

RESOURCES FOR SKATERS

Figure Skating for Dummies by Kristi Yamaguchi, Christy Ness, Jody Meacham contains a complete guide and provided some of the useful material in this parent handbook.

NPAFSC Directory has Board Member and club skater contact information.

Skating Magazine is the official publication of the US Figure Skating and is the best way to keep informed. By joining USFS and CHFSC your family will receive 10 issues a year at no cost.

USFS Directory provides vital contact information for all clubs and Basic Skills programs across the country. It also gives contact information for the USFS Executive Committee, board members, committee chairs, committee members, and officials.

USFS Rulebook contains all the bylaws for the association along with the technical rules that govern figure skating.

WEBSITES FOR SKATERS

www.npafsc.org the website for New Prague Area Figure Skating Club

www.usfsa.org the official website for United States Figure Skating Association



Parent Handbook

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About New Prague Area Figure Skating Club

The New Prague Area Figure Skating Club (NPAFSC) is a non-profit member owned Skating club. We were organized in 1998. Our purpose is to promote the discipline of figure skating while sharing enthusiasm for the sport. We are sanctioned by the United States Figure Skating

US Figure Skating

USFS Association is the governing body for the US sport of figure skating on ice in the United States. It is a member of the International Skating Union and a member of the US Olympic Committee.

Benefits of Belonging to the Club

- You will be a member of US Figure Skating and receive the USFS *Skating Magazine*
- You are eligible to compete in the USFS sanctioned competitions
- You are eligible to take USFS tests and receive certificates and patches for tests passed
- You have the opportunity to perform in club shows
- You will receive quarterly club newsletters.
- You are part of a wonderful organization dedicated to maintaining the positive spirit of figure skating

Fee's and Ice Times

We have a fee schedule that covers our season from September to March plus the USFS yearly fee. (See insert or Registration forms for current fees) This covers the club's ice times, rehearsal times & shows. We will have Part time & Full-time skating opportunities. (A calendar with dates and times will be available at Registration).

Depending on your level of skating ability & involvement the costs can vary. There are additional coaching fees for private or group lessons. You must have figure skates (coaches can help w/ brand suggestions & fittings) & your apparel for appropriate activities. Competition & testing fees are separate.

There are some fundraising activities to help off-set increases in ice fees and to raise money for fun club activities/parties as well as for the new improvements of our facility. Parents are also involved by helping on and off the ice. They volunteer in various club promoting activities, playing of music for the skaters, carpooling if needed & organize & coordinate our shows!

Spin A spin is the rotation of the body in one spot on one foot. There are many different kinds of spins, some named for the body position during the spin: such as sit spin, a layback spin, or a cross-foot spin. A camel spin, originally called a parallel spin, has the free leg extended fully behind the skater parallel to the ice. A very, very fast spin is usually a scratch spin, or blur spin, since the skater spins so fast he/she appears blurred to the vision. If a skater leaps into the air before coming down into a spin, it is usually called a jump or a flying spin, such as a flying camel or flying sit spin.

Spiral A move in which a skater demonstrates flexibility and a fluid line by extending his or her skating leg behind them into the air during a long glide.

Split Jump A flashy move seen in single skating, in which the skater jumps into the air and performs a split in mid-air with the hands touching the ankles or toes. It is also sometimes called a "Russian Split". When a half-revolution is added after touching the toes, the jump is referred to as a "Split Flip".

Sweet spot The spot on your blade that you balance on while spinning. It's right back from the toe pick on the ball of the foot, but not too far back. It's forward on the blade without hitting the toe pick.

Swizzle A method of two-foot progression, either forward or backward, by an in-and-out movement of the feet on inside edges.

Three Turn A turn on one foot from forward to backward to forward (from outside to inside edge or inside to outside edge).

Throw Jumps Seen in pair skating; the male partner assists the lady into the air into a jump.

Toe Loop Rarely performed as a single jump, but very popular as a double and triple. The skater takes off from the back outside edge, strikes the toe of the free foot into the ice, turns in the air and lands on the original back outside edge. The free leg stretches along the line of travel before take off.

