

Skater Development

There are two options available to beginning skaters each competitive season. Skaters may compete in both the ISI and Basic Skill events in which they are qualified.

The chart below is a typical skill progression of athletes from the beginner until entering as a test skater.

Beginning & Free Skating Test Badges

Basic Skating Skills	Ice Skating Institute
Beginning 1	Pre-Alpha
Beginning 2	Alpha
Beginning 3	Beta
Beginning 4	Gamma
Beginning 5	Delta
Beginning 6	
Beginning 7	
Beginning 8	
Free Skating 1	Freestyle 1
Free Skating 2	Freestyle 2
Free Skating 3	Freestyle 3
Free Skating 4	Freestyle 4
Free Skating 5	Freestyle 5
Free Skating 6	Freestyle 6

The chart below illustrates the two competitive tracks available to USFS skaters each season. Skaters choose one or the other tracks for the entire season and may switch at the start of each competitive season that starts September 1 of each year.

A typical skill progression of figure skaters after they join the United States Figure Skating Association (USFSA) as a no test beginner through the Senior test level in Moves in the Field (MITF), Free Skating, Pairs, Compulsory Dances, and Free Dance.

MITF & Free Skating Test ranking	Test Track	Elite Qualifying Track
No Test	No Test	
Pre-Preliminary	Pre-Preliminary	
Preliminary	Preliminary	
Pre-Juvenile	Pre-Juvenile	
Juvenile	Juvenile 13 & over	Juvenile – 12 and under
Intermediate	Intermediate	Intermediate
Novice	Novice	Novice
Junior	Junior	Junior
Senior	Senior	Senior

How rapidly a skater progresses through the various levels of tests depends on their involvement as a test or elite track skater.

Coaches need to help parents understand the progress of their skater in the follow skill areas:

- Basic skating skills
- Physical development
- Spinning, jumping
- Social skills
- Psychological development.

Frequent objective communication with the parents on a regular basis allows parents to make better decisions/choices to guide skaters as they make career choices. Coaches need to assess at what level an athlete should be competing based on existing skills they possess and a list of skills they need to master for specific ages and skill development.

Personal ambitions of the skater and raw talent are not enough for a skater to reach the international competition level. A skater's available financial resources become a major factor in the equation for success to become competitive at the National Senior level.

Off-Ice Training

Off-ice training is essential for all USFS members – starting at the entry-level beginner skater and continuing through to the elite athlete competing at the Olympics.

Incorporating fitness training into a skater's training program ensures that he or she is getting the appropriate level of physical activity. Young figure skaters need to recognize that off-ice training has become part of figure skating training. Fitness classes should focus on fun and group participation.

Training becomes more specialized as the athlete achieves higher levels of USFS tests. The following goals should be included in a training program:

- Core Stability/Strength Training/Functional Movement
- Aerobic and Anaerobic Training
- Flexibility Training
- Creative musical and Dance Movement
- Nutrition
- Mental Training

Developing each athlete's yearly training plan helps skaters achieve their own level of personal excellence – as an all around recreational skater or someone who specializes as a:

- Free Skater
- Pair Skater
- Dancer
- Synchronized Team Skater
- Showcase
- Theater on Ice

Basic Skating Skills

Basic Skating Skills is a learn-to-skate program sponsored by the USFS designed for beginners of all ages. When a skater signs up as a Basic Skating Skills member, they become part of a program that focuses on fun, participation and basic skill development.

As a skater's skill development progresses, they can earn badges that allow them to compete in an environment with other skaters who have also achieved the same level of skills. The Basic Skating Skills program helps skaters to transition to the USFS program of tests and competitions that selects competitors to represent the USA in

International and Olympic Figure Skating competitions

Basic Skating Skills is the premier "Learn to Skate" program of the United State Figure Skating Association. It was developed by experts to teach the fundamentals of skating in a progressive and sequential manner. It is designed to transition skaters of any age into the USFS test and competitive programs.

