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LEVEL I SHORT TRACK SPEED SKATING
TECHNICAL MANUAL

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Level 1 Short Track Speed Skating Coaching Accreditation Course

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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the Level I Coaching Accreditation Course. Level I coaches, such as yourself, are the foundation of the entire Coaching Program. In many cases, you will be the first contact person for new speed skaters. The skills and knowledge which you impart to them will have the most influence in determining their future in our sport. Quality coaching at all levels is the goal of the Coaching Accreditation Program and it all starts at Level I.

This manual has been designed to give you the tools needed to coach short track speed skating. With this manual as a reference book, you will be able to handle every aspect of coaching young and beginner speed skaters.

The manual has sections on Technique, Lesson Plans, Equipment, Games and much more, but the primary capability required for success in Level I coaching still remains enthusiasm. This quality must come from you, as no manual can teach it. As well as introducing speed skating, this manual is low key and you should emphasise to the beginner skaters that they should have fun and enjoy themselves during the process of learning. The technical aim of Level I is to introduce the fundamentals of speed skating technique whilst instilling the philosophical aims which are to create interest in the sport and to foster that interest through specific activities.

Never forget these philosophical aims. At the first level of short track speed skating, competitive success and perfect technique are secondary to laughter and excitement. If you hear laughter and sense excitement on the ice, then you are achieving the goals of a Level I coach.

The general objectives of the AIr Inc. as it relates to short track speed skating are listed below:

1. To upgrade the standard of short track speed skating coaching within Australia;

2. To ensure the standardisation of coaching expertise from state to state:
   (a) For a cohesive national program;
   (b) In case of coaches moving from one area to another;

3. To provide an education program whereby coaches at all levels of competence can receive an appropriate body of knowledge in short track speed skating;

4. To define graduated coaching levels from beginner to elite, thereby providing criteria for coach selection to regional/state and national teams; and

5. To provide an opportunity for interested and dedicated individuals to become nationally recognised short track speed skating coaches.
CHAPTER 1 - EQUIPMENT

A. Skates

1. Types

There are two basic types of speed skates, one for Short Track and the other for Long Track skating. Only Short Track speed skating is undertaken competitively in Australia. The Short Track skate is of a heavier construction as stability and durability are more important concerns than lightness. They are constructed of leather and fibreglass incorporating such space age materials as Kevlar® and carbon. The blades are adjustable and can be set over, or “offset”, to the left of the boot so that the skater can lean into the turn without the edge of the boot hitting the ice. Some of the best Short Track skates in the world are made in Australia.

![Diagram of front-on view showing the difference between Short Track (right hand of diagram) and Long Track (left hand of diagram) skates](image)

**Figure 1.1:** Diagram of front-on view showing the difference between Short Track (right hand of diagram) and Long Track (left hand of diagram) skates

2. Purchasing a Pair of Skates

There are several points to be aware of when considering the purchase of a pair of speed skates. Prices can range considerably. A Level I coach should know how to advise skaters on how a skate should fit and what to look for in a skate’s construction.

The most important factor in fitting a skate is to have a snug heel in order to decrease ankle wobble and promote stability. The skate should not pinch anywhere along the foot and there should be adequate room for the toes. If the toes are touching the end of the skate, it is too tight.
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With the skate laced up, there should be at least 2.5 centimetres of separation between the two rows of eyelets in order to allow for possible stretching of the leather.

Since many beginners’ skates are mass produced, it is wise to check a few things before purchasing. The blades should be equal in length and each boot should be placed on the blade in the same position. There should be an equal amount of blade in front of the toe and behind the heel of each boot. The eyelets should be smooth so that the laces will not be prematurely frayed. The skates should be free of rust and the blades should be straight.

Beginner skaters will notice that a lot of the experienced skaters have custom moulded boots. A plaster cast is taken of the skater’s foot and then boots are made from the cast to provide a unique and comfortable fit. There is no need for beginners to purchase these types of boots initially.

3. **Maintenance of Skates**

A few simple precautions will suffice to keep new speed skates in good condition over the years. First and foremost, the blades should never be allowed to get dirty or rusty. After skating, dry them off well. Remember never walk on cement, pavement or other abrasive surfaces without skateguards. This will dull the blades and necessitate extra effort when sharpening. Remember also to make sure that the skateguards themselves are dry when they are put on.

The boots should be treated with water repellent or leather preservative at the start of each season so that the leather remains soft and supple. If the side of the boot is being worn away by leaning over on the corners, a piece of tape should be used to protect the spot.

If a skate is causing blisters or is uncomfortable to wear, heating the area with a heat gun or hair dryer can soften the area temporarily and allow it to be moulded into a more comfortable shape. The heat may dry out the leather so it is a good idea to rub some oil into the leather later. REMEMBER, heat guns can be dangerous so insist that beginners ask their coach for assistance.

If rust does develop on the blades, put some oil on them and rub the spot with a burr stone. Rust acts like a cancer on the steel, eating at the surface and weakening the blade so it is best to get rid of any rust as soon as it develops.

For beginner skaters, it is important to keep the skate blade straight whilst they are learning.

To check for bends and kinks, hold the boot blade up and sight along it. To straighten a blade, tap the tube with a wooden hammer or place the blade between two straight pieces of wood and tighten in a vice for bad bends. Experienced skaters
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bend their blades so that the concave side of the blade is facing the inside track whilst skating. But your skaters must be experienced before you start bending their blades.

Advise beginners that if storing the skates for the summer, make sure that they are clean and dry. Coat the blades with a little petroleum jelly to prevent any corrosion caused by damp conditions. Make sure that there is no weight acting on the blades which might bend them during the storage period. Following these few tips will help the beginner to keep the skates in a serviceable condition for a relatively long time.

B. Skate Sharpening Jigs

Every Level I coach should be able to instruct skaters and their parents in the skill of sharpening a pair of skates. Otherwise the coach is likely to be found sharpening 15 to 20 pairs of skates during each week and before every competition.

There are two types of jigs used to sharpen skates. One type, the blades are removed from the skates and the brackets are bolted to the jig. The other, the blades are left attached to the boots and the jaws of the jig clamp on each side of the blade. Both types will do a good job if used properly, the blade clamp type of jig is the most common and recommended. The most popular of this style is the DP jig which is produced in Australia. If possible, always sharpen skates in the same jig, changing may necessitate several sharpenings to adjust to the new jig.

![Diagram of a "blade holder" type sharpening jig](image)

**Figure 1.2:** Diagram of a "blade holder" type sharpening jig
C. Sharpening Stones

Sharpening stones are available in a number of sizes. The best ones to use is 228 x 76 mm. Most stones have a course and a fine side. A small burr stone for removing the burr built up during sharpening is the only other piece of equipment needed. These are usually fine-grained and about 75 x 25 mm.

Aluminium oxide stones are hard bonded and can clog and glaze easily but because of their hardness, they will last well. Double sided silicon carbide stones are far quicker to use especially if edge damage must be ground out.

Stones should be kept clean so that the steel shavings and grit do not clog up the pores and reduce the cutting effectiveness of the stone. Soaking the stone in oil upon purchase will help prevent grit from clogging in the stone. The oil should be light machine oil, not household or motor oil. About once a month, both stones should be cleaned well with kerosene. An old toothbrush will serve admirably to scrub the grit off the stone.

**NOTE:** Oil filled stones are available and do not need cleaning but care should be taken to stop coarse grit getting on the fine side of the stone or on the burr stone as this will negate the advantage of the fine stone.

A stone is worn out when valleys develop on its cutting edge. This will cause the stone to round off the skate blades and also hampers the formation of the burr. Stones in this condition can be ground flat on a grindstone and re-used after a thorough cleaning. Valleys which can be detected visually are usually too large for effective use.
D.  Sharpening Skates

HOLLOW GROUND VERSUS FLAT GROUND

Speed skate blades are flat ground as opposed to the hollow ground hockey and figure skates blades.

![Diagram showing "hollow" and "flat" ground blades](image)

**Figure 1.4:** Diagram showing “hollow” and “flat” ground blades

A flat ground blade reduces friction on the ice and is a major reason why the speed skate will glide further than the hockey skate for a given amount of force. A speed skate cannot be sharpened at all on a hockey skate sharpening stand. The skates must be simultaneously sharpened in order to assure that the blades are a mirror image of one another, both in the radius and in the amount of blade on each skate.

A.  Setting up Skates

The skates must be set up so that both blades are parallel to one another and level on top. To check to see if the blades are set up correctly, take the edge of the smooth side of the stone and run it across the top of the blades. A thin etch mark completely across both blades indicates that the blades are level, hence when grinding starts, the blades will be ground down equally.

If the etched line only covers a portion of one blade, adjust the skates until a subsequent check shows a complete etch mark on both blades.
NOTE: When a skate is new, it may be necessary to sharpen several times in order to get a flat and square surface on both blades. Set up the skates as described ensuring that the jaws fit snugly against the metal lip of the tube and then sharpen to level off the blades. After they have been levelled once, they should set up level each time.

B. **Grinding**

This idea behind sharpening is to build up a very slight “lip” of burr on each side of the blade. Naturally the less burr that is built up, the less steel is being ground down and the longer the skates will last. The full length of the blade should be ground down by the same amount. This will maintain the correct radius or rock on the skates.

It is difficult to take exactly the same amount of metal from each part of the blade for two reasons:

1. The amount of burr formed depends on the amount of wear on the previously formed edge, mostly near the middle of the blade and hence burr will form at the heel and toe before the middle; and

2. Even if the same amount of grinding is done on each part of the blade, and with identical pressure, the amount of metal taken off at each point will depend on the curvature of the blade at that point: the more curved, the more will be taken off, because the stone will be acting on effectively less blade. The common result of this mistake is an increase in radius towards the toe.