Twizzle A traveling turn on one foot with one or more rotations, which is quickly rotated with a continuous (uninterrupted) action. The weight remains on the skating foot with the free foot in any position during the turn, and then placed beside the skating foot to skate the next steps.

Waltz Jump A jump involving a half-turn in the air in which the skater takes off from a forward outside edge on one foot and lands on the backward outside edge of the other.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Axel The easiest jump to recognize because it is the only jump taken off from a forward position. The skater glides forward on one foot, takes off from a forward outside edge, rotates (1 ½ revolutions for a single axel) and lands on the opposite foot skating backward. Named after its inventor Axel Paulsen.

Cheated jump Any jump where the rotations are completed before the takeoff or after landing.

Clean A program with no mistakes. It also describes precise skating without scraping the blade, dragging the toe pick, and so on.

Crossover A method of gaining speed and turning corners in which skaters cross one foot over the other. There are both forward and backward crossovers.

Flip A toe-assisted jump, taken off from the left foot going backward and landed on the right foot. The skater will push with the right foot going into this jump.

Layback Spin Generally performed by women, the layback spin involves an upright spin position where the head and shoulders are dropped backwards and the back arches.

Lifts Any move in which the man in pair or ice dancing lifts the female partner off the ice. In pair skating, the man lifts his partner overhead with arms fully extended. In dance, only small lifts are allowed and a man may not lift his partner above his shoulders.

Loop The loop is taken off and landed on the same foot and edge. At the point of take off, the skater's feet may look as if they are together. The free leg is then thrown sideways and upward in the direction of the jump.

Lutz One of the few jumps that takes off counter to the natural rotation of the edge. The skater approaches in a long curve, takes off from the left back outside edge with assistance from the right toe, and turns counter clockwise, landing on the outside back edge of the right foot. Named for Austrian skater Alois Lutz.

Mohawk A turn from forward to backward (or backward to forward), from one foot to the other, each edge forming parts of the same curve.

Salchow A jump with a wide leg swing. At the moment before take off, the back inside edge of the skating foot curves sharply and the free leg is brought forward to initiate rotation. The skater lands on the back outside edge of the opposite foot of takeoff. Named for Swedish skater Ulrich Salchow.

What is expected of me as a club member?

As a club, we help each other on and off the ice. (Older skaters usually mentor the younger ones) We encourage and cheer each other on to excel at each level. As an individual, be timely and respectful of others while on the ice. Represent the club in a positive manner at all times. Be open to learning and growing in the sport of figure skating but do it at your own pace. Have fun!

Some members have been with us since the beginning! You are a member of good standing as long as your dues are current and up to date. You register yearly every September and you will keep the same USFS number with your renewal. Ask any experienced club member for help or contact a club officer or coach for answers.

Group and Private Lessons

Private lessons are the best way to develop a program for competitions and shows. You and your instructor will decide on a lesson time, either during a public session or on a private freestyle session. It is a good idea to practice between lessons. Consult with your coach about the amount of time you should practice and how many lessons you should have.

Each skating Coach sets their own rates based on experience and qualifications. The cost varies from \$8.00 to \$20.00 or more depending on the Coach and the amount of time spent. Lessons vary from 15, 20 or 30 minutes.

To pick a coach you may want to observe a few ice skating lessons taught by the NPAFSC Professional Coaching Staff. Then you should take a lesson from the Coach that you are interested in. After you have a lesson, you can decide on which Coach you would like to work with.

To get the most from your lesson you need to focus on your skating. Come rested and mentally prepared to work and concentrate. Eat right, warm up and stretch properly before each lesson. Ask questions; don't wait until the last few minutes of the lesson to ask questions. If they are important enough to ask, they are important to have answered and maybe worked on during the lesson. Practice, practice, practice. Repeat the same lesson you did with your coach in the same order, because there is often a reason for the order.

