



**NATIONAL SKATING MONTH
MARKETING TOOLKIT**



U.S. FIGURE SKATING MEDIA CONTACT

Taylor Dean
Coordinator, Communications
T: 719.228.3411
Email: tdean@usfigureskating.org

OVERVIEW

National Skating Month is used as both a membership recruitment tool and an outlet for clubs and Learn to Skate USA programs to publicize ice sports to a wide audience in their community. It is the biggest annual campaign to bring new skaters to your program, and media buzz will help maximize the campaign’s potential.

The documents provided in this toolkit include social media tips and examples, story ideas, a marketing timeline as well as sample press releases and flyers that you can modify as you need.

If you have any questions, contact Taylor Dean at U.S. Figure Skating’s Communications Department at 719.228.3411.

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QUICKSTART CHECKLIST

Use the following checklist to help promote your National Skating Month event(s).



Use **social media** to raise awareness of your club and promote National Skating Month to draw more attendees.



Follow **Learn to Skate USA, Team USA, U.S. Figure Skating, USA Hockey and US Speedskating** on social media to stay updated.



Encourage members and event attendees to take photos and share them online. Every National Skating Month kit comes with a photo booth activity with cut outs. Encourage members to use the photo booth and post their pictures on social media.



Use the **campaign hashtags** #NationalSkatingMonth and #SkatetoSuperpowers on all of your social posts.



Send a **press release** to local print and online newspapers, bloggers and radio and TV personalities to promote your National Skating Month event. *Sample press release on page 11.*



Use **email and newsletters** to encourage member participation and keep everyone updated.



Connect with **involved citizens and influencers** in your community and encourage them to share information about your event.

TIMELINE AND TASKS

SUGGESTED NATIONAL SKATING MONTH MEDIA TIMELINE

National Skating Month promotional materials arrive	November 2018
Update & distribute local flyer.....	Upon receiving materials
Create & distribute local news release & story ideas	1 week prior to planned events
Create & distribute media advisory	2-3 days prior to planned events
Follow-up calls to media	1-2 days prior to planned events
Program underway	January 2019

OPTIONAL

Create & distribute “Media Demo Day” release/invitation 1 week prior to “Media Demo Day”

1. SELECT OR DESIGNATE A MEDIA CONTACT – IMMEDIATELY

The media contact person for your event should have a good understanding of the sport of figure skating, an understanding of your events and their schedules and a desire to work with the media. Good writing and communications skills, professionalism and the ability to respond to inquiries in a timely manner are critical to this position.

It is equally important for you to acknowledge that the media may pass at your first attempts, but don’t be afraid to try again. Be persistent. If you have not heard back, try again with a new angle. Explain how your event affects the community, and in turn, their readers and viewers. Living in the digital age provides an added benefit – media outlets have websites they need to populate daily with new and original content. Even if your event doesn’t show up in the newspaper or on TV, if it’s published digitally, your story will get out there.

If you’re still having trouble getting a response, consider calling the media outlet. Emails often go to the spam or junk folder, and a phone call will ensure the right person has received your information.

2. ESTABLISH A MEDIA LIST – IMMEDIATELY & ONGOING

A media list is simply a spreadsheet of all media outlets you want your news to reach, such as newspapers and their editors, TV stations and their producers and local radio stations and their program directors. Where do you get your news? What are your TV affiliates? Most news outlets have contact information on their websites. Do some research and create a media list with the names and contact information of those most likely to pick up your story (for example, choose contacts for the sports, community or lifestyle sections, not business or crime reporting).

Establishing an up-to-date media list is essential to receiving publicity for your club.

Your media list should contain the following information:

1. Media Contact’s Name
2. Media Contact’s Title
3. Publication’s Title or Station’s Name
4. Phone Number of Reporter and Assignment Editor (if possible)
5. Email Address of Reporter
6. General Email (newsdesk@youraffiliate.com)

3. THE NEWS RELEASE – 1 WEEK OUT

The purpose of a news release (**page 11**) is to inform the media of a story or event. When properly prepared, it can be an effective communication tool between your club and the media. The provided template should be updated to reflect your local market and distributed to everyone on your media list one week prior to your events.