The stone can be held with one hand at either end, thus removing the fingers from any danger and providing even pressure on each side. The stone should remain
perpendicular to the blades at all times so that the same part of each blade is being sharpened.

The beginner is advised to make five strokes in one direction then make five strokes in the other, sliding the stone across the blades so the entire surface of the blade is covered. After three or four cycles of alternating directions, turn the jig around so the stone is travelling from the toes to the heels of the skates. Repeat the same number of cycles. This will ensure that any pressure differential in one direction is cancelled out. It is also important to try and run the stone over both the tips and tails of the skate blades. If this is not done, the toes will gradually assume an out of proportion shape and the heels will develop sharp points. In order to prevent this from happening after the basic grinding pattern has produced an edge on both sides of the each blade for the entire length of the blades, make five or 10 short strokes over the tips and heels of the skates, ensuring that the stone is going past the end of the steel.

The radius should not be affected by sharpening in this manner. What will affect the radius is repetitive grinding over a spot which has no burr. Never grind over one spot. Always maintain the pattern of strokes and in due course the bare spot will develop a burr. Burrs can be detected easily by using the fingernails which will click on the tiny lip of steel.

When a complete burr is present, make a few passes with the smooth side of the stone to remove obvious cross-hatch marks. Then take the burr stone and placing it on the tube sleeve and the blade in this manner, run it up and down the entire length of the blade a couple of times. The burr should disappear. Again, even pressure is very important during this procedure.

**Figure 1.6:** Diagram showing the position of the burr stone on the blade
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When the burr has been removed from all four edges, take the fine side of the big stone and lightly polish the entire length of the blades a few more times. If any burr builds up, it can be removed in the aforementioned manner.

After this final polishing and edging procedure, the skates are now sharp and ready to use. Difficulty in sharpening is directly proportional to the length of time between sharpenings and the care that the skate blade gets. If you cannot shave any fingernail on the edge of your skate, it is too dull to skate on and should be sharpened.

![Diagram of the Fingernail Test](image)

**FIGURE 1.7:** Diagram of the Fingernail Test Used to Check the Sharpness of the Blade

The more dull a blade gets, the more grinding must be done to produce a burr and the greater is the chance of changing the position of the high point of the radius.

A very important point to emphasise is that only a small burr is required for sharp skates. A large burr is harder to get rid of and directly contributes to a shorter blade life and can also remove an edge when taken off. If the skates are set up correctly in a consistent manner and a pattern is used for sharpening, the entire process should not take more than 10 minutes.
C. Radius

**High points, flat spots and hollows**

To understand the radius of a blade, first think of a circle, the curve on a blade is like a small part of that circle. The more curve on the blade, the smaller the circle and vice versa. So when the curve on the blade and the circle are equal then the blades’ curve is measured as the radius of the circle. A hockey skate has a small radius than a short track skate. You can easily see the radius of a blade by placing it on a straight edge.

![Testing the amount of "rocker" using a straight edge](image1.png)

**FIGURE 1.8:** TESTING THE AMOUNT OF “ROCKER” USING A STRAIGHT EDGE

For most speed skates, the straight edges of each blade should contact each other for less then 2.5 centimetres. If they contact for more than this distance, the blade has a flat spot and if, on holding the blade and straight edge up to the light, light can be seen between the ends of the flat spot and the blade is hollow. Flat spots and hollows should be avoided because they interfere with the natural action of the skate blade on the ice, causing lack of control and an inefficient push.

![Flat spot on the skate blade](image2.png)

**FIGURE 1.9:** FLAT SPOT ON THE SKATE BLADE
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**High Point**

The high point of a skate blade is the point where the blade has the most steel. The position of the high point is critical as this is the place where the force of the leg push is transmitted onto the ice. The high point should be directly under the centre of gravity of the skater when they are in the skating position. On a speed skater, this translates to a point approximately two-thirds of the distance back from the front cone between the two cones.

This spot can be located in a couple of ways. A visual sight can be made along the side of the blade. The high point can be estimated by this method very quickly.

![Diagram indicating the general location of the high point](image)

**Figure 1.10: Diagram indicating the general location of the high point**

**Correcting Small Flat Spots and Hollows**

Proper sharpening will ensure that a radius stays consistent and that the high point will not move. If a beginner is faced with a pair of blades which have a hollow or a flat spot along the radius, it is necessary they understand what is involved and how to remedy it. Flat spots can be eliminated by increasing the curvature of the blade at the ends of the flat spot. Mark out the flat spot with tape on the tube so the extent of the problem is known. Remember, a flat segment of the blade needs to be turned into a curved segment of the blade. If the flat spot is towards the back end of the blade, sharpen over the back end of the flat spot, towards the heel. Reverse this process if the flat spot is towards the front of the blade. Do not grind on the flat spot itself as this will only increase the problem. Remember too, that what is taken off on one end must be removed on the other end also in order to retain the overall curve of the blade.
Check frequently with the straight edge. When it passes smoothly and continuously over the blade, the flat spot has been removed. Do a complete sharpening after the corrective work has been done.

For a hollow, the process is similar except that it is more concentrated. A hollow is essentially two high points with a low point in between them. The high point which is closest to the end of the skate blade needs to be removed. This means that you must grind directly over the high point closest to the end of the blade and also over all the blades between this point and the end of the blade.
Marking the extent of the hollow with tape will help you to focus your grinding attempts. Never grind in the hollow part, as that is needed to reduce the second high point to a normal curve.

Moving a high point forwards or backwards

If the high point is too far to the rear of the skate, it can be moved forward by grinding the blade from the high point back to the end of the blade. This will lower the back part of the skate blade and push the high point forwards. If the high point is too far towards the toe of the skate, it can be moved backwards by grinding over the high point and all the blade from there to the toe.

Remember when this is being done the other portion of the blade must be ground down as well so that one end is not ground down more than the other. It does not take much grinding to move the position of the high point, so check frequently either with a straight edge or visually.

![Diagram](image.png)

**Figure 1.13:** Diagram indicating the general pattern required for grinding to move the high point on blades.
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**UNIFORMS**

Like just about every other sport, short track speed skating requires some sort of uniform. The most common outfit is the one piece “skin suit”

The main function of the speed skating uniform is to allow freedom of motion along with minimisation of wind resistance. It is therefore obvious, for the uniform to allow both of these, that it must be tight-fitting, lightweight and constructed of a stretchy material. Any clothing that meets these requirements is perfectly acceptable. Clothing such as jeans, bulky sweaters or wide-leg pants reduce the freedom of limb motion, increase wind resistance and may even cause the wearer to trip over.

For beginners, a track suit is perfectly adequate. Turtleneck tops will help to protect the neck area and suspenders may be used to hold up any loose fitting track suit pants.

The choice of a uniform is dictated only by four basic criteria – that the uniform should not restrict freedom of motion; the uniform should reduce wind resistance; the uniform should conform to the shape of the individual’s body; and should keep the wearer warm.

From 1st July 2013, Australian Ice Racing Inc requires that all skating members of affiliated clubs and state associations of AIR Inc, who have reached the age qualification of Junior division, and above, and any Sub Junior skating members of affiliated clubs and state associations of AIR Inc who wish to skate in the Junior division of any AIR sanctioned events must wear a cut Resistant Racing Suit as defined by ISU regulation to protect the body as suggested in ISU Communication No. 1265 and meet the criteria EN388 Level 2 of the ISU regulations or Cut Resistant under garment. AIR Inc highly recommends that all other skaters to wear either a Cut Resistant Racing Suit or Cut Resistant under garments in all AIR sanctioned events.
CHAPTER 2

A. Basic Principles of Speed Skating

A simple method of teaching new skaters the basics of skating technique is to break the technique into four parts:

1. Basic body position
2. Push to the side
3. Arm swing
4. Return of the leg

Each section is covered in some detail only to provide a model. The skater should not be expected to do the exercises perfectly, but should improve in the direction of the model.

1. **Basic Body Position**

   1. Ankles straight, not caving in or learning out.
   2. Skates shoulder width apart.
   4. Knees over toes.
   5. Knees bent about ninety degrees (90º).
   6. Elbows on knees with hands clasped.
   7. Back bent at least forty-five degrees (45º) in a relaxed position.
   8. Centre of gravity in middle of blade.
   9. Heads and eyes straight ahead looking at point about 2 to 3 metres ahead.
Description

It is important that the skaters learn the Basic Position well. Being in a still position, they should be able to do this with a little practice and correction. There are nine points to consider:

1. Everyone’s ankles are generally strong enough to support them without caving in or leaning out. If the legs are not in a straight line though, this could be difficult. Have the skater stand on the ground with feet shoulder width apart and knees together to see how the ankles respond. The legs must be vertical to have a chance of keeping the ankles straight. If this does not work, check the fitness and tightness of the skates. Have the skater tighten the skates if necessary or try to get them better skates if that is the problem. These remedies work 99% of the time.

2. If the skates are about shoulder width apart, it provides a good base for the skater to balance on. The knees should be about the same distance apart as the feet to keep the legs vertical.

3. The blades should be parallel so that both legs can then be in the same relative position. The blades should also point straight ahead since that is the direction you want to travel.

4. The knees should be approximately over the toes. This means that the bend must start at the ankles. The bend is forward though, not to the side. This makes it easier to get the legs themselves bent in the proper way.
5. The knees should be bent about ninety degrees (90°) or fairly close to this angle. In this position the leg can be stretched further out on the ice than when standing. The push is then much longer and more powerful.

6. Put elbows on knees and clasp hands to gain equal weight distribution on both legs. This takes a little pressure off the thighs so the SKATER is more comfortable in this position.

