

Basic Techniques

HOW DO YOU LEARN TO SKATE?

Learning to skate is quite easy and fun. It requires a little determination, a lot of practice and no fear of falling down! Before you know it, you will be gliding forward and backward, able to show your family and friends what you can do on the ice. Whether your goal is to skate backward, spin really fast, score a goal or win a race, we've got the know-how to help. Remember, every champion had to begin with a few easy lessons, just like you.

HOW TO FALL AND GET UP

Even the best skaters in the world fall. Falling is a necessary part of learning and does not need to be scary. Always remember to fall to one side, not forward or 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 onto your hands and knees, and place one foot on the ice between your hands. Then, place your other foot on the ice between your hands, and slowly push to a standing position, keeping your knees slightly bent. As you stand, try to maintain your balance.

EDGES

All skate blades have two edges – outside and inside – and two directions of travel – forward and backward. You have two feet, so there are eight total edges to learn. Whenever you are skating on a curve, you are gliding on an edge. It is very important to use your edges while skating, as all advanced skating skills require strong edges.

FORWARD SKATING

Proper control and balance are key elements in successful gliding. Skate forward in a stepping or marching action with your toes slightly turned out. Take little steps in the beginning; after three to four steps forward, use a two-foot glide for three counts. Knees and ankles should be slightly bent, toes pointed in direction of travel, and chest and head up with arms held slightly to the front and parallel to the ice for balance. Repeat, pushing harder with each stroke. You will gain confidence and speed as you go.

BACKWARD SKATING/WIGGLES

Start with feet parallel – knees bent – and shift your weight between your feet, pushing outward with each. The secret is to maintain your balance on the balls of your feet, keeping knees bent and chest up. You can also try wiggling your hips against your shoulders while shifting your weight and pushing backward off the balls of your feet. If you are wiggling but not going anywhere, try walking backward slowly with your toes turned in, shifting

your weight and maintaining your balance just to feel the momentum.

FORWARD SWIZZLES

Begin standing in a 'V' position with your heels together and your toes slightly turned out. Slowly bend your knees and ankles and press inward. Allow your feet to move forward and separate until they are about one foot apart. Then, straighten your knees and bring your toes together to form an inverted 'V' position, making a circular motion with both feet. This will get you into a two-foot glide parallel position. Try six to eight repetitions, gaining speed as you swizzle. Remember to keep your chest and head up and both arms extended to maintain balance.

BACKWARD SWIZZLES

These use the same motion as forward swizzles but going backward. Begin in an inverted 'V' position, toes together, knees bent, press on the balls of your feet and using your inside edges, press heels outward and let your skates glide to about a foot apart. Then rise up with your knees bringing your heels together into a two-foot backward glide position. Repeat this down-up rhythmic motion until you can complete six to eight continuous repetitions.

FORWARD ONE-FOOT GLIDE

Balancing on one foot is very important. After getting a moving start, balance in a two-foot glide position, and then pick up one foot. Hold your free foot close to your skating leg in a toe-to-heel position. The hip on this side of your body should be raised. Your shoulders should be square to the line of travel, with your arms parallel to the ice. A strong glide occurs when a skater balances on one foot for at least three counts or glides the distance of his or her height.

FORWARD CROSSOVERS

Forward crossovers require a lot of practice to master. To begin, skate in a counterclockwise direction. Hold your upper body strong over the curve, shoulders open and twisted (hugging the circle). Stroke onto a left forward outside edge knee slightly bent. Now cross your right foot over your left foot, stepping inside the circle. Shift your weight to your right foot, gliding onto a right forward inside edge, and tuck your left hip slightly under your right hip. Both feet will cross until your left foot gives a slight push with the outside edge into a full outward extension under the body. Return to the starting position and repeat.

BACKWARD ½ SWIZZLE PUMPS

This is an important developmental skill to learn before backward crossovers. Stand on a painted hockey circle. Your shoulders and arms should be hugging the circle and your head turned back inside the circle so you have a full view behind

you. Start moving backward. Your feet will have different functions – one is the gliding or guiding foot, and the other is the pumping foot. Your gliding foot will remain on a strong back-outside edge. Your pumping foot will be in constant motion, powering the ½ swizzle by pushing outward in a 'C' motion and drawing toward your gliding heel in a "swizzling" action. After doing this twice around the circle, turn around and try the other direction.

BACKWARD CROSSOVERS

The better you get at backward crossovers, the faster you will go. Before you begin, review the backward ½ swizzle pumps that we previously described. Make sure you are leaning into the circle and your upper body is still. While pumping outward, the heel of the pumping foot slides in front of the toe of the skating foot, and the weight transfers from the skating foot to the pumping foot. The most important part of backward crossovers is the weight transfer. This action makes a question-mark pattern. Initially, skaters can simply pick up the foot underneath and place it next to the skating foot. The proper rhythm of a backward crossover is "push, cross, hold, together" or a one-two rhythm, one being the pump and two being the cross. As you get better at the crossing part, work toward pushing out with the undercut, using the outside edge to gain power.

BASIC STOPS:

SNOWPLOW STOPS - ONE OR TWO FEET

Begin by skating with a little speed in a two-foot glide position. Bend your knees and ankles, and prepare to stop. Apply pressure to the inside edge(s) of the skates. Your heels should begin angling out. A skidding action (making snow) will begin on the ice, taking you to a complete stop. You might use the words "glide, bend, slide" to help you learn to use the snowplow. It is often best to work on skidding first while holding on to the wall, then while standing still and, finally, with speed. You must press hard to skid and stop. If you press too hard, you won't be able to shave off any ice. If you don't press hard enough, not only will you not shave off any ice, but also you might end up doing the splits!

T-STOP (R OR L)

Stand in an upside-down 'T' position. Your back foot will become your stopping foot. To learn a T-stop, skate forward on a slow one-foot glide, then barely place the free foot on the ice with the pinky toe pressing down toward the ice. Bend the skating knee, put pressure on the stopping foot and draw the stopping foot into the heel of the skating foot. If possible, slightly shift your weight to your stopping foot, pressing down on an outside edge to come to a complete stop. Keep your shoulders square to the line of travel.