Edit the enclosed Story Ideas template (**page 10**) with respect to your market and event and distribute it along with the news release. In addition, if any celebrities, well-known figures or recognizable current competitors of the sport will be attending or helping out with your event, this would serve as the lead news item in your release or may merit its own release.

TIP: Invite media to participate in your event. They have the unique ability to tell the story through images, and reporters often like to get involved in the story. When pitching your event, remind them that your event offers a fantastic visual as well as an interactive experience. Sell the experience, not just the facts.

4. THE MEDIA ADVISORY – 2-3 DAYS OUT

A media advisory (**page 12**) is a condensed version of a news release that contains only the bare facts about the event. It lists who, what, where, when, why and how. This should be updated to reflect the local market and distributed a few days prior to National Skating Month events.

The media advisory is often used as a reminder or follow-up in the days preceding your event. Be sure to distribute this to the same list of media to whom you sent the news release.

5. FOLLOW-UP – 1-2 DAYS OUT

One to two days prior to the planned event, make personal calls to the media to whom you have distributed the news release and media advisory. Give them a short, succinct description of the event. Pitch the unique details and the impact the event will have on the community. Remind them that you would like to host them and have them participate in the event itself. Be sure to tell them who to ask for when they arrive at the rink and leave a contact phone number.

INTERVIEWS

Journalists may want to conduct interviews for their stories about your event. Journalists are on a time schedule, so make sure your event runs smoothly and interviews are kept short. In advance, identify interview subjects that fit certain needs:

- Official spokesperson for program (club president, coach, etc.) or club media contact
- Well-spoken participants in program (children with parental permission, parents, coaches, etc.)
- Members of Team USA who train at your club and can be available to the media

TIP: Although the media may be attending to cover only one aspect, take the opportunity to inform them of the various other programs that your club operates. This may be an opportunity to develop a long-lasting relationship.

OPTIONAL MEDIA ACTIVITIES:

MEDIA DEMO DAY RELEASE/INVITE – 1 WEEK FROM MEDIA DEMO DAY (page 13)

A Media Demo Day can be incorporated into your event by inviting reporters to your clinic or as a stand-alone event exclusively for the media. This provides local media the chance to better understand the sport and what it takes to learn to skate. Invite media via your release/advisory or by calling them directly. Give them the chance to ask questions and to interview skaters, coaches, parents and club leadership. If possible, offer an exhibition by local skaters. If you have the resources, invite the media to bring their kids with them. Remember to have skates in a range of sizes at the ready when the reporters arrive.

USING SOCIAL MEDIA TO YOUR ADVANTAGE

Use social media tools (Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, etc.) to post invites, updates and information to your National Skating Month events. Encourage local media to follow your club on social media. Please see the accompanying document “Social Media Tips” for more information. Did a local outlet tweet about your event? Retweet it! Did the local newspaper publish a story about your event online? Share it! Remember, visual posts are more likely to attract social engagement, so be sure to share plenty of photos that showcase the fun aspects of skating.

10 IDEAS TO CELEBRATE NATIONAL SKATING MONTH

1. 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. More information is available in the resources box of usfigureskating.org/nationalskatingmonth.

2. HOST A SKATE-A-THON

Turn your event into a fundraiser by hosting a skate-a-thon. As an alternative to an open house, skate-a-thons turn a profit and raise money for your club. Each skater that participates will set a goal for how many laps he/she plans to skate and will be responsible for gathering sponsors that pledge to donate a specific dollar amount per lap. Have volunteers serve as designated lap-counters during your event and sign off on a skater's completion of his/her designated lap goal. When the event is complete, skaters should follow up with their sponsors and collect the pledged donations. Encourage participation with prizes and giveaways.