7. The back should be bent at least forty-five degrees (45°), but no further than parallel to the ice. Any further than this will make the skater lean too far forward. The back should be as relaxed as possible. The muscles in the back are not used much so they should always be relaxed.
8. The centre of gravity should be about the middle of the blade. Do not get too fussy about this. The idea is that the skater should not be leaning too far forwards or backwards.

9. The head should be kept up so that the skater can see where they are going. If you have them look at a point in the distance this makes it easier. Under no circumstances should a skater watch his or her feet.

The best procedure for teaching this position is to demonstrate it yourself or have someone else demonstrate. If you cannot get into the position yourself fairly well, do not try to teach by personal demonstration. This will only confuse the skater. Use a demonstrator or a film to get the idea across to the skater and then make the corrections yourself. Even if you cannot do these exercises you will be able to observe a skater’s mistakes.

**Drills**

- Have skaters assume the Basic Position and then make corrections. Do not keep them in Basic Positions too long as it is too demanding. Concentrate on one main point each time.

- Have skaters take a few steps and glide down the ice in Basic Position. Check for parallel skates and straight ankles and knees.

- As above but have the skater rock backwards and forwards on their skates to feel the effects of changing the positions on both the centre of gravity and the glide point on the ice. Have them experiment to come up with the most effective glide.
2. **PUSH TO THE SIDE**

1. Complete extension of leg directly to the side.
2. Blades almost parallel and pointing ahead.
3. Knee, toe of supporting leg and nose in straight vertical line.
4. Supporting leg bent about ninety degrees (90°).
5. Back bent at least forty-five degrees (45°) in a relaxed position.
6. Centre of gravity directly over the supporting leg.
7. Head and eyes straight ahead looking at a point about three metres ahead.

**Description**

1. It is very important to have a complete extension of the leg. The stroke will be longer and more powerful if the leg is fully extended.
2. While doing this exercise in place, the blades should be parallel and pointing straight ahead with one leg extended. This allows the skater to push to the side for the entire stroke.
3. The toe and knee (of the supporting leg) and the nose should almost be in a straight line whilst the other leg is extended. The idea is to stretch the leg out as far as possible, whilst keeping the centre of gravity over the supporting leg. The body must stay in a straight line, not twist to the left or right.

4. The supporting knee should be bent at ninety degrees (90°) as in the Basic Position. This is a difficult position to hold because all of the weight is on one foot.

5. The elbows remain in the same position as before, both for balance and to remove some of the strain from the thighs.

6. The back remains the same as before at forty-five degrees (45°).

7. The centre of gravity at the end of the push should be over the supporting skate. This allows for a better glide. This is not critical for the beginner and is difficult even for the more advanced skaters.

8. The head should be up with the eyes focused about three metres head.

9. All of the weight should be over the supporting leg.

In this particular exercise, the coach needs to ensure that the skater pushes to the side and not backwards. The above nine points should determine why a skater is not pushing to the side.
Drills.

- Have the skaters assume the Basic Position with one leg extended to the side. Again do not keep them down for too long. Work on one point at a time.

- In the Basic Position with one leg extended, have skaters try to lift the extended leg off the ice to show that their weight is still over the supporting leg. Skaters should be able to lift the extended skate without falling onto the side. Check both sides.

- Have skaters take a few steps and then glide in Basic Position with one leg extended to the side. Check both sides.

- Same as above but try to have skaters lift up the extended leg. They should be able to lift the skate off the ice without falling over to the side, i.e. should be gliding on the flat part of the blade.
3. **ARM SWING – STRAIGHTS**

1. Swing the arms straight back and forth.
2. No higher than shoulders front or back.
3. Relaxed but controlled.
4. Hands relaxed with palms facing towards the body.
5. Slight bend in elbow in front.

**Description**

1. Swing the arms in a forwards and backwards direction. They should not be stiff or follow rigidly straight lines.
2. Because the aim is to increase forward momentum only, the arms should not swing any higher than the shoulders in either the forward or backward swing.
3. The arms should swing in a rhythmical and relaxed manner. The shoulders should not twist whilst doing this exercise. The arm should
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be extended at the completion of the backswing.

4. The hands should be open with the palms of the hands facing the sides of the body. Clenched fists are a sign of tightness and rigidity and distracts from a smooth rhythm.

5. The arms should be slightly bent at the elbows at the end of the forward swing. A straight arm will pull the shoulder up and result in poor body alignment.

6. **Remember:** Right arm and left leg together left arm and
Left arm and right leg together

**Drills**

- Have the skaters assume the Basic Position and then swing their arms whilst stationary. Work only on one point in each session.

- Take a few strides and then get into the Basic Position and swing the arms. Look for relaxation and rhythm.
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4. **RETURN OF THE LEG**

This exercise must be done by holding onto the barrier or another skater if nothing else is available.

1. Push to the side.
2. Relax the leg and allow it to swing behind you. The knees should be bent and the leg should be in a parallel plane with the supporting leg.
3. Return the leg to its starting position.
4. Knees and feet should be close together.

*Drills*

- Have a skater hold onto the rink barrier and practice leg recovery on both sides.
- Have a skater take a few steps, assume the Basic Position and practice recovering with one leg and then the other.
- In Basic Position, go from one end of the rink to the other pushing and recovering with the right leg. Next length use the left leg. Check that the skater pushes with the full length of the blade and is pushing in a straight line.
- Same as above but using arm swing.
- Combination of the above with just easy stepping, no force in the push.
B. Corners

The corner is also broken into four different areas:

1. Basic body position
2. Push to the side
3. Arm swing
4. Crossing over

The turns are very difficult for a young skater to learn. It is an unnatural movement and requires a good deal of practice and instruction. Do not expect the progress to be fast on the turns as on the straight. The most important things to watch for are the push to the side with good extension and keeping the skates relatively close to the ice so that the stride appears to be smooth, and the arms are used correctly to maintain balance.

1. **Basic Position - Corner**

![Corner Position Image]

1. All the principles of the Basic Position for the straightaway apply equally to the turn. In fact, it is even more critical to have a good body position during the turns in order to make the correct movements.

2. The head and shoulders should follow the line of the corner as this will help the skater to turn to the left more easily.

![Corner Turning Image]

3. The weight must be on the outside edge of the left skate and on the inside edge of the right skate in order to turn to the left.
Drills

- Have the skaters form a large circle and then assume the Basic Position.
- Have the skaters take a few steps, assume the Basic Position and glide around the circle.

2. ARM SWING - CORNER

1. The right arm swing is the same for the straightaway.
2. The left arm range of forward motion is reduced slightly.
3. The movement is done mainly in the elbow and not at the shoulder level.
4. This reduction is to stabilise the shoulders and not act against the desired turning direction.
Drills

- Have the skaters assume the Basic Position and glide around the circle using their arms.

- Have the skaters glide in the crossover position: right leg over the fully extended left leg. The left hand adjacent to the left side of the face and the right arm fully extended back to shoulder level.

3. **PUSH TO THE SIDE – CORNER**

The principles apply as in the straightaway. The only difference is that now both feet are pushing to the same side.

1. Imagine a circle with a line starting from the centre and continuing beyond the circle. The push with either the left or right foot should follow this line. The tendency is for most young skaters to push behind them rather than to the side which is more effective.

2. The feet should stay close to the ice as possible. It’s the shortest way to get the skates from one point on the ice to the other and requires less energy.
1. Full extension of the leg to the side
2. Lean into the turn.
3. Feet stay close to the ice.

**RIGHT LEG IN CORNER FRONT**

1. Push to the side – not back.
2. Place skates in direction you will travel.
3. It’s the knee that directs the movement.

**RIGHT LEG IN CORNER SIDE**

**Drills**

- Have the skaters support themselves on the rink barrier, assume the Basic Position and push with the left and right legs.

- Have the skater skate in a straight line and take the basic position in the turn. In that position, have them extend the right leg.

- Same drill again but with the left leg extended

- Same drills again but on smaller turn to better feel the lean.
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4. CROSSING OVER

1. Keep feet close to the ice. It is the shortest way to get the skate from one point on the ice to the other and requires less energy.

2. Place the skates in the direction you will travel, so you do not have to make an adjustment after the skate is placed on the ice. It is extremely important that the knees are bent, preferably at ninety degrees (90°) during the corner otherwise it is practically impossible to cross one skate over the other.

3. Push to the side and not back.

4. The placement of the skate should always be done on the outside of the centre of gravity. This will allow to lean.
Drills

- Have the skaters assume the Basic Position and then step right over left repeatedly so that the skater travels sideways.
- As above but with slight forward momentum.
- Have the skater skate in a circle so that every step is a crossover.

C. Starts

The procedure for starting is also broken up into four sections to provide a consistency in learning. In short races the start is often a deciding factor, so an understanding of the principles is very important.

1. Current starting rules
2. Position on the line
3. The first three steps
4. Body position

1. Rules - Starts

You should explain the starting rules to the skaters and always start them that way. If all coaches insist that the skaters learn the correct way there might be less difficulty with the start during competitions.

Drills

- Have all skaters familiarise themselves with the pre-start and start lines.
- Have all skaters step through the start, trying to do each step correctly.
- Have the skaters do a complete start but just for technique, not speed. Watch for correct arm-leg relationships.
2. **POSITION ON THE LINE – AFTER THE COMMAND “READY”**

1. Skates parallel and forty-five degrees (45°) to the line.
2. Feet shoulder width apart.
4. Trailing arm loosely extended behind.
5. Back bent about forty-five degrees (45°).
6. Weight evenly distributed on both feet.

**Description**

The skates should be parallel and about forty-five degrees (45°) to the line. This allows for good balance, a position that the skater can spring from and the rear foot already in the correct position to push.

1. The feet should be shoulder width apart to provide a steady base from which to spring. It is also more comfortable than other positions which would allow you to do the same thing.

