

How to Form a new U.S. Figure Skating Member Club

About U.S. Figure Skating

Mission Statement: We create and cultivate opportunities for participation and achievement in figure skating.

U.S. Figure Skating, the national governing body for figure skating in the United States, is comprised of member clubs, collegiate clubs, school-affiliated clubs, Learn to Skate USA programs and individual members. The charter member clubs of U.S. Figure Skating numbered seven in 1921 when the association was formed. Today, more than 750 full member, collegiate and school-affiliated clubs and 1,000 Learn to Skate USA programs cover the country from coast to coast and from border to border, and the number of skaters who register on an annual basis total more than 203,000.

Tests – moves in the field, free skating, pairs and dance – are the measurement of progress in the various disciplines of the sport. Official test sessions are conducted by member clubs for their members, members of other clubs, including collegiate clubs and individual members. Under certain conditions, members of other skating associations may also take the U.S. Figure Skating official tests.

Competitions on every level are a principal incentive for figure skaters to train, develop and improve their proficiency. By ascending the competition "ladder," competitors registered with U.S. Figure Skating have the opportunity to enter international figure skating events, among them the Winter Olympic Games and ISU World Figure Skating Championships. All figure skating competitions in the United States, especially the regional and sectional challenges and finals and the U.S. Championships, are sanctioned by U.S. Figure Skating and conducted under the auspices of member clubs.

Exhibitions and ice shows showcase the talents of figure skaters. Member clubs are eligible to hold figure skating performances in the United States with the sanction of U.S. Figure Skating. Skaters representing member and collegiate clubs, individual members and Learn to Skate USA program members are eligible to participate in such events. In addition, a member club, at its discretion and subject to conditions prescribed in the official rules, may also invite the participation of nonregistered skaters and professionals.

The **rules** which govern the sport of figure skating on ice – the curriculum, test structure, competition regulations and all related informational material – are the result of the labor of countless dedicated figure skaters throughout the world since the birth of the sport. The official rulebook of U.S. Figure Skating contains this information as well as related educational and instructional material. It is available not only to members of the association but to all who are interested in figure skating on ice to encourage their greater participation in and enjoyment of the sport.

How to form a new U.S. Figure Skating Club:

Qualifications for Club Membership – Interim, Provisional and Full Items of Consideration in Forming a New Club

- A. U.S. Figure Skating Rulebook
- B. Mission Statement
- C. Club Programs, Services and Membership Benefits
- D. Board of Directors
- E. Officer Job Descriptions
- F. Bylaws

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- G. Dues
- H. Strategic Planning
- I. Developing a Communication Plan
- J. Working with your Coaching Staff
- K. Rink Relations

Qualifications for Club Membership

Procedures for Interim and Provisional Membership

1. The applicant club shall have been skating as an organized club 6 consecutive months prior to the date of application. A club is deemed to be organized when an election of officers and directors has taken place and bylaws have been approved by the members of the club. The bylaws should be in a form similar to the sample drafted by U.S. Figure Skating available on the website, or in such form that will be acceptable to the Membership Committee, and which calls for the election of officers and directors in accordance with generally accepted parliamentary procedures.
2. The principal skating headquarters of a club shall be the address of the rink in which the club conducts the majority of its skating activities. This address will be recorded in the U.S. Figure Skating database. A club may only name one principal skating headquarters (MR 2.04).
3. To maintain a club's principal skating headquarters, a Facility Usage Form must be completed each year by the club president, certifying the facility is the principal skating headquarters of said club and said club secures ice and/or runs sanctioned activities at the facility certified as the principal skating headquarters in compliance with rule MR 2.04 (A). Clubs in violation of this rule may be subject to disciplinary action by the Membership Committee, including omission of said principal skating headquarters from the U.S. Figure Skating directory.
4. The applicant club shall have more than 25 home club members, 10 of whom are adult members over the age of eighteen (18) years.
5. A payment of \$50 shall be included with the application.
6. An applicant club may be granted interim membership by the Membership Committee at any time during the year, if the application has been investigated and approved.
7. For the application to be considered for provisional club membership at the next meeting of the Governing Council, it must be sent no later than December 31st.
8. As an interim and provisional club, the club will be able to sanction exhibitions, carnivals and ice shows, hold test sessions, and all club members are eligible to compete representing your club. There are two things that an interim/provisional club **cannot** do until you are a full member club: 1) host a qualifying competition and 2) vote at the annual Governing Council.
9. Until the applicant club has been approved for interim, members who wish to compete or test should join U.S. Figure Skating through another member club or as an individual member.
10. During the 6-month formation process, interim and provisional status or the first year after full membership is granted, the applicant club must complete club education requirements as specified by the Membership Committee.