CLUB ICE RULES

NPAFSC Freestyle Ice Rules:

These rules guide skaters to exercise awareness of one another and use good judgment while they are on the ice and at the rink. Enforcement of these rules will be the responsibility of the Ice Monitor. Ice Monitor responsibilities can be found in the check in book at the ice rink. Breaking these rules may result in written warning, removal or exclusion from the ice for a determined period, or permanent expulsion from the facility. Coaches should help skaters remember that the rules are for the safety of all skaters.

General Rules

1. All skaters are to be considerate of other skaters and coaches at all times.
2. A skater must get up immediately after a fall if s/he is able.
3. Any injuries must be reported to the Ice Monitor immediately.
4. No food or gum is allowed on figure skating ice.
5. No socializing on the ice. Standing is allowed only next to the boards when requesting music, etc.
6. Coaches should exercise awareness of other skaters around their students, particularly when using the harness.
7. Equipment and personal items are the responsibility of the skater. NPAFSC nor the Community Center are not responsible for lost items.
8. Proper conduct is expected. The use of abusive language, disrespectful actions or words, and uncontrolled temper will not be tolerated.
9. Do not use the lobby to put on/take off skates. Use the assigned locker room.

Ice Rules

1. Contract Skaters must check in with the Ice Monitor before entering the ice.
2. No more than thirty skaters on the ice.
3. Programs are played by rotation in the order requested (see Music Rules)
4. The first program music will commence after a five-minute warm-up.
5. Any skater wishing to practice a free skating program will have the right-of-way during his/her program music and must wear an orange vest.
6. Moves in the Field practice is allowed, skating flow goes counter-clockwise.
7. Group skating is only allowed during specified practice times.
8. If an issue arises during and ice practice, first go to the rink monitor and the board members from there. Do not go to the Community Center Employees.
9. Practice of spins to the center of the ice.
10. Practice of jumps to the ends of the ice.

High School Lettering

Lettering is available to our Clubs high school competitive skating members. (A fee for the lettering will be required with the application.) The Lettering Committee determines if skaters have met lettering requirements with the approval of the coach. Skaters qualifying for lettering will receive a handout on the requirements.

To be eligible for lettering all skaters must register and meet the following criteria:

- Skater must be a member in good standing of the NPAFSC and USFSA
- Must contract for at least 55 hours of ice time during the Club season from Sept through March. (A 5 hour credit is given towards the hour's requirement for participating in a competition)
- Must be participating in the Basic Skills or higher testing levels
- Must attempt at least one US Figure Skating official test per season
- Skater must participate in a minimum of three(3) public US Figure Skating or ISI sanctioned events: One of which must be a US Figure Skating or ISI sanctioned competition, one of which must be the annual Ice Show (Christmas Exhibition also counts) ,the other is the choice of the skater
- Be a positive role model by displaying good attitude, work ethic, and behavior
- Must adhere to all school district policies & requirements including attendance, conduct, scholastic standing and other eligibility requirements. ***Please note: If the skater fails to adhere to any of these requirements, the skater forfeits the right to letter for the season.***

Please contact Test Chair for forms and details.

Types of Figure Skating & Events

Dance

Ice Dancing is the discipline within skating that most emphasizes the “beauty of the sport, rather than the athleticism. Dance emphasizes the techniques of edgework, flow, and motion of 2 skaters together in rhythmic interpretation of music. Ice Dancing has 2 main focus areas, the “Compulsory Dances”, and the “Free Dances”.

Figures

Figures are another of the technical disciplines, one primarily emphasizing body control and edges/turns. Figures are the famous “figure 8’s” for which the sport is named, and there are dozens of different ways to modify the basic figure 8 for testing purposes.

Freestyle

This is the discipline in Figure Skating that most spectators are familiar with. In Freestyle skating, or “Singles Freestyle” skating, a competitive skater performs a “program” that lasts anywhere from 1 to 4 ½ minutes, is composed of elements such as jumps and spins, and is usually skated to music.

Moves in the Field One of three test structures in U.S. Figure Skating (including free skating and dance). Moves in the field tests help develop all basic fundamental edges and turns while emphasizing edge quality, extension, quickness and power.

