



## CHEER ON YOUR CHILD: YOUR ROLE AS A SUPPORTIVE SPORT PARENT

Reinforcing positive behavior is integral in shaping your child's skating experience. As the parent to a young skater, your role is an important one and requires positivity, respect and encouragement.

### FOCUS ON FUN

Skating is about more than winning the competition. Lessons should provide a fun, participatory environment while teaching children the fundamentals of skating that will help them in the sport and in life. Focus on encouraging the participation and skill-building aspects of the sport.

### SHOW YOUR SUPPORT

Whether your child wins a competition or passes a test, support is important in a child's growth as a person. Certain words or body language used in a critical situation has the potential to erase all the praise you give young children — both in the rink and in life.

### BE POSITIVE

Positivity goes a long way in shaping a child's sport experience. Avoid using fear and guilt to criticize, and instead focus on helping your child develop through skating using positive reinforcements. Think positively and show empathy.

### KNOW YOUR ROLE

Know your role in your child's skating. The coach is there to coach; you are there to be a parent. Discuss any concerns directly with the coach.

### RESPECT EVERYONE

Your child looks up to you and follows your behavior, so be mindful of how you treat others at the rink — from the coaches to the other students and parents. Practicing respect and support with others helps instill good sportsmanship in your child.

## BEING A GOOD ROLE MODEL

Children learn behavior from many different people — coaches, teachers, other adults and peers — but the people they learn the most from are their parents.

Your children not only soak up what you say; they soak up what you don't say. Non-verbal messages often speak louder than words. Telling your children to respect others is great, but the message is lost if you don't model that respect. You'll have many opportunities as your children skate to model good behavior and attitudes. By putting your children's development and welfare ahead of winning, you'll be better able to display a healthy attitude toward sports and life — as will your children.

### MODELING GOOD SPORTSMANSHIP

It's especially critical that you model good sportsmanship for your children.

Being a good sport is much easier said than done — just look at the examples of certain professional and collegiate coaches and athletes who do the opposite. It's crucial that you maintain a cool head and a healthy attitude toward sport if you expect your children to do the same. Here are ways to model appropriate attitudes and behavior when you are at your children's practices and competitions:

- Encourage all skaters
- Control your emotions in frustrating situations
- Respect and accept judges' decisions
- Congratulate other skaters when they win



# PARENTS' RESPONSIBILITY TO THEIR SKATERS

A parent's job is to raise his/her children to become well-rounded, productive and respectful members of society. This job doesn't change when children become athletes. Whether they are competitive or recreational, individual or team athletes, our final goal is for them to be good people as well as good athletes. Here are a few ideas to keep in mind when approaching your child's skating.

## BALANCE

Make sure there is balance in your skater's life. Few skaters make skating their life career. If that is their path, they'll focus on it. Here are some tips for keeping your child's skating in balance with the rest of the family:

1. **Encourage sport sampling.** Playing multiple sports throughout the year allows kids to become a more well-rounded athlete, reduces risk of overuse injury and minimizes sports burnout.
2. **Prioritize.** Skating is a privilege, not a right. Skating, schoolwork and family life should be given equal billing.
3. **Make a realistic schedule.** Help your child make a list of all activities and include time for travel. Then draw up a schedule you can all manage.
4. **Make time for homework.** Dedicate a certain amount of time each night to homework.
5. **Get your kids to help.** Depending on their age, skaters can help by keeping their own equipment, music, etc. clean and organized.
6. **Keep track of your budget.** Skating is an expensive sport. If costs are getting out of hand, let your children know that they will have to make choices or contribute to the expenses.

## LEARN

Take the time to educate yourself on the ins and outs of figure skating. Not all parents will understand the elements of skating, but it's important to your skaters to be involved in some way because it's important to them. The best way to learn about skating is to join your skater's club and participate in club events as a participant and volunteer. The U.S. Figure Skating Rulebook is also online and a great resource to help you understand the rules important to your child and the sport.

## SUPPORT YOUR COACH

Listen to the coach's advice and instructions, and ensure your skater is following through with those instructions. Let the coach be the coach, and don't try to second-guess the approach he/she is taking with teaching. If you have an issue with the coach, bring it to his/her attention privately and never in front of the skater or with other parents. Pay your child's lesson bills on time. Get your skater to the rink on time, and when you can't be there, make sure to tell the coach in advance.

## SUPPORT THE CLUB

Help with club activities. Clubs are run by volunteers, and they always need all the help they can get. Be willing to work on committees or serve on the board if needed. Help with jobs like ice monitoring, music, etc. at competitions.

## WATCH

Stay and watch your skater at the rink and show your interest. Often, skaters whose parents never watch in practice feel self-conscious or pressured to do well when their parents finally do show up to watch. If competition is the only time you watch your child skate, you may be hurting more than helping.