Items of Consideration in Forming a New Club

The first and most important thing to consider when forming a new club is that you are starting a small business. This is not a small task, nor should it be viewed as such. Use the following information as a reference tool while you are in the forming stages of your new organization. More detailed information can be found on the Clubs home page of www.usfigureskating.org.

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A. U.S. Figure Skating Rulebook

Persons seeking to establish a new skating club should secure a copy of the current official rulebook and study the Membership Rules (MR 1.00). Members should also be familiar with the rules on sanctions and eligibility, club ethics and the contents of this manual.

B. Mission Statement — Answers WHO are we and WHY do we exist? WHY are we committed to support that existence?

- What is a mission statement?
 - Every club needs to define its fundamental purpose, philosophy, and values. The mission statement clarifies the essence of club existence. It describes the needs the club was created to fill and answers the basic question of why the club exists.
- Why have one?
 - Without guidance, it is difficult to establish boundaries for appropriate course of action. The mission statement provides the basis for judging the success of the club and its programs. It helps verify if the club is on the right track and making the right decisions. It provides direction when the club needs to adapt to new demands. Attention to mission helps the board adhere to its primary purpose and helps during conflicts by serving as a touchstone for every decision. The mission statement can be used as a tool for resource allocation. A powerful mission statement attracts donors, volunteers and community involvement.
- How to develop a mission statement?
 - An effective mission statement is concise, to the point, realistic, operational, inspirational, motivational, informative and even emotional. It is not too abstract or too intellectual. The mission clearly states the purpose of the club. It is forward-thinking, positive and describes success. It is clear and focused so that the reader can identify with the statement. It reflects the values and clearly enumerates the reasons why the club exists.

C. Club Programs, Services and Membership Benefits

Why should someone join your club? To be attractive, your membership package must provide clear benefits. Club programs and services are designed to meet the specific needs of its membership. Some of the benefits and services of member clubs include:

- Holding practice sessions for:
 - Moves in the field
 - Free skating
 - Ice dancing
 - Pairs
 - Synchronized skating
 - Theatre On Ice teams
- Conducting U.S. Figure Skating test sessions
- Hosting Compete USA, nonqualifying and qualifying competitions
- Hosting exhibitions, ice shows and other performances
- Hosting annual membership meetings and membership drives
- Fundraising activities
- Offering grants and financial support to members
- Rewards and recognition for member accomplishments

- Hosting judges, referees, accountants and technical schools
 - Hosting training camps, clinics and seminars
 - Conducting other programs such as off-ice training and educational seminars for skater development
 - Offering coach development programs
 - Delivering parent education programs
 - Organizing social activities
 - Member of an interclub association
- D.** Board of Directors — Serving on a figure skating board is not only a huge responsibility but a privilege. One needs to remember that he or she is an ambassador for the sport of figure skating as well as his or her local club. According to nonprofit corporation law, a board member must meet certain standards of conduct and attention to his or her responsibilities to the club. These are referred to as Duty of Care, Loyalty and Obedience. Here are the definitions:
1. DUTY OF CARE means using your best judgment and that you have exercised reasonable caution in making decisions.
 2. DUTY OF LOYALTY means putting your personal and professional interests aside for the good of the club.
 3. DUTY OF OBEDIENCE means being true to the club's mission.

Role of the Board

- Acts as the fiduciary and guardian of the organizational assets
- Reviews and approves club's annual budget
- Establishes short- and long-term goals
- Assesses progress toward goals
- Assumes stewardship responsibility for club finances
- Sets policies for the overall management and operation of the club

Expectations of Board Members

- Attend regularly scheduled board meetings
- Participate in committee work
- Become informed about the policies and programs of the club
- Participate in fundraising activities and special events sponsored by the club
- Contribute financially according to ability
- Participate in board orientation activities
- Act as an informed advocate of the club

E. Sample Officer Job Descriptions:

President:

It shall be the duty of the president to take charge of the club and to preside at all meetings of the club and of the Board of Directors. The president shall be responsible for the entire supervision and management of the club and its property, pending the action of the Board of Directors; have the power to suspend any member for violating the bylaws or regulations of the club, pending the approval of the Board; and may call special meetings.

Other specific duties include:

- Ensuring the club's goals and mission are being supported by the board
- Working with appropriate members to oversee the budget and club's finances
- Leading the board during and outside board meetings

Vice President:

It shall be the duty of the vice president to assist the president in the discharge of his/her duties and in the president's absence to assume his/her duties and officiate in his/her stead.

Other specific duties include:

- Lead board meetings if president is absent
- Support the president in strategic planning

Treasurer:

The treasurer shall have charge of the funds of the club and shall keep a record of all receipts and disbursements and render a written report when requested by the president or Board of Directors.

