

Host An Open House!



Need More Skaters? Host An Open House!

To grow your program, offer as many guided opportunities to the public to try ice skating as you can. Make this process fool proof. Think of the basics that people need to know to have the best possible first time experience on the ice – who, what, where, when, why. They need to know about skates; how to fit and tie them properly, basic skating techniques and information about how to learn more.

Use this easy formula to bring in 60-250 new skaters for a Fun-Day-at-the-Rink type open house.

Set aside an hour of ice during a weekend afternoon when you kick off your skating season, during a day off from school or whenever your program needs a membership drive. Advertise a time for the public to come try ice skating. Make this a free or inexpensive promotion to encourage as many people to try skating. Select staff members who are fun and friendly and can teach varying ability levels within groups.

Ask participants at the door what their skating experience/skill level is by using these questions: Have you ever skated before? Can you skate forward and backward? Can you stop comfortably? Have you learned crossovers and turns? Most people will place themselves in their correct skill level or one level below so they feel comfortable. Give them a color nametag based on their answers. These general groupings will have to be further sub-divided based on the number of participants in each group and ages.

Skill Level Groupings:

- Never Skated & Public skated only - no formal instruction
- Forward skating, backward skating and stops
- Crossovers and turns

Instructors will meet the participants in the lobby or rink side with a colored piece of paper to match the skill groups on their nametags. They should go through a quick off-ice orientation about proper fit and lacing of skates (equipment check), 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). This begins their free half hour introductory lesson.

Bring everyone together for a brief re-cap of their skating lesson. Allow your instructors and assistants to “float” around answering questions and offering advice. Turn on the radio and get the people moving around the rink, practicing on their own. Allow time for a few skating demonstrations by your club skaters, synchronized skating team, or theatre on ice team to show new participants more about the sport.

To the right is a sample agenda we recommend to use but customize it to meet your specific needs. Many programs and clubs attracted new families which may have never tried ice skating, but having an open house and offering free lessons at the local rink enticed them to tie up some skates and give it a try. Make sure everyone leaves the facility with an understanding of skating, programs your club/ rink has to offer, information to take home and share with others, and most importantly, a smile on their face.

Open House Sample Agenda

1:00 – 1:15 p.m. -	Sign-in at registration table/sign waiver Welcome to the facility, verbal tour, promote programming opportunities Introductions of staff members and rink personnel View a DVD or introductory video
1:15 – 1:25 p.m. -	Off ice orientation: Discussion about proper equipment, explaining skates, what to look for, how to lace, proper fit, where to shop for skates, recommended attire, helmets, warm-up stretches.
1:25 – 1:30 p.m. -	Break into smaller groups by skating experience with instructor. Group sizes should be determined by number of rental skates, available staff and ice space. Use colors to designate groups and levels on participant nametags. Skating experience of participants: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Never skated/public skated only (green group)• Forward and backward skating skills & stops (red group)• Crossover and turns (blue group)
1:30 – 2:00 p.m. -	On-ice lesson time – ½ hour maximum – lesson should be tailored to ability group **Repeat ½ hour lesson time with group two if large turnout
2:00 – 2:30 p.m. -	Open skating time after lesson (s) - all instructors float Play skating games with the children Mini exhibition – use local skaters to show their skills, play a quick exhibition hockey game, have competitive skaters perform their routines (Apply for a performance sanction/approval if necessary)
Conclusion	Distribute lesson information, coupons for free public skating with schedules of facility events Q & A time with staff Door prize drawing

Registration Table:

- At least two-three volunteers depending on expected turnout
- Registration sign in sheets and colored name tags
- Waiver and releases
- Public Skating Schedules
- Lesson information, figure skating club and hockey information
- Coupons – 20% off the next Basic Skills group lesson session
- Bring a Friend Public Skating Passes
- Souvenirs and prizes

Staffing Recommendations:

Each open house will need at least 10 trained staff for the session to run smoothly, more if larger turnout is expected :

- Director
- 5 Trained skating instructors – more if a larger turnout is expected
- 2 Trained on-ice assistants
- 2-3 Registration table staff
- Skaters for demonstration and assistance