

Red River Valley Figure Skating Club

Fargo, North Dakota - Moorhead, MN



Your Responsibilities as a Skating Parent

More than 20 million kids in the United States participate in organized sports. According to numerous studies, people participate in sport:

- To have fun
- To improve skills and learn new ones
- To be with friends and make new ones
- To feel the excitement of competition
- To succeed or to win
- To exercise or become physically fit.

As you encourage your child's endeavors in skating, please keep in mind that your child may wish to quit skating if the reasons they skate are not being fulfilled.

Encourage your child to skate, but don't pressure. Let your child choose to skate—and to quit—if he or she wants. Understand what your child wants from skating and provide a supportive atmosphere for achieving their goals. Put your child's participation in perspective. Don't make skating everything in your child's life; make it a part of their life. Make sure the coach is qualified to guide your child through their skating experience. Keep winning in perspective and help your child do the same. Help your child set challenging but realistic goals rather than focusing only on winning. Help your child understand the valuable lessons skating can teach. Help your child meet their responsibilities. Discipline your child when necessary. Turn your child over to the coach at practices and competitions—don't meddle or coach from the sidelines.

What Should Skaters Wear on the Ice?

Skating attire changes depending on the age and skill level of your skater. It is important that skaters are dressed comfortably and are also able to move freely. Close-fitting, stretchy clothing is best. Those just beginning to skate will often wear warm-up pants or sweatpants, jackets, and mittens or gloves. As they progress, many skaters will prefer to wear skating tights, practice dresses or skirts, and light jackets or sweatshirts. A helmet is recommended for children under the age of 6 and for beginner skaters. Check out our Learn to Skate page for more information on helmets.

Feet will feel best in skates if the skater is wearing one pair of lightweight socks or tights.

Skates

In the Basic Skills programs, children wear an assortment of different skates, from new or used hockey skates and figure skates to more expensive junior level figure skates. Children who know they will be moving into hockey after learning to skate should wear hockey skates. Children who are interested in working into the advanced levels of figure skating are likely to progress more quickly if they are properly fitted in a good, supportive pair of figure skates.

Figure skates are built to have strong ankle support and they have picks on the front of the blade. The lowest pick is an important part of the skate and should never be ground off. Skate blades and boots can be obtained fitted together as a set or purchased separately. A number of manufacturers produce a beginning boot that comes with a good beginning blade. As the skater becomes more advanced and is working on the more difficult jumps, he or she will require more sophisticated blades and a high quality boot with maximum support. You don't always need to buy new skates; used skates may be a good bargain. If you need more information about what kind of skates your child should be wearing or

where to purchase them, please talk to any of our coaching professionals. Our coaches will be able to suggest the appropriate boot and skate for your child's level of skating.

Figure skating blades are designed with a concave skating surface and toe picks. The concave design is there to give the blade a definite inside and outside edge for control. The purpose of the pick is to assist the skater in jumping. Advanced blades are sold separately from the boots and require special sharpening skills. Hockey skates and figure skates are not sharpened the same way. It is important to have figure skate blades sharpened by an experienced sharpener to avoid permanent damage. Please consult with your coach as to the type of blade needed by your skater and the type and frequency of sharpening the blades require.

To keep blades sharp and free from damage, skaters should always wear skate guards when not on the ice surface; however, to prevent falls, be careful to remove the guards when stepping back onto the ice! To prevent rusting always wipe skate blades dry after use. Most skaters don't store their blades with the guard in place; they take the guard off and put soft protective covers on the blades called "soakers".

Sizing Skates

Skate boot sizes are different from your shoe size. Generally, skating boots are worn in a smaller size than street shoes. The more snug the skate boot fits, the better the support will be for your ankles. When fitting skates be sure to wear the kind of nylon's, tights, or socks you will be wearing when you skate. Also, be sure to push the heel as far back as possible in the skate when determining the proper fit. Skate boots should have snug fitting heel but not be too tight around the toes. Your toes should be able to wiggle, but your heel should not slide up and down or slide around once your foot is properly laced in the skate. Skates also need to provide plenty of ankle support. If the boot is too large and lacks ankle support, the skater loses some control. Boots that are too small are uncomfortable to wear and will cause the feet to become cold due to poor circulation. It is critical to get a good fit.