Other specific duties include:

- Pay out reimbursements
- Keep track of checkbook
- Report to president on finances
- Be responsible for handling tax issue of club or for finding a resource to handle these issues
- Help in the budgeting process for the club and present to the board for approval
- Help provide a checks and balance system for the club's finances
- Make bank deposits and do all bank dealings
- Understand nonprofit organization financial accounting
- Attend board meetings and report monthly

Secretary:

It shall be the duty of the secretary to keep the minutes of the meetings of the club and of the Board of Directors and supervise all reports.

Other specific duties include:

- Supervise correspondence of the club
- Prepare and issue notices
- Reserve rooms for all meetings of the club and Board of Directors
- Responsible for club handbook updates

- Notify U.S. Figure Skating of club officer and board changes

Membership Chair:

It shall be the responsibility of the membership chair to handle all applications for membership to the club.

Other specific duties include:

- Update address changes for club members
- Distribute information to prospective members
- Handle the yearly membership drive

Sanction Chair:

It shall be the responsibility of the sanctions chair to ensure that events being sponsored by the club are sanctioned, if necessary. This includes competitions and performances.

Test Chair:

It shall be the responsibility of the test chair for the planning, executing and reporting of each test session.

SafeSport Chair:

Ensures the club compliant with current SafeSport policies and procedures, serves as the club's primary SafeSport contact for U.S. Figure Skating and oversees the implementation of educational programs for all club members, their parents/guardians and coaches. In addition, the SafeSport chair performs other functions as necessary to fulfill U.S. Figure Skating's continuing efforts to foster a safe, healthy and positive environment for its members and all participants.

Junior Board:

A Junior Board can give skaters an opportunity to develop leadership skills, provide service to others and become effective, active members. Some positions can include president, vice president, treasurer, secretary, historian and members-at-large.

Specific duties for junior board members include:

- Conducting monthly meetings
- Organizing and hosting club events: holiday parties, charity events to support local organizations, organize games and activities for the younger skaters during club events, recognize club skaters during qualifying competitions, etc.
- Hosting charity events to support local organizations
- Creating a mentor program through Learn to Skate USA and younger skaters
- Organizing fundraisers for the club
- Maintaining a club website page for Junior Board information, activities and calendar

Resources:

["Board Officer Responsibilities & Qualifications." BoardSource, boardsource.org/.](https://boardsource.org/)

F. Bylaws

A set of bylaws is to be submitted with the application for approval by the national vice chair for rules and policies of the Membership Committee. Bylaws are the legally binding rules that outline how the board of a nonprofit will operate. All nonprofit organizations need these regulations to help determine how they are to be governed. In order to ensure that your club is fairly governed and legally protected, board members need clear and concise bylaws that address critical organizational issues. Bylaws are a guide and a reference on how a club is structured, what rights the participants/members have and the procedures by which those rights can be put into effect.

This document must be tailored to the needs of your own organization. There should also be provisions for making changes to the bylaws if something has been missed on the first attempt. In addition, you must include a provision for conflict resolution in your club and conflict of interest policy. The procedure can be part of your bylaws or the bylaws can point to an adopted procedure. To find a sample set of bylaws, please go to [login to](#)

G. Dues

The primary source of revenue for your club will be from the fees assessed to members. All member clubs set their own fees, membership categories and benefits. Your local requirements will dictate what the fees should be based upon the level of benefits or services your club offers. A portion of the fees collected from your members will be submitted to U.S. Figure Skating, making them both members of your own club and members of U.S. Figure Skating. Different membership categories to consider when designing your club include full home, subsequent home, associate, introductory, coaching, collegiate, alumni, supportive and Learn to Skate USA. SKATING magazine is included for the first member of each family.

H. Developing Your Strategic Plan

Strategic planning determines where an organization is going, how it intends to get there and how it will evaluate its progress. Defining your mission and values are important first steps. The next step, your SWOT analysis, examines the **S**trengths, **W**eaknesses, **O**pportunities and **T**hreats facing your program. Divide a piece of paper into the four sections and brainstorm each one while considering internal and external factors. An internal strength could be a reliable staff, while an external threat could be the national economy. Consider as many information sources as possible. To find a template of a SWOT analysis, please [login to](#)

Next, define your goals and strategies for the year. Aim for turning your opportunities into programs and overcoming your weaknesses by using your strengths. Don't waste time worrying about factors you cannot control. Instead, consider creative ways to address them. Here is a list of questions to begin your first strategic planning session:

Fifteen Questions for Strategic Planning:

1. Do we need to exist? If so, why?
2. What is our image?
3. What would we like our image to be?
4. What impact would we like to have?
5. Who do we serve?
6. What are the needs of our constituents?
7. What do we do?
8. What programs are we going to need to develop?
9. What are our strengths?
10. What are our weaknesses?
11. What are the threats facing us?
12. What are our opportunities?
13. What trends are taking place that will affect us?