2. The knees must be bent to get any spring out of them. It is the uncoiling of the legs which produces the power.
3. Leading arm is mentioned rather than the left or right because some skaters start facing to the right while others start to the left. The lead arm should be comfortably in front and the elbow should be bent, since the first few arm swings will be with a bent elbow similar to a normal running pattern.

4. The trailing arm is slightly behind and ready to be swung forward. One arm forward and one arm backwards to balance each other and also at the best position to begin supplying momentum.

5. The back is relatively straight because the first three steps require the back to be in this position.

6. The weight should be evenly distributed to provide good balance. This also makes it easier to lift the left foot and push off with the right foot simultaneously.

**Drills**

- Get all skaters on the same line and have them assume the proper position. First ensure their skates are at the correct angle and their feet are shoulder width apart. Then have them assume the correct body position. Practice this by shouting the starting commands. Make necessary corrections.
3. **FIRST THREE STEPS**

*First Step – Left Handed Start*

1. Left foot raised and placed forty-five degrees ($45^\circ$) in opposite direction.
2. Left arm swings back slightly with elbow still bent.
3. Right arm swings forward as if punching someone.
4. Drive off right foot.

**Description**

A number of things happen simultaneously when the gun goes off. From the starting position, the left foot is raised and turned so that it is facing forty-five degrees ($45^\circ$) in the opposite direction. This step should be as long as possible to get a good lean established. At the same time, the left arm pulls back. This straightens the body and forces the skater to face the direction they are going in. The right arm swings forward with a bent elbow, the right leg pushes backwards, both providing a forward momentum. These few steps should occur at the same time. It might be a little difficult to coordinate all four movements in the beginning but it will come together with practice.

The first three steps form the start of a herringbone pattern down the ice. The first three steps are very quick and therefore must be close together. As the ice speed increases, then the distance between the steps will lengthen.
Second Step – Left Handed Start

1. Left arm punches forward.
2. Right arm back.
3. Drive off left foot.
4. Right foot placed in front and to the side of the left foot.

Description

The second step is just about the opposite of the first. The right foot moves from its original position to the next position without twisting or rotating. The arms continue in a punching fashion straight forward and back.
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Third Step – Left Handed Start

1. Right arm punches forward.
2. Left arm back.
3. Drive off right foot.
4. Left foot placed in front and to the side of the right foot at forty-five degrees (45°).
5. Knee angle ninety to one hundred degrees (90° to 100°) at skate landing.

Description

The third step is the complete opposite of the second step.

Drills

• Have the skaters perform several starts. Watch for one point each time.
4. **BODY POSITION - STARTS**

1. Back fairly straight for the first three steps.
2. Knees bent about ninety degrees (90°).
3. Back gradually lowers as speed increases and tempo decreases.
4. Elbows bent for the first three steps.
5. Arm swing gradually lengthens as stride lengthens.

**Description**

1. The back needs to be fairly straight for the first three steps because the motion of the legs during the start is forward. If the back is bent over, the skaters would keep hitting their chest with their knees. So whilst the knees are coming up and forward, the back must be fairly straight.

2. The legs must be bent so that the skater can generate power. You should look for quick powerful steps.

3. The back gradually lowers to its normal position as the speed increases. As speed increases the steps become longer and more to the side. During the transition of stepping straight ahead and striding to the side, the back slowly lowers to its normal position.

4. During the first steps, the arms are bent so the skater can swing them quickly. The legs cannot go any faster than the arms. The arms swing straight forward and backward to get the most forward momentum possible.

5. As the speed increases, the steps gradually lengthen out. Several things happen at the same time. The legs begin to push to the side, the back slowly comes down to its normal level and the arms gradually settle into their normal swing.

**Drills**

- Have the skaters perform several starts. Watch for one point each time.
D. Teaching Tips

1. Make sure that each drill is clearly understood by all the skaters. Demonstrate each one.
2. Only work on one point at a time.
3. Speak loudly and clearly so that all skaters can hear.
4. Move fairly quickly from one point to another.
5. Reinforce success.
6. Work with all skaters, not just a select few.
7. Do not belabour a point. You can come back to it next time.
8. Break up formal instruction periods with quick games.
9. Repeat the basics during every practice session.

The beginner skater needs to be continually reviewed in all areas so repetition is good. Keep the instruction periods short and try to get as much variety as possible into the program. Do not expect perfection, but do expect the skaters to have an understanding of the principles involved. They should be at least aware of most of the points even though they cannot do it perfectly.

E. Extra Drills

These exercises are more advanced and may be too demanding for the beginner skater. They form the basis of much of the Level II technique, but can be used by the Level I coach after skaters have mastered the basic principles.

1. Skaters assume the Basic Position and glide down the ice pushing with the right leg only. Keep right skate on the ice. Watch for the push with the whole blade and weight on the supporting leg.

2. Same as above but alternate leg with each push.

3. Same as drills 1 and 2, but using arms.
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4. Skaters assume the Basic Position and extend one leg. Shift upper body from side to side so that each leg is extended. Make sure that all weight is transferred from leg to leg by lifting the skate of the extended leg off the ice.

5. Skaters assume the Basic Position and take a few steps. Glide on one foot with the other leg in the glide position, i.e. legs bent and relaxed knee just behind and to the side of the supporting leg. Go as far as possible. Staying in a straight line indicates glide on flat part of the blade.

6. Skaters assume the Basic Position and glide on one leg. Other leg pushes, repetitively recovering off the ice. Watch for push with whole blade and relaxed recovery.

7. As above but use arm swing.

8. As for drills 6 and 7 except using alternate legs. This is basic skating. Correct body position and arm swing with alternate leg push.

9. Skaters in Basic Position gliding around circle. Push only with right leg to maintain momentum. Push straight out with the entire blade. Keep skate on the ice.

10. As above except with arm swing.

11. As above with recovering leg off the ice.

12. Skaters in Basic Position gliding around circle. Push through with left leg and hold the glide. Keep left skate on the ice. Push with the heel of the left skate.

13. As above except alternate with right leg push. Keep both skates on the ice and hold the glide in the left leg extended position.

14. As for drill 13 except with arm swing.

F. **Tips on Running Effective Practices**

1. Utilise the entire ice surface.

2. It is possible to do starts on the inside of the track, as well as on the track.

3. The centre circle marked on the ice can be used for corner training.

4. Always break your skaters into groups according to ability.

5. Designate an area of the ice as the resting area and make sure that all non-active skaters stay in that area.
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6. When skaters are on the track, the inside of the track can be used for technique and drills for beginner skaters.

7. Games and relays can involve the entire group at one time.

8. Warm-ups and warm-downs can also be performed as a group.

9. Ideally coaches should take groups of no more than six.
CHAPTER 3 – COACHING BEGINNER SKATERS

A. Introduction

There are three major factors that must be considered in coaching beginner skaters:

1. That the beginner acquires a positive self concept of themselves as a skater.
2. That the beginner acquires a positive attitude about skating.
3. That the beginner acquires the ability to skate.

The coach’s role is to develop a learning environment in which the beginner not only learns how to skate but also enjoys skating and feels that skating is good for them. For a beginner, learning to skate is a means to acquire other factors. Whilst a beginner is learning a skill, they pass through at least four phases of learning:

- In the first phase (idea phase) the beginner is trying to understand the task they are going to learn.
- In the second phase (explore phase) the learner tries out different methods of doing the task.
- In the third phase (practice phase) the individual repeats the skill until they reach the fourth phase, where they can execute the skill automatically (participate-complete phase).
- Which one of the fourth phases the learner advances to is determined by the goals and readiness of the individual.

The coach of the beginner skater uses the four phases of learning to help the skater achieve the goals of coaching.
Figure 3.1: Interaction of the Phases of Learning and the Goals of Coaching Beginners

B. Idea Phase

The best way to think about learning and practice is to try to remember practising a new skill. Often the most difficult aspect of learning is understanding the task. Every person at one time or another has listened to instructions, watched demonstrations and then performed the task incorrectly. The error is not because of a lack of intent or ability but because of a lack of understanding the concept of the task. Acquiring the concept of the task is called the idea phase of motor learning. A good example of this in speed skating is the concept of standing directly on top of one’s skates. This is perhaps the most basic skill in learning to skate. As a coach, you will understand that this means balancing so that the centre of gravity of the body passes directly through the skate blade. A good way to teach this concept is to ask the beginner to “stand on top of their skates” and walk forward holding onto the boards. Some skaters will do the skill perfectly while other skaters are ankle benders, who walk on the side of their skates. If you ask the ankle benders if they were walking on top of their skates, some will answer “yes”. They probably do not have a good concept of “standing on top of their skates”. (The only other possibilities are that the skates do not fit or are not tied properly). It is important to emphasise that a good coach assumes that the beginner wants to learn and is trying
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to learn. Therefore the coach must be patient, re-explain and demonstrate to ensure that the beginner understands what they are trying to learn.

Coaches can make three basic errors in explaining a skill:

- The first is to forget how much a coach knows and/or assumes that the beginner knows more than they actually do.

- The second error is to provide the beginner with too much information so that they cannot remember it all.

- The third error is not explaining oneself very well. (I know that you believe you understand what you think I said but I am not sure that you realise that what you heard is not what I meant).

There are no magic formulas to determine “what is right” or “how much is enough” or “the right way”. Good coaches and teachers find out what the beginner did not understand by asking them questions and observing.

Coaches assume they made the error themselves and spend time correcting it. Good coaches do not blame the beginner for not understanding.

