skills. There are no shortcuts to good technique and some skills will take longer to master than others. Taking the necessary time and developing their confidence on the ice is probably one of the greatest gifts you can give to your students.

Class Management reminders: YOU ARE IN CHARGE! Always keep your skaters in your view at all times. Teach to the whole class and then highlight common errors and corrections. Explain what the standard is for each skill and give them encouragement along the way to help them reach that standard. Alternate your class demonstrators as to not favor one skater over another. Be prepared ahead of time, know what you will be teaching and have a plan to do so. During the time you are instructing the skaters, you are responsible for their well being- emotionally and physically. Your skaters are there to learn and have fun so you must maintain a safe learning environment at all times!

The most important factor in all lessons is SAFETY. Encourage all children under six to wear an ice approved helmet or a thick hat to protect their head. Also inform parents of appropriate skating attire for the temperature of the ice facility, gloves/mittens, and how to wipe down and store skates after class.

Draw a stop/start line on each end of your teaching space so the class knows their boundaries and keeps them away from either hitting or hanging on the barrier. This also gives you immediate control of the class if you say, “toes on the line” and the class will automatically know to line up, listen to the next set of instructions and prepare to skate their next skill.

Breakdown of a ½ hour class:
- 3 min.- gather class, settle down, announcements
- 3-4 min.-review prior skills (warm-up)
- 5 min.- learn a new skill
- 5 min.- practice another skill
- 5 min.- practice another skill
- 5 min.- educational games reinforce the skills learned
- Extra time to review or practice time, individual help time – (take attendance during this time as class is doing an exercise so to catch all of those tardy skaters)
- Final words and see you next time!

Every class should have a definite beginning, middle, and end. End each class with a bow, curtsey, ‘High Five’ and a “Can’t wait to skate with you again next week!”

Real fun in skating comes from progress and the feeling of satisfaction and accomplishment. Be sure to reward and emphasize the little steps along the way to skill mastery. If a skater becomes frustrated, break it down into easier attainable steps and make sure that all of the parts of the skill are mastered before you put it together as a whole (forward outside three turn example- skill breakdown is a two foot turn, rock on the blade, forward outside edge glide, backward inside edge glide, twisting shoulders against hips).

Fun and Games to add during class lesson times:

Here are a few ideas from skating instructors who truly enjoy teaching group lessons. Remember that if you are having fun, your students probably are as well. Use a variety of traffic patterns while teaching the skills
in each class to make use of your teaching space. This also helps class time to be more entertaining than the traditional back and forth method of teaching. Use of toys and games should enhance the learning process, not detract from it. Try to incorporate some of these ideas into your class teaching to reinforce the mastery of each skill while having fun practicing them. Our first priority is to foster a love of skating in these beginning skaters not to just play with toys on the ice.

Ideas for Snowplow Sam and Basic level classes-

**Before the first class, meet rink side to discuss the following:**  
Always go over proper fit and lacing of skates, attire, falling and getting up, marching/walking off ice in their skates, balance on blades, one foot balance, proper posture on ice, and penguin walks (rock or a waddle motion with feet in a V position) before taking the ice.

**Driving game:** March to the parking lot. Fasten seat belts and stroke onto the highway. Dip under a bridge or through a dark tunnel. Lean and curve on a twisty mountain road. Stop sign! Practice stops. Detour- back wiggles or swizzles. Back onto the highway. Hop over potholes in the road. Make sure to use your horn, headlights and wind shield wipers. If they fall down, they have a “flat tire” and need a tow truck to come rescue them. Give out speeding tickets for the reckless drivers. Skills addressed are marching, dips, curves, wiggles, swizzles, stopping, gliding, falling and getting up.