3. RECOGNIZE YOUR MEMBERS

Recognize skaters in your Learn to Skate USA program who have recently passed the highest levels of a curriculum by presenting them with a special certificate or award at your event. Award skaters in your club for passing their pre-preliminary moves in the field test or participating in their first competition. Try not to focus the entire spotlight on the best skaters in your club, but also the skaters who are close in age to your audience and kids who are skating for the first time.

4. SHOWCASE YOUR SPORT

Include an exhibition of hockey, speed skating, synchronized skating, Theatre On Ice, ice dance and/or pairs with a description of each discipline at your event. Most people attending your events will not know all the different disciplines of skating and may be more interested in signing up for something other than singles figure skating.

5. BRING A BUDDY

Expand your audience by asking existing members to bring friends and family to your event. You'll double attendance and encourage leadership among young skaters as they show their guests the sport. You can even have members wear club T-shirts or jackets, and ask them to help first-time skaters. Bing-A-Buddy passes are even available to print and distribute in the resources box at usfigureskating.org/nationalskatingmonth.

6. MAKE SOME MEDIA

Make a video or photo slideshow as a club/facility with highlights of the past year. Include clips of ice shows, learn to skate, competitions, exhibitions, and any other events in which your club hosted or had skaters participate. Play this video in the rink lobby during your event to celebrate another year on the ice.

7. SHOW THEM THE WAY

Have club officers, coaches and experienced parents help new skaters and their parents as they prepare for their first time on the ice. Make safety announcements; demonstrate how to properly tie skates and how a helmet should fit, etc. This simple activity will help skaters feel more comfortable in their skates and parents will appreciate the help.

8. MAKE THE PATH CLEAR

Work with your rink and/or Learn to Skate USA program to offer a discount on group lessons for new skaters that attended your National Skating Month event. Order your National Skating Month kit for fun bulletin board takeover kits that will show each participant their next steps. Have directors or coaches on hand to answer questions and provide information on how to continue in skating.

9. SPREAD THE WORD

Festive, family-friendly events will be top of mind for 2019 National Skating Month. Capitalize on the opportunity by promoting your event through local media and throughout your community. Check with your skaters' schools to see if they will let you send home a flyer about your event in students' backpacks. Invite local TV personalities to try skating. Post your event to online community event calendars or bulletin boards. Share the details of your event on community Facebook pages or blogs. All the above-mentioned promotions are free of charge. There's even a sample press release in the resources box at usfigureskating.org/nationalskatingmonth. Need more help? We're here for you. Email tdean@usfigureskating.org with questions.

10. HAVE SOME FUN!

No matter what you include in your National Skating Month event, have some FUN! The ice is for everyone, and these events can instill a lifelong love of skating. Show your participants how much there is to love about skating, and make sure everyone has an enjoyable time at your facility.

SOCIAL MEDIA TIPS FOR NATIONAL SKATING MONTH

FACEBOOK:

If you don't already have a club Facebook page, National Skating Month is a great opportunity to create one and start building an online community. Encourage members to "Like" it and to check it regularly.

- Make your Facebook page a place where club members can easily see important information. If you're going to post regular updates, make sure you don't miss anything. You don't want people to become dependent on Facebook to provide updates and then have them miss out on key dates/deadlines!
- Post pictures! One easy way to make your Facebook page a destination is to post pictures from events. Show everyone how much fun skaters in your program are having! Take a few snaps at events or during skating sessions and post them online for members to view, tag and engage with. Make sure the skaters in your pictures have signed a waiver that allows pictures to be posted online.
- Create events. Have an event that needs added exposure? Create an event on Facebook and invite members of your club to join the event page. This can help create chatter and excitement surrounding the event and also serve as publicity for non-club members who happen to be friends of members. Ask members to share the event with their Facebook friends.
- *Do not* be controversial. Do not post anything that could create a problem or cause a stir. Remember, people can comment and share, and you want to make certain that your Facebook page is a place where people can learn and be positive.
- Give members a reason to check the page. Use the following questions to help create content, and consider posting deals, reminders and updates to answer them:
 - Why would someone need to check the page?
 - Why would someone want to "Like" this page on Facebook?
- Don't re-invent the wheel. If you see someone or another club doing something successful, take their idea and use it on your page.
- Be creative! For a small investment, you can boost your posts so that potential skaters who don't like your page may see your post. There is no cost to looking at the potential cost and potential audience of a boosted post.