C. Explore Phase

It is possible with more complex skills (such as gliding on one leg) that the beginner understands the task but cannot actually do the task the first time. The beginner will probably attempt several different strategies, some that work and others that are ineffective. This is called the explore-phase of motor learning. The beginner is trying out different combinations of known responses to find a way of doing the skill that works. The coach’s role during this phase is to ensure that the beginner knows what they are trying to learn and give the beginner some time to develop a way of executing the skill.

During the explore-phase, beginners do not benefit from being told what they are doing wrong or how to do the skill. A passing comment encouraging good trials is all that is necessary.

D. Practice Phase

Once the beginner has an acceptable method of doing the skill, they advance to the next stage of motor learning called the practice-phase. The purpose of practice is to repeat the skill enough times so that the beginner can do the skill without thinking about it. This is important in speed skating because a skater has enough to do during a race without worrying about how to skate. Mere repetition does not lead to learning a skill. The best example of this is handwriting. How many times have you written your name in the past year? Has the writing of your name improved? Not
very likely, however, if you write your name 10 times trying to improve your handwriting it will probably get better. Successful practice requires attention and/or effort, as well as repetition. If the beginning skater is learning to push to the side and stay in the basic skating position, they must focus on these factors while practising. The coach’s role is to encourage beginners to attend to what they are learning.

(a) Practice and Attitude

Next to the athlete’s natural ability, the most important factor in improving performances is the skater’s attitude toward practice. Most children are highly motivated when they first become involved in skating. Some kids are capable of maintaining this attitude under all conditions. Other skaters lose interest in practice and skating and opt out of speed skating. One of the key factors in working with beginner skaters is to maintain a positive attitude.

The first consideration is the coach’s attitude about practice. An enthusiastic, cheerful and positive manner creates the impression that practising is fun, good to do and worth doing. A negative or even a bored or disinterested manner suggests to the skater that practising is not very valuable.

The second consideration is maintaining a positive attitude is to keep the tasks meaningful, appealing and challenging. For advance skaters, explaining why the task is important to optimal performance not only makes the task meaningful but also helps the skater learn the task.

For example, the importance of staying back on the skates can be explained by showing that the front of the skate digs in and causes friction that reduces the glide and increases the chance of a fall. However, for most beginners, this would probably be meaningless. They just want to have fun skating. For these skaters, ending practice with relays, races and games using the skills acquired in practice give the skaters a reason to learn the skill. In order to encourage them to stay back on their skates, use a relay that requires that skill.

The third factor coaches must keep in mind, to maintain a positive attitude is a variety and fun in practice. Repeating the same drill for too long or following the same pattern from practice to practice removes the fun of practising. Novel drills, relays and games create a little uncertainty about what is going to happen next and helps to maintain interest. Not dwelling on one drill too long also leads to more efficient use of practice time. There is no magic formula telling coaches how long to run a drill. However, when children start chattering and/or fooling around learning is minimised.
(b) Feedback, Reinforcement and Self-Concept

Children tend to behave and perform in a manner that corresponds with their self-concept. Sport has the potential to enhance self-concept. A child who perceives themselves as a motor moron will perform like a motor moron no matter how much ability the child has. A child’s self-concept is shaped by their perceptions of reactions to them by significant others. For young skaters, a coach is an important significant other. Therefore, everything a coach says or gestures affects the beginners’ ability to learn how to skate. Coaches provide two categories of information to the beginner:

- Feedback which is information about the quality of the response; and
- Reinforcement which is the reward the skater receives.

One of the most accepted theories in learning is Thorndike’s law of effect. The law simply stated is that the benefit of practice is dependant on the consequences of practice. When a positive reward follows a trial performance improves. If a negative reward follows a trial, the beginner tends to avoid that task. For example, if a beginner tries to push to the side and is encouraged by the coach’s comments and gestures, the beginner will probably try to repeat the task and feel good about themselves. However, if the coach shows any negative reaction such as verbal criticism, a gesture or facial expression, the child will be reluctant to repeat the task and will lose confidence in themselves. Sometimes it is difficult to find good things about a beginner’s attempts and to react positively. However, the mere fact the child is there and trying to learn usually provides some material for positive reinforcement.

A common reaction of coaches to using only positive reinforcement is that you can never tell a person what they did wrong. What a person is told about what they did right or wrong is feedback. The manner in which the coach provides the feedback to the athlete and not the nature of the information determines if the feedback is received as positive or negative reinforcement. The key to avoiding error information being interpreted as negative reinforcement is the rapport between the skater and the coach. If the beginner is confident that the coach is concerned about them as a person and wants them to do well and enjoy the sport then error information is accepted as feedback. However, if the beginner feels that their acceptance by the coach is dependant on their performance, error information by the coach is perceived as threatening and is considered negative reinforcement. Coaches who criticise skaters in front of other skaters, yell at skaters, appear angry, frustrated or disappointed, or communicate any other negative feelings towards skaters do not build self-confidence and often interfere with learning.

Another aspect of error information is the athlete’s willingness to accept or believe that they are doing the wrong things. Changing the way a person does a skill usually feels less comfortable than the old way. Visual aids are extremely useful but are both time consuming and expensive. A good method to help an athlete to accept their errors is to help the athlete identify their faults by themselves. Instead of telling a skater what they are doing wrong, ask them. This method has two advantages:
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1. The coach merely reinforces the skaters’ evaluation, therefore is not the source of the negative feedback; and

2. The beginner starts to become aware of the internal information about their performance.

The attention to the internal information about performance facilitates learning the skill as well as helping to identify the errors. If the beginner does not know what the errors they are making or identifies inappropriate faults, the coach simply suggests that they try to feel certain parts of the task. For example, if a skater’s arms are swinging across the midline of the body, ask the skater where their arms are swinging. Once they can tell you where their arms are, ask them to tell you how they should swing. If the skater knows the arms are supposed to swing, merely attending to where they swing should help correct the fault. If the skater is unsure of where the arms should swing, then the coach must explain the correct method. In both cases, the coach must reinforce the correct arm swing when the skater does it right.

The last factor to consider for developing self-concept and skill learning is the frequency and distribution of feedback and reinforcement. Coaches always seem to have too much to do at practice. When an athlete makes an error, coaches try to bring the fault to their attention and help the athlete to correct the skill. When the athlete succeeds in correcting the error, the coach makes a mental note of the success and start working on the next fault. The net result is that coaches often communicate far more negative feedback and reinforcement than positive. In most cases, coaches are pleased with the skaters’ progress but the beginner is often not aware of the coach’s positive reaction. In fact, the predominance of negative feedback and reinforcement sometimes suggest that the coach is always dissatisfied. This can destroy self-concept, interfere with learning and creates a less positive attitude towards skating.

**Coaches must find time and remember to reinforce beginners’ improvements.**

E. **Participate-Compete Phase**

Each coach hopes that each child they work with will learn to skate well enough to enjoy participating. Perfect performances are very rarely achieved in sport. Striving to improve is part of sport. The beginner skater may or may not have a strong drive to be competitive but most will want to race. The issue of when a beginner should start to compete is very complex. Each situation is unique and depends on the interaction of the skater’s goals and level of readiness.

Some individuals simply want to participate and are not interested in competing, whilst others may want to race but are not ready. Readiness can be divided into two categories: physical and mental. It is very easy to be physically ready to compete but not be emotionally mature enough to cope with the emotional pressure of competition. It is easy for parents and coaches to expect too much from young skaters based on their physical ability. If a beginning skater is to compete in formal
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competition, both the coach and parent should be confident that the competition will be a good experience.

Winning is not as important as is the child developing his or her self-confidence, attitude and skill. The child must be physically and mentally ready enough to have a reasonable chance of having a positive competitive experience. Running informal competitions during practice allows the beginner skater to learn about racing and competing and allows the coach and parents to assess the child’s physical and mental readiness.
CHAPTER 4 – FUN AND GAMES

A. Philosophy

In order to encourage participants, each practice should have fun and laughter as well as effort. The easiest way to do this is to have relays, races and games. These can be played and enjoyed by all ages and abilities and usually all ages and abilities at the same time with careful supervision by the coach(es).

By balancing teams and handicapping individuals, a coach can develop a competitive environment in which everyone has an equal opportunity to win. Fun diminishes by over-emphasising winning, e.g. having losers skate extra laps or put away the mats.

Relays, races and games can and should be used as opportunities to practice skills and supplement formal training sessions. While fun is the primary purpose, the activity should also be useful, i.e. used to emphasise technique, strength, strategy, cornering, endurance, etc. For example, if you have taught or reviewed the basic skating position in the skill portion of the practice, you should use this skill as part of the relay. This makes the learning more meaningful, evaluates the amount of learning and serves as a review for the skater. Another example would be to emphasise a certain type of interval training by selecting or developing a relay to include this aspect. This will make hard training fun and encourage hard effort.

At the end of this section is a list of fun activities which can be used during practice sessions. This list is not comprehensive. These are only examples. Virtually any running relay or game can be adapted to skating. There are books of games readily available. Inventing your own relays and games is easy. Simply decide the purpose of the game or relay and develop a game to play that you think will work. This does not bother skaters. If it is not working, stop the game or relay and start another you know will work. You may also ask older skaters to invent new games.

Remember, the main purpose is to have fun.

1. FORMATIONS, EXCHANGES AND SETTING UP COURSES

A. The Three General Formations

   (i) Skaters racing on the track: In this formation it is very important that the skaters awaiting their turn or who have finished their turn must remain inside the track and out of the way. In some relays, such as the pursuit relays, the non-racing team members have specific responsibilities. In other relays, it is best to have them waiting in straight lines at an adequate distance apart.
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(ii) **Skaters in two lines facing each other:** In this formation, it is very important that the skaters go to the end of the lines as quickly as possible. Lines must be an adequate distance apart.

