



Choosing a Coach

ASPIRE TO SUCCEED

FIND THE RIGHT FIT

There are many reasons for hiring a private coach, from supplementing group lessons or getting assistance on a difficult skill to beginning to compete more seriously. Private lessons can be a great, beneficial way to help a skater progress in the sport. This guide is meant as a resource to help you find the right coach that fits your needs and outlines what makes a good coach.

BEFORE YOU BEGIN YOUR SEARCH

Before you begin, remember that the key to hiring the “right” coach is to approach it as you would any other major decision – with research and patience. Start by asking yourself why you’re interested in private lesson instruction. The following questions will help you understand your needs:

- Would you like help on a specific element or skill?
- Are you interested in trying another skating discipline?
- Do you want to compete or participate in a show?
- Do you have dreams of one day making it to the Olympics?
- How much time do you need with a coach? If you’re a beginner, maybe only once a week for half an hour. More serious skating means more ice time and perhaps additional lessons.

There are many factors that go into choosing a coach, including cost, personality of the skater and the coach and the coach’s experience. You have the best idea of who might make a good fit for both you and your child.

Keep in mind that whoever you choose as your first private coach may not be your “forever coach,” and you may work with many different coaches throughout your skating journey. Many coaches work in teams with each one specializing in a different area of skating (i.e., moves in the field, choreography, jumps, etc.), and skaters work with multiple coaches at one time. Your skating journey is always changing, so be open to what changes might lie ahead.

FACE-TO-FACE MEETINGS

Once you understand what you’re looking for in a coach, ask your rink’s skating director for a list of local coaches at rinks and figure skating clubs in the area. Select a few potential coaches and set up face-to-face meetings. This will give you the chance to ask important questions and find out how you interact on a personal level.



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ASK POTENTIAL COACHES THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS

- Are you a member of U.S. Figure Skating and the Professional Skaters Association (PSA)?
- Are you compliant with U.S. Figure Skating's SafeSport and background check guidelines?
- Do you prioritize continuing education by taking courses and attending workshops?
- Do you demonstrate a standard of ethics?
- Will you be a good role model for my child?
- Will you treat me and/or my child politely, with respect and enthusiasm?
- Do you have a specific plan to teach the appropriate skating and technical skills?
- Do you work with a team of coaches, or am I expected to solely work with you?
- What are your private lesson rates? (Discuss the coach's fees and any additional costs.)
- Do you fit the personality of what I believe me and/or my child needs? (Coaches, skaters and parents should be able to work together to prioritize the same goals and expectations.)
- What important policies (i.e. cancellation, payment, etc.) do you keep?
- What are your preferred communication methods?

Keep your skater's personality and needs in mind when interviewing and selecting a coach. Communication is key: communicate your expected commitment and relationship with all potential coaches.

TRIAL LESSONS

Set up one to three "trial lessons" with a few to test out interactions. Ask these questions during the trial period:

- Does the skater have a good connection with the coach?
- Does the skater enjoy skating during the lesson?
- Is the coach able to excite and inspire the skater?



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WHAT MAKES A GOOD COACH?

A coach's role is to help his/her athletes improve performance and reach their full potential by teaching, monitoring and motivating them. Good coaches are made, not born. Whether they are at the elite or beginner level, it takes time, education, dedication and training to become a successful coach. The best coach is one who is knowledgeable about his/her sport, listens to the athletes, understands and responds to their needs, gives them a sense of self-worth and helps them develop and enjoy the sport.

A GOOD COACH

Knows the sport and keeps up with current rules. Helps parents and skaters understand the complexities of figure skating.

Knows about differences in personality. What is right for one child isn't necessarily right for another.

Understands each athlete's motivation for skating. Some are more serious about competing; others enjoy it as a recreational activity.

Understands and can deal with differences in physical and emotional maturity. Appreciates each skater for his or her individuality and gives age-appropriate instruction based on each skater's development.

Has more than just winning in sight. Helps students set long- and short-term goals to achieve success in other areas than winning. Promotes confidence, self-esteem and character development above all else.

Is skilled at teaching the fundamentals of skating. Improvement is the primary source of enjoyment for athletes.

Advises appropriate equipment purchases.

Makes skating fun. Displays a positive, motivational and encouraging demeanor.

Teaches skaters to enjoy success and respond to failure with new determination.

Teaches a love of skating.

Is well-versed in athletes' different learning styles.



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COACHING COMPLIANCE

U.S. Figure Skating has implemented a series of coach requirements to ensure that the environment in all U.S. Figure Skating programs is as safe as possible for all participants. Coach compliance gives parents the highest degree of confidence that their children are not only receiving good care and proper instruction but are safe from improper conduct.

U.S. FIGURE SKATING COACH REQUIREMENTS

- U.S. Figure Skating full membership
- Completion of SafeSport training
- Successfully pass the annual background screen
- Verification of coach liability insurance
- Completion of CER courses
- Professional Skaters Association (PSA) membership (only if coaching in qualifying competitions)

Noncompliant coaches who attempt to coach at a test session or competition are subject to disciplinary action by U.S. Figure Skating and/or the PSA.

PROFESSIONAL SKATERS ASSOCIATION (PSA)

The PSA is the official figure skating coaches' education, training and accreditation program for U.S. Figure Skating. It's the largest and most recognized of all figure skating coaches' organizations in the world.

PSA is dedicated to providing continuing education and accreditation to ice skating professionals in a safe and ethical environment. PSA and U.S. Figure Skating collaborate on dozens of educational opportunities for coaches, including oral ratings exams, rankings, conferences, seminars and more.

CONTINUING EDUCATION REQUIREMENT (CER) COURSES

In cooperation with the PSA, U.S. Figure Skating requires all coaches who are coaching at nonqualifying, qualifying and/or test sessions to fulfill a CER beginning each year. This requirement is designed to set a standard of education for coaches.