When an adult or child becomes a member of the Basic Skating Skills program, they receive the following:

- Badges
- Stickers
- Coloring sheets
- Parent information sheets
- Progress updates and report cards
- Special Basic Skating Skill events and club functions
- Opportunity to participate in a positive activity

The Basic Skating Skills program focuses on the development of eight fundamental goals. The skills are arranged in a series of progressions, from very simple to the more complex. Each stage has a primary focus. Once the skills of each stage are mastered, a skater may test for that badge. The series of badges range from Beginner 1 through Beginner 8.

The goals of the Basic Skating Skills program are:

- Stage 1 – Balance/stroking Forward and Backwards
- Stage 2 – Glide Forward and Backwards
- Stage 3 – Stopping (Forward and Backwards, one foot and two foot)
- Stage 4 – Edges (Forward and Backwards, Outside and Inside)
- Stage 5 – Crossovers (Forward and Backwards)
- Stage 6 – Speed/Power Forward and Backwards
- Stage 7 – One foot turns (3-Turns) Forward and Backwards
- Stage 8 – Change foot turns (Mohawks) Forward and Backwards

The test structure of Moves in the Field (MITF) is an instructional program that focuses on balance, power, agility, speeds and endurance. Each test level stresses technical skills, technical performance levels, and conditioning/stamina.

The unique skill requirements of the MITF tests helps a skater prepare for becoming a well balanced skater. Mastering the MITF requirements helps to motivate skaters to continue to achieve the skills required to pass their free skating tests.

Skaters six or older progress through a series of basic skills:

- Forward and backward skating skills (skating the length of the rink using alternate strides)
- Stop on command without use of the boards.
- Balance skills, forward and backward skating
- Turning agility skills.

The United State Figure Skating Association provides the following opportunities:

- Recognized through a nationally standardized testing system of figure skating skills
- Open and interclub non-qualifying competitions
- Sanctioned club shows and carnivals
- Testing and qualifying competitions leading to National Championships
- Development of skills such as goal setting, self-discipline, self-confidence, time management, healthy & drug free lifestyle, and coping strategies to deal with success and failure.

The Basic Skating Skills program consists of five specialized areas –

- Skating Skills
- Free Skating
- Ice Dance
- Interpretive
- Synchronized Team Skating.

Each area is divided into different levels of skill development that qualify for national competition.

Taking tests are not mandatory, but most USFS skater use the opportunity to test at organized test sessions as a way of measuring their skills. Skaters may choose to enter competitions in No Test Level events.

Ice Dancing

Ice Dancing involves a skater's ability to perform specific edges, steps, and turns as defined in a dance pattern while performed to the correct timing/rhythm, musical interpretation, and flow, body control and unison if performed with a partner.

Free Skating

Free skating consists of the execution of jumps, spins, footwork, field movements and

stroking, either in isolation or performed in sequence to music.

Interpretive, Showcase and Theater On Ice

All Interpretive free skating programs are designed to encourage and develop skaters' creativity, expression, body movement, interpretation of music, and the use of space, rhythm, line, and style. These events deemphasize skater's performing multi-revolution jumps and encourage the performance aspect of skating.

The trip to US Nationals starts by qualifying at Regionals, followed by Sectionals, and then on to Nationals.

Life after Competing in Regionals

What are my options in figure skating if I am not an elite track competitive skater? There are a number of options once a skater decides that the elite competitive track may not be the program for them.

Skaters may choose to enter the Test Track Competitive Program or participate on a Synchronized Team Skating team. Contact:

Susi Wehrli-McLaughlin
Senior Director of Membership
swehrli@usfigureskating.org
<http://www.usfigureskating.org/Programs.asp?id=79>

Some skaters who leave the Competitive Program may wish to pursue becoming a coach, judge or accountant. Others skaters may choose to compete as an adult member of the USFS.

Annual competitions for high school skaters are currently being held in certain areas of the USA. If you are interested in more information about organizing or participating in a high school event in your area, please contact,

Ian Macadam,
USFS National Vice Chair, School Programs
iceskater@beld.net.

There is a Collegiate Skating program, which allows skaters attending college to participate in events such as singles, dance, pairs, and synchronized skating. Visit <http://www.usfigureskating.org/Programs.asp?id=45> or contact

Kelly Hodge
Director of Synchronized Skating and Collegiate Programs
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