![Figure 4.1](image_url)

**Figure 4.1**

(iii) **Skaters start and finish at one end:** The same safety rules as skaters in two lines facing each other apply, however, it is very important to limit the area available for the turn and have all skaters turn in the same direction in order to avoid collision. (Ref Figure 5.2).

![Figure 4.2](image_url)

**Figure 4.2**
B. Exchanges

Accidents can occur at the exchange during the relays. One problem with the simple hand tag relays is that it can be easily missed or the finishing skaters may interfere with other skaters. Methods that slow down the incoming and outgoing skaters are much safer. The pursuit push exchange is very good in this regard. Another method is to have the teams exchange on opposite sides. A third method is to have the incoming skaters circle the waiting team, stop and then tag for the exchange. In order for this method to be effective, the incoming skater must stop before the tagging and the team must be kept far enough apart.

**Figure 4.3**

**Figure 4.4**
C. Laying out the course

It is common to use wooden blocks or rubber pylons to limit the course. These are potentially dangerous if kicked and at best lead to disorganisation. It is better to use face-off dots or skaters that are not in the relay to mark out the route. Of course any relay involving the use of the track should be marked in the usual manner.

2. RELAYS

Relays can be enjoyed by skaters of all ages and levels of ability. They are adaptable to any combination or number of skilled and unskilled skaters. Relays are an excellent method of developing competitive skills and teamwork.

Setting up relays is easiest when you have the full attention of your skaters. Count off your teams clearly and when they have all regrouped, explain the nature of the race and, if necessary, have a few skaters demonstrate until everyone understands.

Be sure that the racing course is unobstructed by waiting skaters. As in all games and races, the normal rules of fair play and sportsmanship apply and should be enforced.

1. End to End Relay

Number of players: 3 – 4 teams of 8
Ability: All levels
Equipment Safety mats
Time 2 – 4 minutes

![Diagram of End to End Relay]

**Figure 4.5**
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(a) Line up teams as shown.

(b) Skater number 1 starts and skates down rink, touches number 5 who goes back and touches number 2, etc.

(c) Skater number 1 takes new position behind skater number 8.

(d) Skater number 5 takes new position behind skater number 4.

(e) Relay continues until teams are back in their original position.

(f) Relay can also be performed skating backwards

**NOTE:** As a safety precaution, protective mats must be placed at either end during this exercise.

2. **Traditional Relay**

   Number of players: 2 teams of 4 – 6

   Ability: All levels

   Equipment: Skateguard

   Time: 2 – 4 minutes

---

**FIGURE 4.6**
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(a) Two teams line up at the start/finish (S/F) line as shown.
(b) First skaters race one or more laps.
(c) Use hand tag or skateguard pass between blue lines.
(d) New skaters come from the middle when it is their turn to skate.

3. **Slalom Relay**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of players:</th>
<th>4 – 6 teams of 4 – 5</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ability:</td>
<td>All levels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equipment</td>
<td>4 – 6 cones/team</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

**FIGURE 4.7**

(a) Teams line up as shown with cones in ice.
(b) Skaters skate course as shown.
(c) Relay can be either forwards or backwards or a combination.
(d) Next skater leaves when team mate crosses start/finish (S/F).

**NOTE:** A good exercise for individual skaters.
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4. **Push Race Relay**

   Number of players: 4 – 6 teams of 4 – 5 pairs
   Ability: All levels
   Equipment: None
   Time: 3 – 4 minutes

![Diagram of Push Race Relay](image)

**Figure 4.8**

(a) Teams line up in pairs as shown.
(b) Each pair skate down the rink with one person pushing the other.
(c) Partners change position when they get to the other end of the rink.
(d) Next pair leave when their team mates cross start/finish (S/F).

5. **Circle Relay**

   Number of players: Up to 24
   Ability: All levels
   Equipment: Cones to mark the circle
   Time: 2 – 3 minutes
FIGURE 4.9

(a) Cones are used to mark out the circle as shown.
(b) Teams line up as shown.
(c) At whistle, first skaters of each team go counter-clockwise.
(d) Can go more than one lap.
(e) Hand tap to next skater.

6. Rescue Relay

Number of players: 10 – 16
Ability: All levels
Equipment None
Time 3 – 4 minutes
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(a) Two teams line up as shown.

(b) One member from each team is selected to be the initial rescuer and goes to the circle at the other end of the rink.

(c) Teams are told that they are in a sinking ship, burning building, etc and that they are to be saved as soon as possible.

(d) On the whistle, rescuers race down and pull up on of their team mates back to the other circle.

(e) The person just rescued becomes the new rescuer and so on until all team members are safe.

7. Relay Games

Number of players: 6 – 12

Ability: All levels, best for beginners

Equipment 4 cones

Time 2 – 4 minutes

---

**Figure 4.11**

(a) Teams line up as shown:

- Team A goes from circle I to circle II
- Team B goes from circle III to circle IV
- Next skater may leave when team mate is in the other circle.
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(b) Same as for (a) except that now skaters go in pairs and one pushes the other.

(c) Same as for (b) except that one skater pulls instead of pushing.

(d) Same as in (b) except that two skaters go hand in hand.

(e) Same as for all above except that skaters must complete several complete circuits, e.g. Team A must go from I to II to I to II, etc.

8. Relay Games

Number of players: 4 – 6 teams of 4 – 8
Ability: All levels
Equipment One cone/team
Time 4 – 6 minutes

(a) Team lines up as shown and each skater skates the path as indicated by the above diagram – use hand tag.

(b) Same as for (a) except that all skaters now must keep their feet on the ice at all times.

(c) Same as for (a) except that now skaters go in pairs, one pushing the other.

(d) Same as for (c) except that now one skater pulls the other.

(e) Same as for (c) except that now skaters go hand in hand.

FIGURE 4.12

(a) Team lines up as shown and each skater skates the path as indicated by the above diagram – use hand tag.

(b) Same as for (a) except that all skaters now must keep their feet on the ice at all times.

(c) Same as for (a) except that now skaters go in pairs, one pushing the other.

(d) Same as for (c) except that now one skater pulls the other.

(e) Same as for (c) except that now skaters go hand in hand.
9. **Lines Relay**

   Number of players: 4 – 6 teams of 4 – 6 players
   Ability: All levels
   Equipment: None
   Time: 3 – 4 minutes

![Diagram of Lines Relay](image)

**FIGURE 4.13**

(a) Teams line up as shown.
(b) First skater on each team goes to the nearest blue line and back.
(c) Second skater on each team goes to the centre line and back.
(d) Third skater goes to the far blue line and back.
(e) Last skater goes to the end line and back.
(f) Possible to run complete team through several times.
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10. Individual Pursuit Corner Relay

Number of players: 2/circle

Ability: All matched in each circle

Equipment: None

Time: Until the pursuit is ended

---

Figure 4.14

(a) Skaters skate slowly around staying on opposite sides.

(b) On whistle, skaters try to catch their partner.

(c) Change after every two whistles.

---

Figure 4.15
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(d) Can be team pursuit also using hand tag exchange and larger circle – extra skaters tag inside circle.

(e) Can be used with one strong skater versus team of weaker skaters.

11. Individual Pursuit Corner Relay

Number of players: 4 – 6 teams of 3 – 5

Ability: All levels

Equipment None

Time Arbitrarily determined

![Diagram of Individual Pursuit Corner Relay](image)

**Figure 4.16**

(a) Skater number 1 does a start and sprints to number 2, tagging the second skater on the shoulder.

(b) Number 2 returns to number 3.

(c) Number 3 returns to number 1.

(d) Number 1 returns to number 2, etc.

(e) Count total number of tags in a given time period.
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12. One Leg Relay

   Number of players: 3 – 4 teams of 4 – 6
   Ability: All levels
   Equipment None
   Time 3 – 5 minutes

   ![Diagram of One Leg Relay]

   **FIGURE 4.17**

   (a) Skater go one lap in Basic Position, pushing with right leg only and then skate second lap pushing with left leg only.
   (b) Each skater does two laps.
   (c) Use hand tag.

13. Technique Relay

   Number of players: 3 – 4 teams of 4 – 6
   Ability: All levels
   Equipment None
   Time 3 – 5 minutes
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**FIGURE 4.18**

(a) Each skater must perform a selected skill for one lap, i.e. gliding on one leg; gliding in Basic Position; skating while keeping both feet on ice.

14. **Sweat-Top Relay**

- **Number of players:** 3 – 4 teams of 4 – 6
- **Ability:** All levels
- **Equipment:** Extra sweat-tops
- **Time:** 2 – 3 minutes

**FIGURE 4.19**

2. Skater number 1 starts with sweat-top on and races to number 2 where they take their sweat-top off.
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(a) Number 2 must put the sweat-top on before leaving to give sweat-top to number 3, etc.

15. Snakes and Alligators

Number of players: 3 – 4 teams of 4 – 6
Ability: Beginners
Equipment None
Time 2 – 4 minutes

![Figure 4.20](image)

(a) Blue lines are rivers filled with alligators.
(b) Red line is a pit filled with snakes.
(c) Skater must jump over these obstacles.
(d) Skater number 1 goes to number 2, who goes to number 3, etc.
16. Chain Relay

Number of players: 4 – 6 teams of 4 – 6
Ability: All levels
Equipment None
Time 3 – 4 minutes

FIGURE 4.21

(a) Skater number 1 goes up and back, picks up number 2 and they go up and back.
(b) Number 1 and 2 pick up number 3 and then number 4 in the same manner.
(c) Number 2, 3 and 4 drop off number 1, then 3 and 4 drop off number 2.
(d) Number 3 drops off next lap and number 4 finishes the relay on their own.

