



# Preparing a Skater for Competition

ASPIRE TO PERSONAL EXCELLENCE.

**COMPETITIONS ARE MORE THAN WINNING THE GOLD MEDAL.** It's a way to show off your skills, receive feedback to continue improving and drive competitive spirit. Most importantly, it's fun! There are competitive opportunities almost every weekend across the nation offering a full range of figure skating events, including all levels and age groups, from the grassroots to the senior level in varying disciplines.

When registering for a competition, take a moment to look at the event announcement and explore the events offered. Skaters can enter multiple events to make the weekend and the dollars spent more worthwhile. Typical events include free skate levels, compulsory moves, showcase events, solo dance events and more. The competition announcement breaks down each event offered with program length guidelines and required elements. The announcement also includes practice ice information, hotel and travel information and application deadline.

When you and your skater have decided on which events to enter, you will register based on the competition's instructions. Application deadlines are strict, so be sure to enter early (there are no guarantees for late entries, and you may be charged a late fee). Event schedules are sent out to competitors about two weeks prior to the event. Competition schedules are tentative, so keep this in mind and plan around it.

## PREPARATION

Preparation for the competition is mostly up to the skater and coach, and some Aspire programs have competition classes to prepare skaters for the big day. Skaters need to make sure the program is at the right time length and contains the correct elements. Nervous energy is a normal reaction to the excitement of performance, so running a program in practice is important as well. Preparation is key to confidence on the ice!

With proper preparation and confidence, a good performance is bound to happen. Regardless of final placements, skaters should feel they gave their best effort based on how they prepared.

## WHAT TO DO WHEN YOU ARRIVE

Plan to arrive at least one hour before your scheduled event. This will give you time to check in, turn in a copy of the music (if you haven't uploaded it), and let the coach know you've arrived. Skaters should be fully dressed in costume and ready to warm up off the ice at least 30 minutes prior to taking the ice.

While your skater is preparing to take the ice, find a seat in the stands to cheer him/her on. Skaters will check in with the monitor at the ice entrance. The coach will remind the skater of the warm-up routine (stroke around, number of jumps, spins, etc.). After skates are on and he/she is checked in, it's now the coach's job to put the skater on the ice and calm any nerves.

## POST-PERFORMANCE

After competing, your coach will give feedback on the performance and a game plan post-competition. Meanwhile, the accountant will tally the judges' scores, and the final standings will be posted in a designated area.

Awards typically happen shortly after the event, so stay in costume. Congratulate the winner and others for good efforts and encourage your skater to do the same. There is only one winner per event, and everyone will have their good days and could-be-better days. Always be proud of your skater's performance, practice good sportsmanship and learn from each experience.

## TIPS

- Skaters sign up for the correct level based on their test level and ability
- Arrive one hour before your scheduled event
- There usually isn't enough time to skate back to your coach a lot during a 3-to-5-minute warm up, so use your time wisely
- Have confidence, try your best and take each element one at a time
- Smile at the judges and audience and have fun!

## COMPETITION CHECKLIST

- Your skates, guards, soakers and extra laces
- Competition costume and back-up costume
- Girls: extra pair of tights, hair accessories and makeup
- Two copies of your music
- Competition information – hotel reservations, event times, practice ice, etc.
- Gloves, warm up jacket, club outfit, blanket
- Screwdriver, skate polish, nail polish remover, Band-Aids
- Good luck charms

## MENTAL PREPARATION BEFORE PERFORMING

Competitions should be a fun and rewarding experience for every participant. While technical and physical skills will set skaters up for success, athletes often won't experience success without mental preparation. The following strategies can help you use the power of your mind to skate your best and enjoy competitions.

### SET GOALS

Write down your goals for a competition at least one month before the event. Goals could include giving your best effort, skating a clean program, staying focused on one element at a time, etc. Remember that placement is not under your control. Read your goals the day of the competition to help you stay focused, motivated and feeling confident.

### USE YOUR IMAGINATION

Pretend you're competing each time you practice your program. Visualize yourself skating your best at least once a day a month before the event. Try to feel how you want to feel and think what you want to think. Continue this visualization on competition day as you wait to take the ice.

### PRACTICE POSITIVE SELF-TALK

Positive self-talk can go a long way in keeping yourself motivated and confident. Keep your thoughts encouraging and focused and tell yourself to stop if you have any doubts or distracting thoughts. You can do this!

### RELAX

Relaxation techniques will help ease anxiety and pre-competition jitters. Take a few deep breaths, close your eyes and stay calm. Remind yourself of how ready you are and why you love to skate.



## FOCUS

Remain concentrated on your own performance. You can't control how other skaters perform, only yourself. Take one element at a time, and focus on each skill, not the whole program.

## CELEBRATE AND EVALUATE

Celebrate, no matter how you place. If you skated great, remember how wonderful you felt when you got off the ice, and don't allow scores or placements to take away that feeling. If you don't skate your best, try to learn what you can from the experience and take it with you to your next practice to continue improving.

## TIPS FROM THE JUDGE

Many judges are former skaters who still enjoy being involved in the sport. They are there to support skaters and provide feedback. While subjectivity can take place, there are a few things all judges would like to see in your program. Your goal should be to execute a well-balanced program including:

- **PRESENTATION** – pay attention to your choreography and how well you demonstrate good timing and expression. Interpret and enjoy your music while you skate to it.
- **JUMPS** – they only count for a portion of your score, and only cleanly landed jumps will qualify. Include jumps that you have consistently mastered, as you will lose points for falls or incomplete jumps. You and your coach might agree to include one risky jump that you recently learned, but that should be the limit.
- **SPINS** – judges look for spins that are well-centered and in strong positions with good speed.
- **CONNECTING ELEMENTS** – connect your elements with spirals, edges and steps. Focus on transitions other than crossovers.
- **STRONG SKATING SKILLS** – edges and power are important in a well-balanced program and can negatively or positively affect your score.
- **STEP SEQUENCE** – a well-rounded step sequence includes a variety of elements and is challenging but achievable for your skill level.