New skates need a period of time to be "broken in." As you skate in the boots, the leather will form to your feet.

Generally speaking, the boot should be laced snugly with the tightest lacing from the instep area to the ankle. Leave the lace slightly loose at the very top. You should be able to insert your finger between the ankle and the boot top. It takes a little practice and experimentation to lace effectively.

How Much do Lessons Cost?

Beginning skaters are encouraged to start with the group lessons in Basic Skills programs. These programs offer excellent instruction at very reasonable prices.

Skaters wishing to advance past these programs will require private lessons.

Each of the Club's skating professionals set their own rate for private lessons based on their experience and qualifications. The cost of lessons is variable depending on the coaching professional and the amount of time spent in the lessons. Ice time and lesson fees are paid separately. Lesson fees are paid directly to the coach. Most of the time spent during a lesson is in learning, polishing and perfecting the jumps, spins, footwork, dance patterns, and artistic presentation of a program. Lessons are given in 15 minute increments.

The number of lessons offered each week varies. Typically a beginner skater will need to have a lesson each in dance, moves in the field and freeskate at least once a week. Consult with your coach about the amount of time your skater should practice and how many lessons your skater should have. The coach can monitor progress and adjust the amount of instructional time depending upon progress.

You will also be responsible for coaching fees at competitions and test sessions. Travel, lodging and meal expenses the coach incurs by accompanying their skaters to a competition will be split between that coach's families attending a particular competition. You will also pay to have your coach "cut" your skater's music for competitive and testing programs.

How to Get the Most from Your Lessons

- Encourage your child to value the ice time you and the Club have provided and also value the coach's time.
- Ask your child to focus on skating.
- Encourage your child to eat right, warm up and stretch properly before their ice time.
- Encourage your child to ask questions of the coach during their lessons. Off-ice practice and training will build strength, flexibility and coordination. Figure skating is a skill, and it takes lots of practice.

- Encourage your child to practice diligently and have patience.

Things Parents Can Do to Help a Coach

- Ensure your child arrives on time. (Arrive ten to fifteen minutes before scheduled time.)
- Say only positive things at practice and competition.
- Communicate with the coach.
- Do not attempt to coach your child—leave it to the pros.
- Please call the coach if your child is going to miss practice.
- Be sure your child is fed and has plenty of sleep the night before practices, tests, and competitions.
- Focus on the effort and good sportsmanship, not winning.
- Support the coach on discipline and coaching decisions.
- Thank the coaches and be courteous.

Purchasing Ice

Advanced skater ice time is purchased from two different sources depending on the time of the year. From April to October the club purchases the ice directly from the ice arena and packages it to meet our skater's needs. The club then sells it directly to the skater. You pay the club for this ice. Be sure to note any deadline and payment dates to avoid late fees. Ice sold in packages consists of freeskate, dance, moves in the field and stroking. The time period from October through March is considered Park District ice. During this time, advanced skaters purchase ice directly from their respective park districts. We take the opportunity of their programs at this time of the year as the price of ice is very reasonable. Ice registration dates are through the city offices. The ice packages are designed, priced and sold by the skating directors of each program. The Park Districts (Fargo and Moorhead) each sponsor their own ice shows in the spring in which advanced skaters from the club are given the opportunity to participate.

What is testing about?

Proficiency tests are given as a skater progresses and they allow a skater to advance. Tests start at the pre-preliminary level and go through the senior or gold level in freeskate, dance and moves in the field. Dance tests can continue through the international level. It takes, in most cases, many years of practice time, dedication, and discipline to reach the senior level in each discipline. It will not happen overnight or in 2-3 years time either. Your coach will determine if you are ready for a test. Test applications will be made available online several weeks in advance of a test date. The Test Chair organizes the test schedule, ice availability, judges and dance partner schedules.