TWITTER:

Twitter can be a great club resource if used properly. If you don't already have a Twitter account for your club, consider creating one. Encourage members to "Follow" you on Twitter for updates.

- Post event reminders, skating sessions, competitions and anything else happening with the club. Members can even sign up for notifications from your account. This can be useful if you plan to use the account to make important announcements, such as schedule changes and weather delays or cancellations.
- Give people insight, behind-the-scenes information, and let people in to see what goes on. Make your club fun and personable to members so they want to join.
- Give me a reason to follow. Similar to Facebook, why would someone want to follow you on Twitter? Simply because you're a club member isn't enough. Create content to give them a reason.
- Ask your members to engage with your club on Twitter. Post when they're there, post pictures and tag the club in tweets using the @TwitterHandle in a tweet. Engage with your followers if they're engaging with you.
- Post updates during events to show your followers what a great event it is so they want to participate in future events.

INSTAGRAM:

If you have a Facebook page and Twitter account and want to expand your social media presence, Instagram is another great resource to reach a wider audience. Encourage your members to "Follow" your club's Instagram account.

- Beef up your bio! Come up with a catchy bio, and make sure to add a website link. You want visitors to your profile to be interested at the first glance.
- Be creative! Instagram is one of the best platforms for sharing photos and videos. Make sure you post both photos and videos regularly to keep things interesting. Use your account to post during events and skating sessions. Here are some ideas for posts:
 - A video of a skater completing a skill they've been working on.
 - Podium pictures or skating videos of skaters at a competition.
 - Group photos after an event (all the skaters at your National Skating Month event!).

- Hashtag it! Give your posts more exposure with a few hashtags, such as #NationalSkatingMonth, #SkatetoSuperpowers and #LearntoSkateUSA. When people search these tags, your post will be visible to them. Consider creating your own branded hashtag for your club, too.
- If the people in your photos have an Instagram account, make sure to tag them in the photo with their @InstagramHandle. This will ensure the post also lives on their profiles, giving your account more exposure.

DOS AND DON'TS:

DO:

- Post content regularly and consistently.
- Post visual content (photo/video).
- Use a consistent voice across all posts and platforms.
- Designate who may post for the club.
- Share media coverage and stories to engage your community and peers.
- Use common sense (don't post anything you wouldn't want your mom to see).

DON'T:

- Treat every platform equally.
- Overshare or become white noise.
- Neglect proofreading.
- Assume followers are familiar with your program or the sport?
- Oversell. Most content should inform and entertain.
- Sacrifice professionalism.

SOCIAL MEDIA POST EXAMPLES FOR NATIONAL SKATING MONTH

FACEBOOK (Remember to include a photo or video with every post):

- Join us on [DATE] as we #SkatetoSuperpowers for #NationalSkatingMonth! Register now for our open house at [RINK NAME]: [LINK TO REGISTER]
- Always wanted to try skating but didn't know where to start? Here's your chance! Join us for an open house in honor of #NationalSkatingMonth at [RINK NAME] on [DATE], where we will answer all of your questions and get you on track to #SkatetoSuperpowers! [LINK TO REGISTER]
- Are you ready to channel your inner superhero? This year, let's #SkatetoSuperpowers together for #NationalSkatingMonth! Register now for our open house: [LINK TO REGISTER]
- How are you celebrating #NationalSkatingMonth? Show us your best superhero pose! [INSERT PHOTO OF SKATER DOING SUPERHERO POSE]

TWITTER (Remember to include a photo or video with every post):

- Join us for #NationalSkatingMonth! Register here: [LINK TO REGISTER]
- Watch [SKATER'S NAME] #SkatetoSuperpowers! What's your favorite skating move? [USE VIDEO OF SKATER PERFORMING A MOVE]

INSTAGRAM:

- Check out some of our super skaters at our open house! #NationalSkatingMonth #SkatetoSuperpowers #LearntoSkateUSA [USE SEVERAL PHOTOS OF SKATERS IN SUPERHERO POSES]
- Missed our #NationalSkatingMonth exhibition? Check out some of the talent! Learn more about our club and how you can #SkatetoSuperpowers by clicking the link in our bio! [USE VIDEO OF EXHIBITION IF YOU HOLD ONE]
- Thank you everyone that attended our #NationalSkatingMonth open house! We hope you enjoyed the event and hope to see you again soon! #SkatetoSuperpowers [USE GROUP PHOTO OF THE EVENT]

2019 National Skating Month Story Ideas

Local Media Contact: Joe Public, Title with club, phone number

U.S. Figure Skating Media Contact: Taylor Dean, Coordinator, Communications, 719.228.3411

Local Focus

What other figure skating events and/or National Skating Months has city hosted? This is the first, second, 16th time that city has hosted this event or the such-and-such regional, sectional, U.S. Championships, etc. Key Contacts: Local organizers, club, participating rink, city Visitor and Conventions Bureau.

Figure Skating in State ...from Learn to Skate to elite competition: At State's ## rinks is a constant struggle for ice time. What does it take to nurture a child from their first steps on the ice to national competition? Many well-known skaters have emerged from State, including names. Key contacts: Coaches, parents, local skaters, rink managers, club members.

History of figure skating in city:

There are ### in city, including (insert surrounding cities). Insert some historical facts about the host club. Answer this: Is the sport growing or is there declining interest in the area? And why is it growing or declining? Etc. Key contacts: Coaches, local figure skating club members, rink managers, club Board members.

Sport Focus

Benefits of skating: Skating has a variety of physical and mental health benefits, such as building confidence, building muscle, joining a community, etc. Key Contacts: Skaters, club, coaches.

Day in the Life: Shadow a local skater or coach and see what his/her life is like on and off the ice. Key Contacts: Skaters, coaches, parents.

Activities being hosted in association with your National Skating Month event:

(i.e. media skating clinic, fundraiser, races, raffles, silent auctions, costume contests, U.S. Championships watch parties, etc.).

City/clubs Olympians past and present:

Olympians are from (insert surrounding cities/clubs). Insert some historical facts about these people. Key contacts: Athletes, coaches, parents of Olympians. **Please note: All media availability with current members of Team USA MUST be set up through the U.S. Figure Skating communications department.**

Challenges: Has a club member overcome any serious hurdles, such as illnesses, family illnesses or death, missing a military parent who is deployed, etc.? Key Contacts: Skaters, club, coaches.

Coaches: Figure skating coaches often include well-known Olympians and U.S. medalists who live right in your backyard. Are there any notable coaches coaching skaters at this event or in the area? Key Contacts: Local clubs, coaches.

Helmet safety: This is a very important safety precaution at for beginning skaters and one in which Learn to Skate USA strongly advocates.

Community: A reader's guide to National Skating Month schedule, events and opportunities. Key Contacts: Local organizers, local host clubs and participating rink, volunteers.

NEWS RELEASE

CLUB NAME

STREET ADDRESS/CITY, STATE, ZIP CODE

PHONE: XXX.XXX.XXXX – FAX: XXX.XXX.XXXX

CLUB WEBSITE: www.xxxx.com



Local Media Contact: Joe Public, Title with club, phone number

U.S. Figure Skating Media Contact: Taylor Dean, Coordinator, Communications, 719.228.3411

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DATE HERE

XXX FIGURE SKATING CLUB TO CELEBRATE 2019 NATIONAL SKATING MONTH

CITY, State - The CLUB NAME will host a special event as part of U.S. Figure Skating's National Skating Month at the NAME OF VENUE in NAME OF CITY. Provide local details about location, time and importance of the event. Include any special incentives or activities offered by your club.

National Skating Month, now in its 18th year, allows U.S. Figure Skating member clubs and Learn to Skate USA programs to reach out to new members in their communities by offering the fundamentals of ice skating from professionally trained instructors. The goal of National Skating Month is to increase awareness of and participation in U.S. Figure Skating programs.

