

Figure Skating – Avocation or Career

Eventually a skater under the age of 18 and his or her parents need to discuss both short and long term goals and aspirations that the following different levels of commitment require:

- **Serious Competitive Elite Skater?**

Your child may decide he or she wants to skate for and take tests, perhaps even entering USFS qualifying competitions.

There is nothing wrong with continuing in group ballet, ballroom dance, and exercise lessons on a weekly or bi-weekly basis to supplement private figure skating lessons.

- **Serious Test Track Skater?**

What if your child may just wants to skate for fun, but also master certain skills? There is nothing wrong with supplementing group lessons with private lessons on a weekly or bi-weekly basis.

- **Semi-serious Recreational Skater?**

If you do not feel you can commit to being a serious competitive skater, it may be that the lifestyle of a “serious competitive skater” requires more dedication and self sacrifice than you wish to undertake.

At this level, skaters should continue taking group lessons with occasional private lessons on a weekly or bi-weekly basis.

Your child will still master many wonderful skating skills, have opportunities to take part in recreational figure skating competitions, perform in shows, and take skating tests.

- **Just For Fun Skater?**

It is much easier to just take group classes than commit to the expense of private lessons and expensive custom boots

and blades. Your child can still master many wonderful skating skills.

After deciding reasonable skating goals, an understanding needs to be reached to insure financial resources are available to accomplish both educational and skating goals.

It is never wise to over extend your financial resources as this places unwanted stress on the skater to accomplish unrealistic levels of achievement.

One weekly on-ice practice session may be sufficient for a “recreational” skater, but test and competition skaters need to be on the ice for at least two or three practice sessions per day at a Pre-Preliminary level and additional lessons and practice added as they progress towards their goal of achieving a gold medal.

Figure skating requires the development of multiple skills that involve many long hours in a rink practicing. Skaters really must frequently practice if they expect to consistently be able to perform at a high level. Training schedules may include an equal or greater amount of time on off ice activities.

Some serious skaters skate six days a week, but most ice skaters practice five days a week. Adding an extra weekly practice is more likely to occur as a competition approaches.

In the 1950s many rinks in cold winter climates were outdoors and only operated during the winter and closed in the spring not to reopen until late fall.

Gradually indoor rinks equipped with dehumidification systems extended the skating season with summer sessions.

Eventually most rinks have expanded their operation to twelve months, even in warm summer climates.

The popularity of figure skating has expanded due to coverage of national, World, and Olympic figure skating competitions. There is a noticeable up tick in new skaters after each winter Olympics.

The availability of ice on year a round basis has also been accompanied by an increase in the number of coaches and the use of improved training techniques.

Off-Ice Training:

It is a good investment to supplement on-ice sessions with off-ice training in ballet, dance, and conditioning. Every figure skater should spend some time practicing figure skating jumps off the ice.

Private Lessons:

Most beginning skaters start with a 15 minute weekly private lesson combined with skating five daily 45 to 60 minute practice sessions for each lesson they take. When a second lesson is added, the on-ice practice time should double and off-ice training should become part of the weekly schedule.

Progress depends on a consistent attendance for lessons and practices. Very little progress will occur if a skater arrives at the rink, but is unable to focus.

Skaters improve only if they do more than come to the rink to take their lesson each week. A beginning skater should attend public sessions to practice the skills that you taught in the group classes.

Freestyle, MITF, Dance, and Synchro practice sessions are more expensive than the public sessions that beginning skaters use to practice.

The following is a sample minimum Monday through Friday schedule for skaters in three different test levels:

No Test – Preliminary Test Level

- One daily practice session or public session after school
- A fifteen minute private lesson per week, plus advanced group classes
- Off-ice ballet class on Saturday

Pre- Juvenile - Intermediate Test Level

- Two forty-five minute daily practice sessions before school or
- Two forty-five minute daily practice sessions after school
- A thirty to forty-five minute private lesson per week
- Off-ice ballet class on Saturday

Novice - Senior Test Level

- Three forty-five minute daily practice sessions before school or
- Three forty-five minute daily practice sessions after school
- Forty-five to sixty minute private lessons per week
- Off-ice ballet class on Saturday

A skater who wants to consistently perform their best in tests and competitions needs to do off ice training. Much of the learning in ballet, dance, or gymnastics occurs in a group lesson setting. The default learning configuration as practiced in figure skating has evolved as private lessons.

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Figure skating is both art and sport and skaters need to comprehend their off-ice training in a way that will make complete and immediate sense on the ice

There are so many individuals giving skating lessons these days. Choosing the best coach for your child can be confusing, so take your time before making a commitment to one particular coach. You might ask coaches what their Professional

Skating Association (PSA) rating is to compare qualifications between coaches.

There are different personality and intensity levels that skaters, parents, and coaches may exhibit.

It is extremely important that there not be a clash in personalities and learning modalities. The coach selected should support your goals, but is not afraid to provide objective advice on the skater's progress.

Sometimes a coach and parent need to have a united front to handle the moodiness that seems inevitable, as happy, cooperative pre-teens become teenagers.

It is very important realize most skaters need parents and coaches to be aware of how they react to mood swings, tears, hostility, etc. Parents and coaches need to have a plan on how to handle these situations.

Aerobics, pilates, yoga, gymnastics, ballet, and ballroom dance are activities improves core body strength, flexibility, and stamina. All of which will help you perform better on the ice.

Many coaches recommend off ice jumping exercises. You should not attempt this on your own. Have your coach give you a lesson off ice. If you lack the proper training, you can actually create bad habits and even injury.