

BASIC TECHNIQUES

HOW DO YOU LEARN TO SKATE?

Learning to skate is quite easy and fun. It requires determination and a lot of practice. 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 doesn't need to be scary. Always remember to fall to one side, not forward or back on your tailbone, and don't use your hands to break your fall.

Begin by practicing a few times off 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.

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. Try to maintain balance as you stand.

EDGES

All advanced skating skills require strong 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.

FORWARD SKATING

Proper control and balance are key elements in successful gliding.

- Skate forward in a stepping/marching action with your toes slightly turned out.
- Take little steps at first; after three to four steps, do 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 in 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 and knees bent. Push outward with each foot while shifting your weight between each foot. Maintain your balance on the balls of your feet, 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're wiggling but not

going anywhere, try walking backward slowly with your toes turned in, shifting your weight just to feel the momentum.

FORWARD SWIZZLES

Begin standing in a "V" position with heels together and toes slightly turned out. Slowly bend your knees and ankles and press inward.

Allow your feet to move forward and separate until they're about one foot apart. Then, straighten your knees and bring your toes together to form an inverted "V" position. 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.

Beginning in an inverted "V" position, toes together, knees bent, press on the balls of your feet. Using your inside edges, press heels out and let your skates glide to about a foot apart. Rise up with your knees, bringing your heels together into a two-foot backward glide position.

Repeat this rhythmic motion until you can complete six to eight continuous repetitions.

FORWARD ONE-FOOT GLIDE

After getting a moving start, balance in a two-foot glide position. Pick up one foot, and hold it close to your skating leg in a toe-to-heel position. The hip on this side of your body should be raised. Shoulders should be square, arms parallel to the ice. Try to balance on one foot for at least three counts or glide the distance of your height.

FORWARD CROSSOVERS

Forward crossovers require a lot of practice to master.

- Begin skating in a counterclockwise direction.
- Hold your upper body strong over the curve, shoulders open and hugging the circle (right arm in front).
- Stroke onto a left forward outside edge, knee slightly bent. 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 1/2 SWIZZLE PUMPS

This is an important developmental skill to learn before backward crossovers.

- Standing 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 1/2 swizzle by pushing outward in a "C" motion and drawing toward your gliding heel in a "swizzling" action.

BACKWARD CROSSOVERS

Before you begin, review the backward 1/2 swizzle pumps described above. Lean into the circle with a still upper body. 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. 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 some speed in a two-foot glide position. Bend your knees and ankles. 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. Use the words "glide, bend, slide" to learn to use the skid.

Work on skidding first while holding on to the wall, then while standing still and, finally, moving. Press hard to skid and stop, but if you press too hard, you won't be able to shave off ice. If you don't press hard enough, you won't shave off any ice, and also you might fall in a split!

T-STOP (RIGHT OR LEFT)

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 lightly 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, lightly 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.