

Backward Stroking and Back Crossovers

Backwards Stroking

Skating backwards is very different from skating forward in that:

- The physics of the back pushes are more difficult than the forward pushes.
- The transfer of weight from one foot to another can't be accomplished in a straight line as is possible in forward stroking
- It is difficult to watch where you are going while learning to skate backwards.

The objective in backward stroking for beginners is to balance on shallow back inside edges and then transfer this skill to glide on shallow back outside edges.

Both back outside and inside edges require learning a "rat tail" push that is much more difficult to learn than forward outside and inside edge pushing.

The transfer of weight and placing the new skating foot on the correct edge and precisely on the arc of the circle pose challenges to the beginning skater.

Skaters need to develop the flexibility to rotate the skate at the ankle to place the new skating foot down properly on the intended edge without a "hook" or a change of edge.

The Push

There are two different back pushes. The standing start is more difficult. The skater straddles the long axis with about 15 to 24 inches separating their skates. The exact distance depends on the size of the skater.

The correct push begins on one foot, usually with the left foot supplying the initial thrust. This requires the skater to acquire the ability to momentarily balance on the pushing foot while turning the soon to be skating foot in a 90 degree angle to the long axis as the thrust is initiated.

The moving back push has the benefit of the momentum to help the skater maintain their balance while changing feet and transferring their weight.

Steps of Correct Backward Pushing

1. Start by gliding backwards on a right outside edge. Lift the left foot off the ice by rising on the knee. The outer side of the body should be slightly in front of the skating foot and looking into the center of the circle.

The thighs should be close together with the free leg-extending forward over the tracing. This position is referred to as a closed leg position.



Balancing on right foot on a shallow outside edge. The illustration shows the proper core body position from the skate through the hips, shoulders, and head.

2. The upper core body is in proper alignment when the chest and shoulders are positioned over ball of the skating foot.
3. The push is initiated when the skater shifts their weight to achieve a more erect body position and increase the knee bend to apply pressure on inside edge of the blade. This push is known as a "rat tail" push.
4. In preparation of pushing, it is necessary to shift your weight to the direction your body with travel while simultaneously straightening the other leg to accomplish the push. The thrust should force your body onto the left foot on the opposite arc.

Transition from right to left foot



Preparing to push from the right foot onto a shallow left back outside edge.

5. The left foot should strike the ice on a clean outside edge.
6. Pushing foot should not trail on the ice. Rising slightly on the skating knee will lift the entire free side of the body, including the pushing foot.



Free leg position after successfully transferring weight to left foot. The right foot off has lifted off the ice so it is positioned over the tracing.

7. Your core body should initially be square to the lobe or arc of the back outside edge.
8. Glide on the Backward Outside edge with free leg foot pigeon-toed over the tracing by pressing thighs together. As control increases, the upper body will begin to rotate and facing outside the circle in preparation of performing back outside half circles on the Pre-Preliminary MITF test.

Stages of a back outside push



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