**Red light/ Green light:** Skaters stand at one end of the class zone (parking lot), instructor is in the middle. Instructor yells “green light”, skaters march toward the “stoplight” until he/she yells “red light”. The skaters must come to a complete stop or get a pretend speeding ticket and have to go back into the parking lot to begin again. First skater to make it across the ice gets to be the next “stoplight”. Use different colored lights for different skating elements depending on the ability of the skaters, such as yellow light = dip, blue light = backward swizzles, black light = fall down, purple light = spin.

**Dot Game:** Cut out large dots of different sizes from poster board. Have them scattered around the ice. Have the skaters collect the dots and put them back in the buckets or sand pails. Have the kids sort the sizes as they place them in the appropriate buckets. Other toys or gloves may be used as the dots. Make the object big enough as to not be a hazard on the ice. Skills addressed are marching, gliding, and stopping.

**Balloon: My personal favorite!** This is a great game for little ones who can barely skate and holds their attention for a long time. Everyone starts in a small cluster, reach in your pocket and pull out an imaginary ‘balloon’. Ask the kids what color it is and if it has any decorations. You will be surprised by how they decorate it. Then as they blow it up everyone wiggles or backwards swizzles away, they keep making a blowing up noise as they are skating backward. The first one to fall POPS the balloon or if the circle is getting too large, clap your hands over your head to POP it yourself. When it pops everyone must fall down. Everyone skates together again using forward swizzles and the game starts over with a new balloon. Skills addressed are backward wiggles, forward swizzles, backward swizzles, stopping, falling and getting up.

**Fishing:** Similar to Balloon but should be played in the crease where the ice looks like a little pond. Kids start in a circle, each holding a pretend fishing pole. Dip down to get a worm from the ground, place on hook and everyone casts in the water. Pretend to reel it up and each child says what they caught (sunfish, octopus, dolphin, goldfish). If someone says “shark” then everyone must wiggle or swizzle backwards as fast as possible to avoid the shark. The kids then form their circle again when the instructor says the shark swam away. Start the game again with another worm. Warning- everyone will catch sharks as often as possible. Skills addressed are backward wiggles, forward swizzles, backward swizzles, stopping, falling and getting up.

**One foot glide contests-forward and backward:** Line up all skaters on the stop/start line. Announce that you are having a contest to see who can hold their one foot glide the longest. They need to count their favorite thing or ‘hippopotamus’ to slow their counting down. So they all pick a favorite object (video games, skating moves, candy, motorcycles, horses) and have them count their objects after they pick up their foot and begin gliding. Get everyone’s score and then tell them they have to beat their own score.
Now have all of the skaters who scored 5 and under go together, then 10 and under, then everyone else. Having them count shows them that they need practice on one foot or the other and also shows their own improvement. Skill addressed is one foot glides.

**Teddy Bear Class**: A ten week session of classes designed for 2 and 3 year olds. Take a piece of carpet and roll it onto the ice. A parent, guardian or babysitter needs to be with the child. Everybody walks onto the carpet (only skaters and instructors are wearing skates). The class begins on the carpet and the skaters gradually go onto the ice, when ready. If the kids are not ready to skate, they participate with the fun and games standing on the carpet. Some of the musical choices are Head, Shoulders, Knees and Toes, Ring Around the Rosey, and Teddy Bear Teddy Bear. The kids receive a certificate, pin, picture of Snowplow Sam to color, and a snapshot of themselves wearing skates at the end of the session. Pre-Snowplow Sam class.

**Other games to play**: Hokey Pokey, Simon Says, Mrs. Fox, Red Rover, controlled races

**Additional props to be used during lessons.** The use of toys should enhance the learning process, always think safety first!

- Washable markers to draw shapes and maps on the ice
- Cones or pylons
- Suction cup basketball hoop
- Plastic cups turned upside down
- Goofy hats
- Puppets
- Pool noodles
- Bubbles
- Stickers for rewards
- *Nerf* toys
- Stuffed animals
- Hula hoops
- Streamers
- Music to play in the background or for special classes or presentations. Music can be motivational and helps some skaters to understand the connection between movement and music.

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