RELAY

There are many more relays which work well on the ice surface. Always make an attempt to have skaters of similar ability race against one another. Make sure that all the coaches understand the relays prior to explaining them to the skaters, so that they can aid in answering questions which might arise.
3. **RACES**

Holding fun races is an excellent way of developing competitive spirit. As much as possible, try to avoid glaring mismatches in your races. Try to make each race competitive by introducing handicaps for the better skaters. Many of the relay races can be adapted to individual contests. The advantages of relays of course is that they involve more skaters at any one time.

17. **Push Race**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of players:</td>
<td>x Number of teams of two</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability:</td>
<td>All levels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equipment</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>30 seconds to 1 minute</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

![Diagram of Push Race](image)

**FIGURE 4.22**

(a) Skaters line up in pairs along start/finish line.

(b) On whistle, one skater pushes his/her partner down to the other end of the rink.

(c) Skaters exchange positions and return.
18. **Slalom Race**

Number of players: 2 – 6
Ability: All levels
Equipment 4 – 5 cones per lane
Time 30 seconds

![Slalom Race Diagram]

**FIGURE 4.23**

(a) Place cones as shown in FIGURE 4.23.
(b) Select skaters of similar calibre.
(c) Skaters race on course as shown.
(d) Can also conduct race backwards.
19. **Kangaroo Race**

   Number of players: 8 – 10
   
   Ability: All levels, but not mixed in 1 race
   
   Equipment Corner blocks
   
   Time Set a time limit

   ![Diagram of a skating rink](image)

   **FIGURE 4.24**

   (a) Space out skaters evenly around rink.
   
   (b) On whistle, everyone tries to catch the skater in front of them.
   
   (c) If passed, skater must go into the centre.
   
   (d) Set a time limit or lap limit.

20. **Handicap Races**

   The skaters skate the same distance every week. The first week is used to get a time for every skater. For the following week’s race, the skaters get a handicap of the number of seconds’ difference between the winning time and their time. All times are adjusted by the handicap and the winner is announced. The handicap keeps changing and should be the difference between the best time on the track and the personal best time of the skater.
21. **Devil Takes the Hindmost**

- **Number of players:** 15 – 20
- **Ability:** Similar speeds
- **Equipment:** None
- **Time:** Arbitrarily determined

**Figure 4.25**

(a) Last skater across the S/F line on each lap must drop off.

(b) Race continues until only two skaters are left, then they must race the last two laps.

4. **Games**

Games are an excellent way to get all the skaters moving at one time. Used in this manner, they can serve as good conditioning drills as well as to develop the basic stops, starts, balance and agility on skates which are prerequisites for success in racing.
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Commonsense must be used with all games. However, the potential for injury is higher on ice than on land. Never have contact games, or games where size and strength play an inordinate role. The chief purpose of a game is to have fun while simultaneously developing skating skills.

22.  Chase Tag

   Number of players: 2 teams of 4 – 8
   Ability: All levels, but matched pairs
   Equipment Corner blocks
   Time 2 – 3 minutes

![Diagram of Chase Tag](image)

**FIGURE 4.26**

(a) Line up two teams as shown above.

(b) On whistle, members from team A skate around track.

(c) When they cross line C, the first team B skater gives chase.

(d) If team A skater is tagged, score 1 for team B; but if team A skater escapes, score 1 for his/her team.
CHAPTER 5

Lesson Planning

All skaters, and most particularly young skaters, improve at different rates. For this reason, certain types of practice plans are suggested rather than prescribing a standard series of practices.

It is quite important for the coach to be able to assess the progress and improvement in the skaters and adjust the practice so that it continues to be interesting, challenging and fun. As exercises, drills and the complete skating movements are learned, the coach should introduce new exercises and look for more precision in old exercises.

It is helpful, however, to have some examples of different types of training sessions. With these few examples, each coach should be able to modify the program to meet his or her needs. In most clubs, practices run from one to one and a half hours and are handled by one to three coaches. With usually two or three different levels on the ice at any one time, the coaches must know how to maximise use of the entire ice surface so as to minimise the time spent standing around. It is important that each coach knows before the practice what they will be doing, where they will be doing it and how long it is to last.

HOW TO DEVELOP A LESSON PLAN

It is easiest to make up a lesson plan by sticking to a general outline and including activities which suit the stage of the outline. Using this outline, any coach can develop a practice session with a variety of activities. Most practices for a club should follow the following format:

1. Warm-up
2. Skill Work
3. Conditioning Drills
4. Games, Relays and Races
5. Warm-down

Warm-up

The warm-up is designed to let the skater get used to their skates, the ice and the environment and to ensure that the body is warmed-up sufficiently so as to aid in the prevention of injury. The warm-up should be mostly self-paced with the emphasis on proper technique. At the completion of the warm-up, the skaters should be mentally and physically prepared to learn a new skill or to push the body harder in a conditioning drill.
Skill Work

Skill work should precede conditioning drills so that the skaters are able to concentrate fully on learning. It is much less efficient to teach a new skill when the skaters are too tired to perform it correctly.

Conditioning Drills

The conditioning part of the practice can be used to develop the physical qualities of speed, power, balance, agility, strength and endurance that are very important in short track skating. It is also a good time for the coach to evaluate the progress of the skill learning by watching the skaters at race speeds.

Games, Relays and Races

The fun part of the practice session is vital to encourage participation and engender enthusiasm. Games and relays can also be interspersed throughout the practice session especially when working with younger and beginner skaters. At this level, the conditioning goal of the practice can be achieved by using the appropriate games, relays or races.

Warm-down

The warm-down at the conclusion of the practice session should allow the skaters to relax after the conditioning and games. It should consist of low intensity, easy skating to conclude the practice session.

Tips on Running Effective Practices

• Utilise the entire ice surface.

• It is possible to do starts inside the track as well as down the length of the ice on the track.

• The centre circles marked on the ice can be used for corner training. There are five of these on rinks where hockey is played.

• Always break your skaters into groups according to ability.

• Designate an area of the ice surface as the resting area and make sure that all non-active skaters stay within that area.

• When skaters are on the track, the inside of the track can be used for technique and drills for beginner skaters.

• Games and relays can involve an entire group at one time.

• Warm-ups and warm-downs can also be performed as a group exercise.
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- The track can be shifted down to one end of the rink thus freeing up the other end for other uses.
- Shift the position of the track regularly to keep the ice fresh.
- Ideally, coaches should take groups of no more than six.

Eight Lesson Plans

**Lessons 1 – 4:**
- 90 minutes of ice time
- Minimum of two coaches
- Two groups

1. Skaters who have mastered the basics and who are ready to begin competing.
2. Beginners and skaters who have trouble with the basics.

**Lessons 5 – 8:**
- 60 minutes of ice time
- Two to three coaches
- Three groups

1. Beginners.
2. Second and third year skaters.
3. Advanced skaters.

The following lesson plans should serve as *examples* of how to conduct a practice session where several ability levels are present. The key to good practice is to be organised so that the limited ice time can be used most efficiently.
Lesson 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GROUP A</th>
<th>TIME</th>
<th>GROUP B</th>
<th>TIME</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Warm-up: start slow and gradually increase speed</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1. Warm-up: as GROUP A. Slower skaters use the inside track area</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. 5 x 5 mins skating at 60% of maximum speed. Rest 5 mins</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>2. Practice basic straightaway stride in centre of ice surface</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Accelerations from moving start in groups up to 75% of maximum</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3. Practice straightaway</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Push relay race, together with GROUP B</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>4. Push relay race, together with GROUP A</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Warm-down: easy skating</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5. Warm-down: as GROUP A</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Lesson 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GROUP A</th>
<th>TIME</th>
<th>GROUP B</th>
<th>TIME</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Warm-up: as in Lesson 1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1. Warm-up: as in Lesson 1</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. 8 x 2 mins skating at 80-90% of maximum speed. Rest 3 mins. Proper path and good technique</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>2. Practice corners around large circle in the centre of the ice. Technique points in manual</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. 2 x 4 to 10 mins x 10 mins at 85% of maximum speed. Rest 4 mins. Slow skating</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>3. Practice skating straightaways and corners</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Novelty races</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4. Watch and cheer for GROUP A</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Warm-down: easy skating</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5. Warm-down: as GROUP A</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>TOTAL</td>
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</table>
Level 1 Short Track Speed Skating Coaching Accreditation Course

Lesson 3

<table>
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<th>GROUP A</th>
<th>TIME</th>
<th>GROUP B</th>
<th>TIME</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Warm-up: as in Lesson 1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1. Warm-up: as in Lesson 1</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. 2 x 5 to 15 mins x 15 mins at 90% of max speed. Rest 5 mins. Slow skating</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>2. Practice basic straightaway stride in centre ice</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Practice passing in groups of 2</td>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>at 50% of max speed</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Individual starts – one skater at a time, one lap</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>3. Practice starts on centre ice</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Practice starts with 6 skaters on the line. One lap</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Novelty race with GROUP B</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4. Novelty race with GROUP A</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Warm-down: as in Lesson 1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5. Warm-down: as in Lesson 1</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
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Lesson 4

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<th>GROUP A</th>
<th>TIME</th>
<th>GROUP B</th>
<th>TIME</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Warm-up: as in Lesson 1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1. Warm-up: as in Lesson 1</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Corner technique in centre ice</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>2. Practice starts with 6 skaters on the line. One lap</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Start practice on one end of the ice</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>3. Practice skating the proper path on the track. Introduce skaters in passing</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Passing in groups of 2 or 3 at 75% max speed</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>4. Corner technique in centre circle</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Introduction to relay racing in groups of 4</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>5. Introduction to relay racing in groups of 4</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Warm-down: as in Lesson 1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6. Warm-down: as in Lesson 1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
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Lesson 5

