



#NationalSkatingMonth  
usfigureskating.org



# LET'S GET STARTED!

## HOW DO YOU LEARN TO SKATE?

Learning to skate is easy and fun. It requires a little determination, a lot of practice and no fear of falling. Whether your goal is to learn to skate backward, spin really fast or even land an Axel, we've got the place for you to start! Remember, every champion had to begin with a few lessons — just like you!

## WHERE DO I GO?

Go to [LearnToSkateUSA.com](http://LearnToSkateUSA.com) to find a skating program near you. Contact your local facility and ask about group class schedules, registration information and public skating times. With more than 1,000 established skating programs across the country, Learn to Skate USA is the best place to begin. Start learning to skate, earning colorful badges and having fun with friends and family on the ice! Learn to Skate USA is the only skating program endorsed by U.S. Figure Skating, USA Hockey and US Speedskating, with support from Special Olympics, the Professional Skaters Association and the U.S. Ice Rink Association.

## EQUIPMENT

Being a successful skater does not require fancy equipment, but it is important that you have properly-fitting skates; warm, comfortable clothes; a hat or safety helmet; and a pair of gloves or mittens.

## SKATES

It is essential that skates fit properly. Skates that are uncomfortable or too big will frustrate beginning skaters. It's important to take the time to find a pair that offers adequate support and fits comfortably. Always take a little walk in your skates off the ice before going on the ice to help determine if they fit properly.

## FITTING

First, find a pair of skates that snugly and comfortably fit your feet. Your heel should be as far back inside the boot as possible and should not be able to slide up and down once the skates are properly laced. Your toes, however, should not feel pinched. Once the skates are laced, you should be able to wiggle them. Remember, you're seeking a snug fit and comfort.

Now, find skates that offer adequate ankle support. If a skate boot lacks support, you will need to use a lot of strength just trying to stay upright.

Socks or tights are very important as well. Your feet will feel best if you wear one pair of lightweight socks or tights. Bulky or thick socks can limit the skate's support and create uncomfortable "bumps" inside your boots.

Rental skates are made to fit everyone — therefore, they fit no one precisely. Be aware that your skate size is not always the same as your shoe size. Take your time and keep trying on skates until you find a pair that fits.

## LACING

The way your skates look when they are laced up can offer a clue as to how well they fit. To get started with proper lacing, tap your heel back into the boot as far as possible. Gently pull the tongue completely up and try to secure it straight up and down before tucking it beside your foot. Starting with the second or third set of laces from the bottom, begin to pull the laces tightly, one pair at a time, so the boot closes well over the front of your foot. It is important that the laces do not slip. The laces should be snug through the ankle area and the bottom two sets of hooks. The top two can be a little looser to allow for some flexibility. If extra lace remains, try to cross it over the hooks neatly. Do not wind the extra lace around the skates if possible. Beware of loose flying bows, because they can cause accidents. When skates are laced properly, there should be enough room, with ankles flexed, to stick a finger down between the back of the boot and your leg. If your foot hurts or doesn't feel right, take time to relace and adjust.

## TAKING CARE OF YOUR SKATES

Never walk on hard surfaces or concrete with uncovered blades — this will ruin them. If you own your own skates, purchase a pair of skate guards for walking off the ice to protect your blades. Always dry off your blades with a towel before storing them in your bag or taking them home. Wet blades may rust, and rusted blades will not glide very well. Also, keep your blades sharp. Sharp blades grab the ice better than dull ones, especially when stopping. Ask your director or instructor for the best places to get your blades sharpened.

## PROPER ATTIRE

Whether skating indoors or outdoors, layer your clothing so you can regulate your own comfort level. Most indoor arenas are kept between 50 and 60 degrees, so jackets are recommended. Comfort and the ability to move freely are also important. We suggest close-fitting but not tight pants. Sweatpants or warm-up pants are ideal. As you start to skate, you may wish to discard a layer.

## SAFETY HELMETS

U.S. Figure Skating strongly recommends the use of helmets for beginner skaters of all ages. A helmet should be comfortable and snug. Be sure that it sits level on your head, not tilted back or pulled too low over your forehead. The chin strap should be securely buckled so that the helmet doesn't move in any direction, which can be important during a fall or a collision. When buying a helmet, it's important to have the user try it on in the store to ensure a proper fit.

## DO:

- Wear helmet low in front to protect forehead
- Fasten buckle and check strap adjustment often.
- Replace your helmet immediately if it shows any visible signs of damage.
- Clean helmet with mild soap/water only.
- Store helmet in a cool dry place.

## WHICH HELMETS WORK FOR ICE SKATING?

A hockey, bicycle, skateboard or ski helmet (multi-sport) is suitable for the beginning ice skater. These helmets are designed to withstand more than one moderate impact, but be aware that protection is provided for only a limited number of impacts. All helmets should be replaced if visibly damaged. Consult the manufacturer's instructions for guidance on when the helmet should be replaced.

## HOW TO FALL AND GET UP

Even the best skaters in the world fall, so it's important to know that falling is a necessary part of learning to skate, and it doesn't need to be scary. Always remember to fall to one side, not forward or straight back on your tailbone.

- Begin by practicing a few times off the ice before getting on the ice.
- Lower your center of gravity, slide onto one hip, relax and collapse all the way to the ice.
- Protect your head from snapping back and hitting the ice by tucking your chin.
- Do not use your hands to break your fall.
- To stand up, roll over onto your hands and knees, and place one foot beneath you on the ice between your hands.
- Place your other foot beneath you and slowly push to a standing position, keeping your knees slightly bent. As you stand, be sure to maintain your balance.

And don't forget your gloves or mittens! Learning to fall is an important part of ice skating. Your hands will feel much better if you are wearing gloves or mittens. If you forget to bring them, ask the rink's lost and found desk if you can borrow a pair.

## SAFE SKATING RULES

- Skaters are required to observe all ice rules, demonstrate courteous behavior and be considerate of other skaters at all times.
- Safe skating will be rigorously enforced.
- No carrying children.
- Entry onto the ice surface must be made through specified access points in the barrier.
- Skate in control and at a comfortable speed at all times.
- No more than three people may skate together in a group during a general session.
- After a fall, the skater should get up as quickly as possible to avoid injury to or from passing skaters.
- Look out for other skaters. Always be alert to the moves of skaters and professionals.
- Skaters should leave the ice in order to make adjustments to skates.
- Make sure the ice re-surfacer entry doors are closed while you are on the ice. Once opened, please leave the ice surface immediately.

**SKATE SAFE  
AND HAVE FUN!**