14. Who is our competition?
15. What is our strategic advantage?

I. Communication Plan – Internal and External

It is extremely important to establish a means of communication between the leadership of the club and its members. Keeping your website relevant, using social media platforms and distributing a monthly e-newsletter serve this purpose, and they are an inexpensive method of keeping your members aware of schedule changes, new programs, etc.

It is essential that you also establish a good working relationship with the media responsible for covering your local area. The media are in the information-for-profit business, and your role is to assist reporters and editors by being a resource for them. The media relations contact person should have a good understanding of the sport of figure skating and a desire to learn about and work with the media.

The key to building a good relationship with the media is to be professional. Although you may be a volunteer, you should be perceived not as a volunteer but rather as a professional publicist.

It is equally important that you understand that the media may pass at your first attempts, but don't be afraid to try again. It is OK to be persistent if you have not heard back, especially if you approach them with a new angle. Be sure to explain to them how this affects the community and, in turn, their readers. Try asking, "Do we have a special story to share about our members or club programs?" such as a member who has overcome adversity and is still pursuing their skating goals or someone who has contributed in an unusual way to the program. Give them different angles to work with beyond the sport alone.

J. Coaching Staff

A strong figure skating club is a direct result of the quality of the professional coaches and instructors associated with it. Most importantly, your staff must be qualified, well trained and act as an asset to your club. All coaches and instructors must also be compliant per the rules of U.S. Figure Skating prior to working within all club events and activities. Staying current on all coaching regulations will help ensure your success.

Employee vs. Independent Contractor

Skating coaches can either be hired as an employee of the rink, club or municipality, or treated as independent contractors. Group lesson instructors are generally classified as employees of the program (rink, club or municipality operated), and private lesson coaches are independent contractors. Consult with your state employment office to find the rules in your state.

There are 20 factors indicating whether an individual is considered an employee or independent contractor by the IRS. A person does not need to meet all criteria. Make sure the tax status of your staff is correct! If coaches are working in your facility as independent contractors, they should provide your facility with a copy of their certificate of insurance naming your rink as an additionally insured entity.

K. Rink Relations

One of the most essential components of any successful club operation is the ability to work well with your local rink. The relationship that the club develops with the rink is a true partnership and should be approached this way.

The club and the rink have many of the same goals and objectives. Together they will be able to provide a greater overall service to the paying customer while achieving these goals. Among these common goals is the desire to have a large and consistent flow of customers into the facility to support all skating programs. This will allow for a steady revenue flow for the rink and a continuous source of new members for the club. It can bring long-term financial benefits to both the club and the rink.

Each rink operation will be different and offers unique opportunities. Some rinks will rent the ice to the club and let the club operate figure skating and possibly even the Learn to Skate USA program. Other rinks will operate their own figure skating and Learn to Skate USA group classes, allowing the club to conduct the test sessions and competitions. It is the option of the rink manager to decide which operation they select. Either

way, the club and the rink need to establish a positive working relationship. Both methods of operation can work well for the club, provided there is a good relationship.

Communication with the rink management is essential to establishing the team approach. Developing this relationship is not always easy and may take some nurturing. Many rink managers do not understand the needs of figure skating and must be educated. This is where a positive and helpful posture can assist the club in developing this positive working relationship.

Being involved with the management team of your facility is the only sure way to have good communication and a solid working relationship. In almost every negative situation, the issues come down to a lack of understanding of each other's concerns. Invite the rink management to attend your board meetings. If they take an interest in your club and learn more about your issues, you will help them to understand the way you operate.

Be aware that the rink manager must deal with other ice users in the facility. Hockey and public skating are very strong revenue streams for most rink operations. The rink manager will typically protect these areas of strong revenue. As a result, you should be realistic in the approach to obtain figure skating ice time. It is also important to establish a relationship with the other user groups within your facility, including the youth hockey club. A strong relationship will benefit the club when seeking extra ice time for competitions or test sessions and will also help the club when trying to unload excess ice time.

About the U.S. Ice Rink Association:

The United States Ice Rink Association (formerly - Serving The American Rinks) is a nonprofit national membership association for individuals, facilities and vendors in the ice rink and arena industry. The organization was formed in 2000 through a joint venture between U.S. Figure Skating and USA Hockey with the intent of servicing the needs of ice skating facilities and their employees in the United States.

Our Mission:

To advance the ice rink industry through membership, world-class education, training, resources and events.

Our Vision:

We are the premier membership organization dedicated to fostering the success of the ice rink industry in the United States.

Three Major Goals:

1. Promote the sustainability and growth of the ice rink industry
2. Raise the level of professionalism amongst ice rink industry members by becoming the undisputed leader in education, training and resources
3. To provide our members with exclusive networking, educational and professional development opportunities