As soon as the schedule is completed it will be posted in the rink/s we are using at the time. It is usually posted a week before test day. You are responsible to check your test times and be at the rink on the right day at the right time. We ask you to arrive at least an hour before your scheduled test as sessions may run early and we do not hold on time—we continue testing. Check with your coach for the appropriate outfit you should wear for each test.

You will find out the results of your test on test day. Once a skater's group has finished testing, the result sheets will be collected from the judges and recorded by the Test Chair. The Chair will give the results to your coach and then the coach will go over and/or discuss the papers with you. These papers contain comments from the judges to help you with future testing. All test papers must be returned to the Test Chair before leaving the rink. If a skater does not pass his/her test they must wait twenty-eight days before retesting.

Competitions

There are two different types of competitions sanctioned by U.S. Figure Skating; qualifying and non-qualifying. Qualifying competitions "qualify" skaters to move from regional to sectional to national championships. Non-qualifying competitions do not have this stepping stone aspect, however, they lay the foundation for the discipline, sportsmanship and goal setting necessary in any competition.

Your coach will give you an application, help you decide which events to enter, help you with filling out the form and get the necessary signatures. You will be required to give basic information. Make sure to give your USFS number and be careful when filling out the birth date and test level (the highest level you have passed) as these are used to place you in your competition group. You will be competing against skaters of similar experience (skaters who have tested no further than you have). Generally you will skate in a group of no more than eight or nine skaters. If there are substantially more skaters in your level, the referee will break the groups into separate "flights" which will be judged separately and the flights are normally grouped according to age.

You should arrive at the rink dressed and ready at least an hour before your event. Events can run ahead or behind schedule. You will need to check in with the ice monitor at the rink entrance for each event. This lets them know you are in the building and intend to compete. You will need to hand in a copy of any music you are using for a program at the registration desk. Remember to pick it up again at the end of the competition! You and/or your coach will need to have a backup copy of your music also in case something goes wrong.

Each event will have a short (3-5 minutes) warm up period. Use the time to stroke and get your muscles warmed up. Sweaters and gloves, which are not worn during your program, may be worn during this warm up period. Leave the ice immediately when announced to do so. You and your club will be announced when it is your turn to compete. Enter the ice and go to your start position. If your skate becomes untied or the wrong music is being played you must skate directly over to the referee and let them know. They will decide on how you will proceed.

The results of an event may take some time to be posted. They are usually posted in the same area as the skate order postings. The results will show you your final position in the group and the ordinal or position each judge gave you. You will not receive any written comments from judges as you do in testing.

Flash photography is prohibited at competitions for the safety of the skater. Video taping is allowed. Skaters and families should be respectful of all competitors. In the audience, refrain from entering, exiting or wandering in the bleacher area while skaters are performing. Support your club skaters!

Competition Checklist:

- Your skates (both of them), guards, soakers and extra laces
- Competition outfits and back-up outfits
- Girls: extra pair of tights
- Girls: hair accessories and make-up
- Two copies of your music
- Competition information: maps, hotel reservations, event times, practice ice
- Gloves, warm-up sweater, club outfit, blanket
- Screwdriver, skate polish, nail polish remover, Band-Aids
- Membership card—may be needed to register
- Video recorder/camera Good Luck charms

Remember—there is only one winner per event and everyone will have their good days and could-be-better days. This is the nature of figure skating, so always be proud of your performance and learn from each experience.

Volunteer Opportunities

The Red River Valley FSC is run exclusively by volunteers. We rely on all cub families to help provide the services we offer to our skating members. The club subsidizes your skater's expenses with the events that we sponsor. Parents please give your time in support of our skaters! Whether your child is skating in the spring Ice Shows or participating in the RRVFSC Classic, your family is expected to volunteer to help at these events. A lot of work needs to be done for our club to sustain its success. We realize everyone is busy but volunteering for club activities and fundraisers helps keep your costs down and adds to your general knowledge and appreciation of figure skating. When you help improve your club, you help improve your skater.