

Learn-to-Skate Programs

Most skaters get their first exposure to skating by enrolling in a "group class" offered by the rink and/or club. This is a very cost-effective way to get started as a free, dance skater, or recreational skater.

Most rinks offer a range of classes based on a wide range of ages and skill levels. The fees are quite reasonable compared to the admission fee to a public session and a private instructor's fees.

There are two primary instructional programs in the USA, depending on the affiliation of your rink.

At United State Figure Skating (USFS) oriented rinks, the instructional program is called "Basic Skills", with skill levels starting with Snowplow Sam, Beginner 1, and Free Skating 1.

At International Skating Institute (ISI) oriented rinks, the classes are known as "Alpha", "Beta", "Gamma", "Delta", etc.

All of the programs have been developed using similar skill sets. While there are some differences, the goal sets out to provide someone with no previous experience skating with the very basic skills – learning how to fall properly, get up, and balance on two feet. The skill sets progress through learning edges, front and back crossovers, stops, and turns.

Students who complete the fundamental skill sequence at any level and are prepared to move onto advanced training can be tested for their badge.

Each program offers levels that require mastering progressively more complex and difficult skills. Usually, each level will encompass 4-8 weeks of instruction with lesson time of about 30 minutes per week. Some programs may offer one or more admissions to practice sessions.

In some programs skaters are tested by their instructors during the final class session and in others, the testing occurs at special sessions by an independent coach or USFS ranked judge prior to passing the badge and being advanced to the next level or evaluated as needing further development on specific elements.

Skaters who continue to enroll in group free skating classes generally also start taking private instruction with a qualified staff PSA coach. The coach they chose for private instruction frequently is someone that taught their group lessons. Parents and skaters may also evaluate other staff instructors by arranging a few trial lessons with several coaches.

The rink's skating school director, because of their background and expertise in figure skating, hires the rink staff to insure they provide a uniformly high quality group class instruction.

It is suggested that parents check a coach's PSA rating prior to hiring someone for private lessons.

Passing Basic Skating Skill or ISI badges is not a pre-requisite to entering the standard USFS Testing program, nor is it a pre-requisite to entering non-test competition levels in Basic Skating Skills and ISI competitions.