

LEARN TO SKATE

STAGE 1: ICE FRIENDS (ACTIVE START) & STAGE 2 : 'COOLEST PLACE IN TOWN' (FUNDAMENTALS)

The first TWO stages in South Africa's LTPD program is, ICE FRIENDS (ACTIVE START) and 'COOLEST PLACE IN TOWN' (FUNDAMENTALS).

As an early specialisation sport, participants will most likely to be coming to skating clubs and ice rinks with minimal to no physical literacy. As such, there are many basic movement skills that must be introduced and acquired in this stage. This is where participants are introduced to the enjoyment of movement along the ice.

The chronological ages of participants in this stage are:

LEARN TO SKATE	FEMALE	MALE
ICE FRIENDS (active start)	3-5	3-5
COOLEST PLACE IN TOWN (fundamentals)	5-8	5-9

Ideally athletes are ready to progress to the next stage of development

PHILOSOPHY: *The philosophy of ACTIVE START and FUNDAMENTALS is to provide opportunities for all South Africans to learn to skate in fun, safe, and engaging environments and to evoke interest for life long participation.*

when they reach the upper age as seen in the table above.

General Objectives

- To create a fun and active learning environment that engages skaters' interest and challenges athletic and personal development.
- To develop basic sport-specific skills
- To develop basic movement skills on-ice (go, stop, turn, jump, spin)
- To introduce motor skills (agility, balance, coordination, speed, rhythm, time/space orientation, dexterity, hand-eye coordination)
- To introduce simple rules and ethics of the sport
- To develop self-confidence and positive attitude
- To instill a love of figure skating.

IMAGINE



The Sensitive Period

The following physiological factors must be introduced and developed through specific programming and coaching and in accordance with age and gender:

- *Speed (female: 6-8; male: 7-9)*
- *Suppleness (Flexibility) (female/male: 6-10)*
- *Quality basic skating skills ("golden age" 8-12)*

Guiding Principles

In order to allow athletes to develop and acquire the skills outlined, the ACTIVE START and FUNDAMENTALS stages must:

- Be coach-directed with assistance from qualified program assistants
- Emphasize group-based teaching (private lessons could be used for enhancement)
- Be attractive in sight, sound and touch in order to stimulate and maintain interest and enthusiasm
- Emphasize fun, safety, and active participation
- Include demonstrations, movement and repetition
- Reward all achievements to instill a sense of accomplishment and encourage continued participation
- Emphasize the achievement of basic skills as well as the introduction of more complex skills for higher quality foundations
- Utilize clear, concise terminology appropriate to the ages of the participants
- No periodization but well structured programs and practices
- Incorporate properly trained quality program assistants.



MISSION OF THE COACH - ACTIVE START & FUNDAMENTALS -

The mission of the coach is to design and implement lessons that ensure the active involvement of all participants. The focus will be on basic movement skills and motor skills. Participants will be introduced to activities in order to create motor patterns that will facilitate sport specific skill acquisition at the next stage of athlete development. Learning takes place in a fun and joyful environment.



Coaches have the primary leadership role at this particular stage of development within skating. It is the coach's responsibility to provide adequate skill development based on the LTPD framework. Beyond their responsibility to the athletes, coaches also need to provide information to parents throughout the session. This might include skating program information and information related to performance opportunities (for athletes aged 5–8/9).



Coaches must be knowledgeable on child development and be aware of the individual needs of skaters as well as program requirements at the grassroots level. Coaches must also understand the role of grassroots programming in the overall development of athletes and individuals.

At this stage, coaches must be 75% entertainer and 25% technician from the skater's perspective. Ideally, coaches must have managerial expertise and need to act as educators to parents and committee members.



FEMALES (3-8) and MALES (3-9)

SPORT SPECIFIC SKILLS:

This chart represents the skills that participants should be able to demonstrate or show a relative mastery of the skills, all dependent on the amount of time spent on the Learn to Skate Stage.

