

LEARN TO SKATE USA

Basic Techniques

How do you learn to skate?

Learning to skate is easy and fun, but it requires determination and a lot of practice. Before you know it, you will be gliding forward and backward, showing your family and friends what you can do on the ice. Whether your goal is to skate backward, spin fast, score a goal or win a race, we've got the know-how to help. Remember, every champion had to begin with a few easy lessons, just like you.

How to Fall and Get Up

Falling is a necessary part of learning and doesn't need to be scary. Remember to always fall on one side, not forward or back on your tail bone. Never use your hands to break your fall.

Begin by practicing falling a few times off the ice.

- Lower your center of gravity, slide onto one hip, relax and collapse to the ice or ground
- Protect your head from snapping back and hitting the ice by tucking your chin

To stand up, roll onto your hands and knees, and place one foot on the ice between your hands. Then, put your other foot between your hands, and slowly push to a standing position, keeping your knees bent. Try to maintain balance as you stand.

EDGES

All advanced skating skills require strong edges. Skate blades have two edges (outside and inside) and two directions of travel (forward and backward). You have two feet, so there are eight total edges. Whenever you are skating on a curve, you are gliding on an edge.

FORWARD SKATING

Proper control and balance are key elements in successful gliding. Use these tips to practice your forward stroking:

- Skate forward in a stepping/marching action with your toes slightly turned out
- Take little steps at first; after three to four steps, hold a two-foot glide for three counts
- Knees and ankles should be slightly bent, toes pointed where you're going and chest/head up with arms slightly in front and parallel to the ice
- Repeat, pushing harder with each stroke – you will gain confidence and speed as you go!

BACKWARD SKATING/WIGGLES

Start with your feet parallel and knees bent. Push outward with each foot while shifting your weight between each. Maintain balance on the balls of your feet, keep knees bent and chest up.

You can also try wiggling your hips against your shoulders while shifting your weight and pushing backward off the balls of your feet. If you're wiggling but not going anywhere, try walking backward slowly with your toes turned in, shifting your weight just to feel the momentum.

FORWARD SWIZZLES

Start standing in a "V" position – heels together and toes slightly turned out. Slowly bend your knees and ankles and press inward, moving your feet forward.

Allow your feet to separate until they're about one foot apart. Then, straighten your knees and bring your toes together to form an inverted "V" position. This will get you into a two-foot glide parallel position.

Practice six to eight times in a row, gaining speed as you swizzle. Keep your chest and head up, and both arms extended for balance.

BACKWARD SWIZZLES

These use the same motion as forward swizzles – but going backward.

Begin in an inverted "V" position with toes together, and knees and ankles bent, pressing on the balls of your feet. Use your inside edges to press the heels out and let your skates glide to about a foot apart. Rise with your knees and bring your heels together into a backward two-foot glide.

Repeat this rhythmic motion until you can complete six to eight in a row.

FORWARD ONE-FOOT GLIDE

Get a moving start and balance in a two-foot glide position. Pick up one foot, holding it close to your skating leg in a toe-to-heel position. The hip on this side of your body should be raised. Keep your shoulders square and arms parallel to the ice. Try to balance on one foot for at least three counts or glide the distance of your height.

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FORWARD CROSSOVERS

Forward crossovers require a lot of practice to master.

- Skating in a counterclockwise direction, hold your upper body strong over the curve, shoulders open and hugging the circle (right arm in front)
- Stroke onto a left forward outside edge, knee slightly bent, and cross your right foot over your left foot, stepping inside the circle
- Shift your weight to your right foot, gliding onto a right forward inside edge, and tuck your left hip slightly under your right hip – both feet will cross until your left foot gives a slight push with the outside edge into a full outward extension under the body
- Repeat and practice in the clockwise direction as well

BACKWARD HALF-SWIZZLE PUMPS

This is an essential foundational skill to learn before beginning backward crossovers.

- Standing on the circle, your shoulders and arms should be hugging the circle, and your head turned back inside it (so you have a full view behind you)
- Start moving backward

Your feet will have different functions: one is the gliding/guiding foot, and the other is the pumping foot. Your gliding foot will remain on a strong backward outside edge. Your pumping foot will be in constant motion. It will power the half-swizzle by pushing out in a “C” motion and drawing toward your gliding heel in a swizzle action.

BACKWARD CROSSOVERS

Review backward half-swizzle pumps before beginning.

Lean into the circle with a still, strong upper body. While pumping out, the pumping foot’s heel slides in front of the skating foot’s toe, and the weight transfers from the skating foot to the pumping foot.

The most important part of backward crossovers is weight transfer. Initially, skaters can simply pick up the underneath foot and place it next to the skating foot. The proper rhythm of a backward crossover is “push, cross, hold, together,” or a one-two rhythm, one being the pump and two being the cross.

As you get better at crossing over, work toward pushing out with the undercut, using the outside edge to gain power.

BASIC STOPS

Snowplow Stops: One or Two Feet

Work on skidding first while holding onto the wall, then while standing still and, finally, moving. Press hard to skid and stop – if you press too hard, you won’t be able to shave the ice. If you don’t press hard enough, you won’t shave off any ice and might fall in a split!

With speed, skate into a two-foot glide position and bend your knees and ankles. Apply pressure to the skates’ inside edge(s) – your heels should be angling out. This will create a skidding action (making snow), taking you to a complete stop. Use the words “glide, bend, slide” to learn to skid.

T-STOP (RIGHT OR LEFT)

Stand in an upside-down “T” position. Your back foot will become your stopping foot. Skate forward on a slow one-foot glide, then lightly place the free foot on the ice, pink toe pressing down into the ice. Bend the skating knee and put pressure on the stopping foot, drawing it into the heel of the skating foot. If possible, lightly shift your weight to your stopping foot, pressing down on an outside edge and coming to a complete stop. Keep your shoulders square to the line of travel.

SKATE TO GREAT, ONE BLADE AT A TIME!

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