Pairs

Pair skating is similar to singles free skating, except that 2 skaters perform together. This adds all sorts of opportunities for new moves, such as lifts, throws, and pair spins and jumps.

Sectionals The sectional championships are the second and final step in the U.S. qualifying competition structure that leads to the U.S. Championships. The top four finishers from each sectional advance to the U.S. Championships. There are currently three sectionals - Eastern, Midwestern and Pacific Coast - within U.S. Figure Skating competition structure.

Synchronized Skating

Synchronized Team Skating is a “team” event, with teams of 8 to as many as 24 skaters skating complicated routines similar to those performed by marching bands or drum corps. Large groups may execute patterns of incredible complexity and beauty. Synchronized skating is another discipline where age is not a significant barrier, and adults nationwide enjoy and compete in this discipline.

Music Priority

1. Tapes or CD’s should be turned in to the Ice Monitor (person in charge of music) at the beginning of the hour. They may be left at the rink for future practices.
2. Each skater must put on an orange vest and signal the Ice Monitor when s/he is ready.
3. The following music priority will be adhered to:
 - a. Names are listed in order as requests are taken. Lessons have priority.
 - b. Second requests are honored after all first requests are played. Third requests, after all second requests and so on.
 - d. Before each skater begins his/her program, Ice Monitor will announce, “skater’s name, on program” and “skater’s name, on deck.”
 - e. Once a skater has been announced as “on deck” s/he will not be bumped.

Accident Report Procedures

An Incident Report is to be completed and returned to the rink monitor or Board Member whenever an accident occurs. Whether the person involved is a participant or bystander, whether the injury is considered minor or major, or whether or not you feel the incident will result in a claim or not the form needs to be filled.

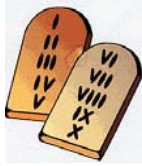
In case of a serious injury, *immediately* notify the rink monitor. It is vital that you contact them as soon as possible anytime we have an injury involving a participant or bystander who has been injured seriously enough to require transportation to a hospital or emergency treatment center.

Community Center Rules

1. No smoking or alcoholic beverages allowed in building.
2. Enter ice through doors.
3. No one is allowed on ice surface until Zamboni is off the ice and operator signals for your group to take the ice.
4. Adults must supervise their children while in facility.
5. Locker rooms must be left clean after each use.

All members agree to abide by the Rules of NPAFSC with application for membership. NPAFSC reserves the right to modify Club Rules throughout the year as needed.

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS FOR FIGURE SKATING PARENTS



I. THOU SHALT NOT IMPOSE YOUR AMBITIONS ON THY CHILD.

Remember that figure skating is your child's activity. Improvement and progress occur at different rates for each individual. Don't judge your child's progress based on the performance of other athletes, and don't push them based on what you think they should be doing.

II. THOU SHALT BE SUPPORTIVE NO MATTER WHAT!

There is only one question to ask your child - "Did you have fun?" If competitions, shows, and practices are not fun, your child should not be forced to participate.

III. THOU SHALT NOT COACH YOUR CHILD.

You have taken your child to a professional coach - do not undermine that performance by trying to coach your child on the side. Your job is to support and love your child no matter what, and the coach is responsible for the technical part of the job.

IV. THOU SHALT ONLY HAVE POSITIVE THINGS TO SAY AT A COMPETITION.

If you are going to show up at a competition, you should cheer and applaud, but never criticize your child, other children, the judges, coaches, or officials. Always strive to set a good example for your child.

V. THOU SHALT ACKNOWLEDGE THY CHILD'S FEARS.

A first competition (or every competition) can be a stressful situation. It is totally appropriate for your child to be anxious. Don't yell or belittle, just assure your child they are ready for it.

The day of the competition

The club mailing that has your schedule on it will tell you what they expect of entrants but in general, you should expect to check in at least an hour before your scheduled event time. Music will be dropped off at the check in table (keep an extra copy in your bag or give to your coach). The club will provide locker rooms for you to change in, and you can usually leave your clothes and skating bags in that room while you're competing. You should be fully dressed and ready to check in when the group before yours takes the ice.