MOTOR SKILLS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of speed • Ability to move and turn in both directions and on both feet • Development of balance or stillness in one position (while moving) • Awareness of the body and full body movement
TECHNICAL	<p>EDGES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to sustain large and small curves on all four edges (both feet) with speed and flow • Ability to control or manipulate edges with ease (i.e. change from outside to inside, etc.) <p>TURNS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3-turns and mohawks are introduced and developed • Evidence of ability to perform turns on a curve • Skaters should be able to demonstrate the concept of unweighting (i.e. transfer of weight/feet) <p>STROKING</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to push equally with both feet from the blade and not the toe pick, with good knee bend and acceleration • Demonstration of proper upper body carriage • Demonstration of proper crosscut technique • Ability to switch directions with minimal loss of momentum or speed <p>JUMPS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstration of balance and power of up–thrust on basic vertical jumps (power up – jumping straight up and down) on two feet, evolving to one-foot landings • Basic understanding of rotation (1/2 to full turn demonstrated) • Rudimentary ability to demonstrate landing positions <p>SPINS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of basic rotational concepts on two feet, one foot, alternating feet, straight legs, bent knees (i.e. basic sit position) • Ability to manipulate arms (out, in, up, and down) for balance, awareness, and the establishment of a rotating axis • Basic grasp of rotational speed • Introduction of the spiraling edge to achieve rotation (i.e. the twisting technique should not be used) <p>FIELD MOVES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to glide in one pose, on each foot, and in each direction • Some ability to perform free foot options (i.e. out, in, up, down) with control • Demonstration of appropriate levels of suppleness (i.e. flexibility) relative to age and sex

FEMALES (3-5 / 5-8) and MALES (3-5 / 5-9)

General Skills

General skills (i.e physiological, psychological and social) are developed through involvement in the sport, and determines the overall development of the individual.

PHYSIOLOGICAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop motor skills, speed and suppleness • Demonstrate knowledge of left and right
PSYCHOLOGICAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop self confidence and self-esteem through skills development, while still emphasizing fun and enjoyment • Demonstrate basic understanding of the language and rules of figure skating • Ability to follow instructions
SOCIAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Willingness to share and learn from other skaters • Basic understanding of the rules of fair play • Understanding that education remains priority number ONE

On Ice Training

This is the ideal amount of time to be spent on and off the ice at this development stage. It is critical that an off-ice warm up of 10 to 15 minutes in length is scheduled immediately prior to the on-ice session. This could be led by a coach, assistant, qualified parent or qualified committee member.

ICE FRIENDS - ACTIVE START(3 - 5 YEARS OF AGE)

	Session length	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 30 to 45 minutes on-ice, with 15 minute off-ice warm-up to begin • Maximum one session per day
	Days / week	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 - 2 days / week
	Weeks / year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 to 20 weeks / year

COOLEST PLACE IN TOWN' - FUNDAMENTALS (5 - 8/9 YEARS OF AGE)

	Session length	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 45 to 60 minutes on-ice, with 15 minutes off-ice warm-up to begin • Maximum one session per day
	Days / week	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 - 4 days / week
	Weeks / year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimum: 20 weeks / year • Ideal: 30 to 40 weeks / year

Off Ice Training

Skaters should be exposed to many different sports or physical activities all year round to develop overall physical literacy and good health. As much as possible, activities should help to develop agility, coordination, balance, speed, flexibility, etc. Coaches, parents and clubs are encouraged to explore the different opportunities that exist in their communities including structured and unstructured play. Ideally, these activities should be participated in one to two hours per week, 20 to 40 weeks per year.



Competition

In the LEARN TO SKATE stage, the primary focus is skill development.

For skaters aged three to five there is no need for any sort of competition. All of their time on the ice should be dedicated to training, as outlined above.

For skaters aged 5 to 8/9, skill presentation/performance should be introduced. Introducing this at an early age can help identify possible talent as well as instill expectations for later development. Skaters do not need to be performing programs at this level but rather focus on elements based on fundamental movements and motor abilities.

Skill presentation should be in the context of participation in fun club, provincial competitions at the club or non-national level where rewards are given but no ranking occurs. These can be held once in a 10 week session ideally with a focus on performance and not competition.

Evaluations are done by coaches with a goal for skaters to achieve a desired performance level for individual achievement.