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<th>GROUP A</th>
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<th>GROUP B</th>
<th>TIME</th>
<th>GROUP C</th>
<th>TIME</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Warm-up in centre of ice, easy skating</td>
<td>5-10</td>
<td>Warm-up around boards, easy skating</td>
<td>5-10</td>
<td>Warm-up around boards, easy skating</td>
<td>5-10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Basic technique at one end of the ice</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Basic technique in middle of the ice</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Two laps hard, two laps easy on the track</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Corner technique on centre of ice</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Start up one side and down</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Starts with GROUP B</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Games and relays</td>
<td>10-15</td>
<td>Games and relays</td>
<td>10-15</td>
<td>Games and relays</td>
<td>10-15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Warm-down in centre of ice</td>
<td>5-10</td>
<td>Warm-down around track</td>
<td>5-10</td>
<td>Warm-down around track</td>
<td>5-10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>TOTAL</td>
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Lesson 6

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<th>TIME</th>
<th>GROUP B</th>
<th>TIME</th>
<th>GROUP C</th>
<th>TIME</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Warm-up in centre of ice, easy skating</td>
<td>5-10</td>
<td>Warm-up around boards, easy skating</td>
<td>5-10</td>
<td>Warm-up around boards, easy skating</td>
<td>5-10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Basic technique at one end of the ice</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Corner training/starts</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>2 mins hard, 2 mins easy</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Starts</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Skating on the track</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Starts/corners training</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Games and relays</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Games and relays</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Games and relays</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Warm-down in centre of ice</td>
<td>5-10</td>
<td>Warm-down around track</td>
<td>5-10</td>
<td>Warm-down around track</td>
<td>5-10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
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Lesson 7

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>GROUP B</th>
<th>TIME</th>
<th>GROUP C</th>
<th>TIME</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Warm-up in centre of ice, easy skating</td>
<td>5-10</td>
<td>Warm-up around boards, easy skating</td>
<td>5-10</td>
<td>Warm-up around boards, easy skating</td>
<td>5-10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Skating on the track</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Corner training</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Starts at one end</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Starts / technique at one end</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Skating on track: 3 x 4 mins, 10 x 10 mins</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Skating with GROUP B</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Games and relays</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Games and relays</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Games and relays</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Warm-down in centre of ice</td>
<td>5-10</td>
<td>Warm-down around track</td>
<td>5-10</td>
<td>Warm-down around track</td>
<td>5-10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>TOTAL</td>
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Lesson 8

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<tr>
<th>GROUP A</th>
<th>TIME</th>
<th>GROUP B</th>
<th>TIME</th>
<th>GROUP C</th>
<th>TIME</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>1. Warm-up in centre of ice, easy skating</td>
<td>5-10</td>
<td>Warm-up around boards, easy skating</td>
<td>5-10</td>
<td>Warm-up around boards, easy skating</td>
<td>5-10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Skating on the track</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Starts/corner training</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Corner training/starts</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Starts/corner training</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Passing practice</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Games and relays</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Games and relays</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Games and relays</td>
<td>25</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Warm-down in centre of ice</td>
<td>5-10</td>
<td>Warm-down around track</td>
<td>5-10</td>
<td>Warm-down around track</td>
<td>5-10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>60</td>
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</table>
CHAPTER 6

Protective Equipment

RATIONALE

The AIR Inc. regulations stipulate that all short track skaters in sanctioned meets must wear cut-resistant gloves, a hard shell helmet, shin guards, knee pads and long sleeves for protection. These are all required because of the sharp blades, frequent falls and close quarters of short track racing.

HELMETS

The hockey helmet offers superior impact protection as well as covering the skull completely, thus protecting against the possibility of a skate cut. The hard shell skating helmet is lighter to wear than the hockey helmet and offers impact and cut protection. Either helmet is suitable for the beginner skater.

GLOVES

Gloves are required to prevent cut fingers and abrasions from falling on the hands. Kevlar is probably the best material as it will resist cutting.

LEG PROTECTION

Soccer shin guards which do not restrict movement and knee pads are required for short track speed skating to prevent injury from skates and falls.
CHAPTER 7

The Coach and Competitions

A coach’s responsibilities at a meet will vary somewhat depending on the age and experience of the skaters they are working with. For the purposes of this manual, it is assumed that most Level I coaches will be working with younger and beginner skaters.

The first responsibility is to ensure that all of your skaters know where the arena or track is, and the time the competition starts. This is especially important if it is a meet away from home. If your skaters are in a hotel, you can easily contact them but if they are billeted out, you must try to contact them before they all go to their respective billets’ home.

The second responsibility is to check the meet schedule and heat lists to see if your skaters are evenly distributed in the heats. If you have a legitimate complaint, take it to the Chief Referee or Meet Coordinator well before the start of the competition.

The next responsibility is to ensure that your skaters all have their racing numbers and that they have a program of the races so they know when they are to race. With inexperienced skaters, it is still best for the coach to check on every skater before they race to make sure they will be ready. With experience, the skaters and/or their parents can be relied upon to use the meet schedule themselves.

With younger skaters, you should take them to the assembly point for the first race so they know where to report in the future. You should try to make the skaters responsible for getting to the ice so you do not have to keep running in and out of the dressing rooms.

If heats are to be skated, make sure that your skaters know what the criteria are for qualifying to the final or semi-finals. After the heats, ensure that your skaters know if they have qualified.

Sharp blades before the start of a race is not the coach’s responsibility. Some coaches feel that they should sharpen all their skaters’ blades, but if you do not agree with this you should make sure that either the parents or the skater is able to sharpen skates. If you have a lot of skaters at a meet, it is not possible to sharpen each pair of skates and fulfil your other responsibilities adequately. Sharpening skates is not a difficult skill to learn and each skater should be encouraged to be responsible for the condition of their own skates.

Again, with younger and beginner skaters, you should check to see they are wearing all of the required safety equipment for Short Track meets and you should have a couple of extra pairs of skate laces for those inexplicable, but inevitable, last second broken-lace emergencies.
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The most important duty during the competition is to watch each and every one of your skaters when they are racing. You cannot evaluate their performance nor answer their questions if you have not seen them in action. If it is possible, try to give feedback to each skater after their race. This is especially important for the first time competitors to whom one fall or bad race can assume unrealistic proportions. Giving such feedback, after all, is part of the essence of effective coaching.

After a competition, it is a nice gesture to thank the meet organisers and/or officials for holding the competition. They are volunteers too and their jobs can be very hectic. A simple word of appreciation of their time and efforts gains you and your club goodwill and compensates them somewhat for the frustrations they endure.

CHAPTER 8

Safety on the Ice

To enjoy physical activities of any kind, one has to be free from injury and illness. As Level I coaches, you must be aware of how safety can be applied to the sport of Short Track speed skating.

In the developing area of accident prevention and injury control, the concept that accidents are caused and do not just happen has done much to aid the idea that they are controllable.

Safety is achieved to a significant degree by providing our skaters with attitudes, skills and knowledge about hazards and their control. Safety in skating can be achieved to a great extent by applying four fundamental principles to the sport:

1. Recognise the hazards.
2. Remove the hazards where feasible.
3. Control the hazards that cannot be removed.
4. Create no additional hazards.

Recognise that the skating rink has only limited space and that if you have a large number of skaters on the ice at one time, they must be controlled in some way if accidents are to be prevented.

(a) You can remove hazards in the rink area itself by:

- Making sure that all doors along the boards are closed before practice begins;
- Providing some sort of padding along the boards at the appropriate places; and
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- If you have a number of groups, dividing the ice surface into sections and designating an area to each group for certain types of work.

(b) Before skaters go onto the ice, make sure that they are all wearing the appropriate equipment:

- Skates should fit properly with no loose laces hanging;
- Skates should not have screws or nuts and bolts which are likely to fall off;
- All skaters should be wearing helmets, gloves, knee and shin guards;
- All skaters should be wearing proper fitting clothes — no loose baggy clothing which could get caught in a skate blade; and
- Skaters should not be wearing pins, buttons or jewellery whilst skating.

(c) During practice itself, there are a number of safety tips that you should be aware of:

- When warming up, have the older skaters skate near the boards and the younger skaters on the inside of the track;
- Instruct younger skaters not to wander onto the main skating track whilst the older skaters are warming up or racing, as they may get run over. They will get their turn. Vice versa, keep the older skaters off the track while the younger skaters are using it; and
- Instruct skaters not to leave the ice surface without telling you first; this will ensure that they will not obstruct some other coach’s group or interfere with a race while leaving the rink. You can tell them when it is safe to leave.

The proper rules of racing should be stressed as unnecessary obstruction of other skaters can cause falls which could be dangerous.

When playing games, make sure that they are appropriate for the age and ability of the skaters. They often go too fast to prevent themselves from running into someone else. Make sure that finish lines are well away from the end or barrier of the rink. Young skaters do not always have the control to stop at the boards.

The preceding guidelines are just a few commonsense safety tips. By using commonsense and imagination, you can probably come up with many more to make your practice safe and enjoyable for your skaters.
CHAPTER 9

How to Stay Warm

A matter of considerable importance to coaches and skaters at low level is the problem of staying warm on cold days. The following are a series of tips which have proved successful through experience in the worst that winter has to offer:

1. Skates should be large enough so that toes can wiggle easily.
2. Skates should not be laced tightly as this will impair circulation in the feet.
3. Fresh socks should be used for every session.
4. Wool socks are good because of their ability to retain warmth even if damp and light cotton socks inside wool socks is a good combination.
5. It is important to keep the neck and throat warm because of the amount of blood passing close to the surface of the skin in this area.
6. Dress in layers rather than one or two bulky garments. Many thin layers will provide more dead space for insulation as well as allow an acceptable range of motion.
7. Spend a little money on good long underwear.
8. Keep a warm-u suit on until just before racing starts.