Check in with the ice monitor at the skaters entry door and then wait until they tell you when its time for your groups warm-up. Skaters are allowed about 3-6 minutes to get out on the ice and warm up you muscles before you compete

When it's your turn, skate out and strike your initial pose. If you are skating to music, they will start it as soon as they know that you are ready. If there is no music, you should wait until they announce something like "skater, you may begin". *Take a deep breath, relax, and skate your best...* When you are done, take your bows then skate off the ice. If you are on a "half-ice" competition and someone else is skating on the other half, hold your ending post to wait until they are finished before you skate off the ice.

Results, Medals, Ribbons

It usually will take about a half-hour or so for the results to be posted. The results sheet shows your final position, and shows the ordinal marking that each of the judges gave you. Different clubs do this differently, but usually Medals or Ribbons are given to the top 3 positions. They may have award ceremonies scheduled during the competition to award these and will take official pictures at this time as well, so you will want to be in your skating outfit and skates. Some competitions don't have a formal award ceremony but have an area where awards are given and pictures are taken.

Before you leave the arena

Don't forget to pick up your tapes or cd's. You may also be able to order professional photos or video of your performance as well. For the safety of the skaters, NO FLASH PHOTOGRAPHY is permitted during competition events at any Figure Skating Competition.

Competition Conduct

Remember, every person competing is special to someone. Skaters and families should be respectful of all competitors. In the audience, refrain from entering, exiting or wandering the bleacher area while skaters are performing. Be attentive to and appreciative of the efforts of all skaters.

COMPETITIONS

Competitions will be one of the most exciting, most confusing, and most stomach-churning days you will ever experience in skating! Just remember, you're doing this for fun, so go out there, show off a little, and enjoy the experience. Every time you go out on that competition ice, try to do just a little bit better than you did last time. You will come off the ice feeling good about your performance, knowing that you've done your best job, then you should be happy.

How to find competitions

Most likely your coach will know about competitions in your area and will advise you as to which ones you should enter. Your coach knows your abilities and knows the general range of abilities expected at the various competitions held in your area. Usually, entry deadlines are about 6-8 weeks before the competition, so don't wait too long to look for it.

Sending in your Application

Application forms are usually included in the announcement Packet (they may also be available online at the hosting clubs website). This packet will list all events, the eligibility requirements, and the required elements for programs. You may enter more than one event if you wish, and in general additional events are cheaper than the first event. There will be an entry deadline listed in the packet,- make sure you get your form in on time! Usually the form will require a signature by a club officer to attest to your eligibility. Don't wait till the last minute to get this signature – sometimes people go out of town, or don't show up at the rink on that one day you left to try to find them. Sometimes they also require a signature from your coach.

When do I find out my event schedule?

Usually, you will get a mailing from the host club about 1-2 weeks prior to the competition. This mailing will list your event day and times, and will provide a map to the rink and other necessary information. In general, it won't help to call earlier than that since they can't make a firm schedule until they have all the entries. Most competitions run over a weekend but some may have start as early as Thursday or Friday to fit all the skaters in.

VI. THOU SHALT NOT CRITICIZE THE JUDGES.

If you complain about the judging or results, don't be surprised when your child models your behavior and acts out against other authority figures in his life. He learned it from you.

VII. HONOR THY CHILD'S COACH.

The bond between coach and skater is a special one and one that contributes to your child's success as well as fun. Do not criticize the coach in the presence of your child.

VIII. THE CHILD SHALL HAVE GOALS BESIDES WINNING.

Giving an honest effort, regardless of the outcome, is much more important than winning. An Olympic swimmer once said, "My goal was to set a world record. Well, I did that but someone did it too, just a little faster than I did. I achieved my goal and lost. That does not make me a failure. In fact, I am very proud of that race."

IX. THOU SHALT PLACE YOUR CHILD FIRST ABOVE EVERYTHING.

Ask yourself this question - Are your child's goals more important to you than they are to your child? Remember that the focus of youth sports should be fun. Children are constantly changing, and their goals, interests and participation in activities will change as well. Parents should remain flexible, patient and always supportive while their children strive to find their niche in life.