Over the last 20 years, U.S. Figure Skating has enjoyed consistent growth through programs that provide opportunities for all ages. During the campaign's inaugural 2001-02 season, U.S. Figure Skating's Basic Skills Program reached a milestone by registering more than 100,000 members for the first time in the program's history. Since its inception in 1985, the program, which now operates as Learn to Skate USA, powered by Toyota, has taught more than 2.5 million people to skate.

U.S. Figure Skating is the national governing body for the sport of figure skating in the United States as recognized by the United States Olympic Committee and the International Skating Union. U.S. Figure Skating is comprised of more than 750 member clubs, collegiate clubs, school-affiliated clubs and more than 1,000 registered Learn to Skate USA programs representing more than 191,700 members. U.S. Figure Skating is charged with the development of the sport on all levels within the United States including athletes, officials, sanctioning of events and exhibitions and establishing the rules and guidelines by which the sport is governed.

For more information, please contact LOCAL CLUB MEDIA CONTACT AT XXX.XXX-XXXX or Taylor Dean, U.S. Figure Skating communications, at 719.228.3411.

MEDIA ADVISORY

CLUB NAME

STREET ADDRESS/CITY, STATE, ZIP CODE

PHONE: XXX.XXX.XXXX FAX: XXX.XXX.XXXX

CLUB WEBSITE: www.xxxx.com



Local Media Contact: Joe Public, Title with club, phone number

U.S. Figure Skating Media Contact: Taylor Dean, Coordinator, Communications, 719.228.3411

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DATE HERE

FROM: NAME OF CLUB

WHAT: 2019 NATIONAL SKATING MONTH CELEBRATION

WHEN: DATE OF CLINIC

WHERE: LOCATION OF CLINIC

TIME: DURATION OF CLINIC

ABOUT NATIONAL SKATING MONTH

National Skating Month welcomes potential skaters to a day of skill introduction and development, education and motivation. The event will allow participants young and old to experience figure skating and learn the basics from professional instructors in a fun-filled environment.

Provide specific details about the clinic, such as who will participate, what will take place and unique opportunities for the media.

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NEWS RELEASE

STREET ADDRESS/CITY, STATE, ZIP CODE
PHONE: XXX.XXX.XXXX FAX: XXX.XXX.XXXX
CLUB WEBSITE: www.xxxx.com



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Members of the Media Invited to Celebrate 2019 National Skating Month at VENUE

CITY, State (Date) – The Club Name invites members of the media to try their hand at ice skating at the Venue in City, Date, to celebrate National Skating Month. Following a brief exhibition by club members, media will learn the basic elements of the sport in a group lesson format under the direction of coach Jane Doe. Media will have the opportunity to interview participating skaters, coaches and parents.

The demonstration presents a unique opportunity for media to learn about the sport of figure skating as well as what it takes to learn to skate and become competitive. Cameras will be allowed on the ice, and rental skates will be available. To participate, please RSVP to name at email or phone by date.

Clinic Schedule

1:00-1:30	Suggested arrival time for skate rental, camera set-up, etc.
1:30	Off-ice orientation
1:50	On-ice warm-up time
2:00	Demonstration by club members
2:05	Group lesson with coach Jane Doe
2:45	Demonstration of figure skating by media and experienced skaters
2:50-3:30	Interviews and refreshments

Provide information here about your club/arena, the clinic instructor and any significant local skaters or celebrities that will attend. **Example1:** Coach Lori Johnson of Portland spent 15 years with Ice Capades, 10 years as a competitive skater and five as an assistant show director for Disney on Ice. Before founding NAFSC's first synchronized skating team, Johnson coached a precision team at the Skating Club of Brunswick. **Example2:** The Family Ice Center, which has donated the ice for this special event, has been southern Maine's premier ice skating and community center since 1999. It offers year-round skating, including northern New England's only outdoor refrigerated ice surface. For more information, please visit www.familyice.org.

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