X. THOU SHALT NOT EXPECT THY CHILD TO BECOME AN OLYMPIAN.

There are more than 100,000 skaters registered with ISI and US Figure Skating. The odds of your child making the Olympic team are less than one in 33,000. Figure Skating is much more than just the Olympics. Ask your coach why he coaches. Chances are he or she was not an Olympic skater but still got enough out of skating that they want to pass that love for the sport on to others. Figure Skating teaches self-discipline and sportsmanship. It builds self-esteem and fitness. It provides lifelong friendships and much more. Figure Skating builds good people and you should be happy that your child wants to participate.

SKATER CODE OF ETHICS

I hereby pledge to be positive about my skating experience and accept responsibility for my participation by following this Skater Code of Ethics.

I will demonstrate and encourage good sportsmanship with fellow skaters, coaches and parents at every practice, competition, and other skating event.

I will team my coaches, other skaters, parents and rink volunteers with respect regardless of race, sex, creed or abilities. I will expect to be treated accordingly.

I will do my very best to listen and learn from the coaches.

I will work hard to improve my skills.

I deserve to have fun during my skating experience and will alert my parents or coaches if not.

I pledge to support a zero tolerance policy regarding the presence and use of drugs, tobacco, and alcohol.

I will encourage my parents to be involved with my skating in some capacity because it is important to me.

I will welcome skaters from other clubs and rinks.

I will maintain a high level of safety awareness while I'm at all ice arenas.

SHOW AND COMPETITION CHECKLIST

Going to a competition? Don't forget the following:

- Your skates (BOTH of them!)
- Your dress/ costume / tights (pants and shirt if male)
- A spare set of tights
- Extra scrunchies, bobbie pins, etc.
- Any makeup you will require
- Comb, brush, hairspray
- Sweater or warm-up jacket
- Your music (tape or cd, labeled, rewound, and tested)
- Backup music copy (tape or cd, labeled, rewound, and tested)
- Guards and soakers
- Your "emergency bag" (spare screws, screwdriver, spare laces, Band-Aids, aspirin, etc)
- Inhaler (if needed)
- Your USFSA number
- Your event number and time
- Directions to the rink
- Your video tape and money to pay for taping (if desired)
- Black electrical tape (cover the flash bulb on your camera)

WHAT TO WEAR

CLOTHING GUIDELINES

Obviously when you compete or test you'll want to wear something that's a bit special so comfort won't be your first priority, but what about all those hours you spend practicing? Here comfort and safety will be more important to you.

It is important that what you wear neither be loose enough to not restrict your motion nor should it be so loose or baggy that it presents a safety hazard. You should never wear anything that is so loose that it drags on the ice or close to your blades.

It can be cold on the ice, especially for younger or slower skaters. Dress warmly in layers so you may shed layers as you heat up. Girls generally wear tights when competing but for practice some skaters choose a heavier tigh or sweat suit pants, those with the zipper are great as they can be removed if you get too warm.

Gloves are always a necessity. Most skaters wear those stretchy one-size-fits all gloves, they usually cost about a dollar a pair. You should get lots of pairs because they always seem to disappear even faster than socks.

HAIR GUIDELINES

Girls should always wear their hair up and out of their face. (It is difficult to jump and spin with hair flying in your face.) If using bobby pins, make sure they are secure so they do not fall out while skating and put skaters at risk.

SPECIAL EVENTS

Holiday Exhibition

The Holiday Exhibition is a smaller version of our Annual Ice Show. ALL skaters perform in group numbers to Holiday Songs chosen by the planning committee. Extra practice time may be required for this show.

Annual Ice Show

The Annual Ice Show is a showcase of the hard work that each skater has put in over the year. Skaters of all levels participate in groups performances. Freestyle skaters may be eligible for a solo performance and/or they may participate in a group performance. The show theme is voted on at the year end meeting for the following years show. The show is typically scheduled at the end of our season in March.

Basic Skills

In basic skills, testing is used to advance skaters from level to level and is usually performed in front of the skater's instructor and is very informal. There are 6 levels that take your child through the basic skating skills. When a skater is finished with the Basic Skills Levels, s/he is eligible to begin working on skills toward official USFSA skating levels.

Test Sessions

Your coach can determine when your skater is ready to participate in a USFSA test session. These tests are judged by USFSA-appointed judges at formal "test sessions". The results are forwarded to the USFSA which keeps official records of each skaters test accomplishments. The USFSA website (www.usfsa.org) has more specifics for each level and rules regarding these levels. In addition to the levels shown below there are also levels for, Pairs, Figures and Dance. For more information about testing, speak to your coach.

USFSA Testing Singles Levels and Moves in the Field

Pre-Preliminary
Preliminary
Pre-Juvenile
Juvenile
Intermediate
Novice
Junior
Senior

USFSA Testing Adult Levels

Adult Pre-Bronze
Adult Bronze
Adult Silver
Adult Gold

TAKING CARE OF YOUR SKATES

You spend a lot of money on your skates so it is important to protect that investment. Poorly maintained skates are more likely to hinder than help.

Caring For Your Blades

1. **Keep them sharp – but not too sharp:** A sharp blade grabs the ice better than a dull one. Sharpen your blades when they start to slide uncomfortably when you land. Make sure the person sharpening your blades specializes in figure skate sharpening.
2. **Protect the blades:** Blades are made to slide on ice, not walk on floors. Wear skate guards when not on the ice to avoid nicking or wearing your blades down too quickly.
3. **Avoid water damage:** Off the ice, the biggest killer of blades is rust. Once a part of your blade is rusted that spot will never hold an edge again. Some rust spots can be removed with your next sharpening. Always dry off your blades when you get off the ice by carefully sliding your fingers along both sides to remove “snow” as soon as you get off. When you’re done for the day, be sure to wipe them down with a towel, getting the blade area and the mounting surfaces (the screws rust too). Let them sit for a few minutes if you’ve got the time and wipe them down again before putting them in your bag, you almost always see more water form from condensation as they warm up. Use “soakers” to cover the blades before putting them in your bag, these help to draw off any remaining moisture and provide a cushion for your edges.

Caring For Your Boots

It is important to have a good quality boot at all levels of skating; most rental skates available are only good for the lower level skaters. Replace your boots when they get too badly broken down – your safety and the quality of your humps rely on the support that only a well cared for boot can provide.

1. **Protect the leather of your boots:** Your boots are just as susceptible to water damage as the steel in your blades. Keep your boots well polished all the time, it makes them look better, seals the leather and helps it to shed water. This is especially important if you’ve nicked up the surface quite a bit and unfinished leather is exposed.

2. **Caring for the inside of your boots:** Moisture can get trapped inside your boot and rot if out from the inside. To help avoid this, open up your boot as much as you can when it is off your foot. Loosen the laces as far down as you can. Pull the tongue up and out from the boot to help the inside of the boot breathe. When you get home let your boots live outside your bag for a little while until they’re nice and dry inside, or at least unzip the bag to let it air out.
3. **The mount:** If you look at the bottom of your boot, you’ll find that the blade is held to the sole with a bunch of screws. It’s really important that you maintain the proper tightness of these screws, they will loosen with time. Loose screws are dangerous, and promote quicker wear of the leather too. Don’t tighten them too tight though because the leather will strip out easily. New skates begin with 2 screws in front and in back as trial mount. Once you’ve skated a couple times and are confident that you can skate straight and spin well, and then you should take the skates back for a permanent mount. That mount just adds a couple more screws, to the round non-slotted holes. Remaining unfilled holes will provide additional locations for later, if some of the existing holes strip out. The best place to get replacement screws is from the shop that sold you the skates.

Caring For Your Laces

A lace that breaks at an inopportune time can cause an awful lot of grief and possibly cause injury. Replace them when they start to wear, loose threads or the little plastic things (aglets) come off the ends. Always keep a few spare pairs of laces in your emergency bag. It is important to use the right length of lace too.