

Teaching Beginners the FUN-damentals of Roller Skating



If you teach them—they will have fun.
If they have fun—they will come.
If they come—they will spend!

By Roberta Molaro

Introduction

Without a doubt, speed skating and hockey programs, can contribute significantly to a skating center's bottom line. Rinks with competitive programs will inevitably receive a great deal of free publicity when skaters' accomplishments appear in the media. Still, skating centers cannot count on exposure to result in a rush of customers or substantial revenue. A beginner class, however, can generate interest roller skating and increase regular visits.

Today, as always, a large portion of skating center income is derived from the session skater. The frequent visitor obviously provides profit through admissions, skate rental and concessions, yet to increase the number of "regulars" attention also must be paid to the occasional skater. Implementing *Teaching Beginners the FUN-damentals of Roller Skating* may be just what a customer needs to transition from an occasional visitor to one who comes often.

So remember: Customers return more frequently, if they have fun. They will have more fun, if they don't feel foolish. And learning roller skating basics gives them the confidence to skate in general sessions.

Teaching Beginners the FUN-damentals of Roller Skating was adapted from the curriculum used at the SKATERY, Pillow, Penn., but it is adaptable to any skating center. To make the most of it, skating centers are encouraged to customize to their needs and those of their students.

The program includes five recommended skating levels. Below is a chart with skills listed under the appropriate level. The levels were named for use at the SKATERY but can be changed as necessary.

Pre-Skater	Beginner	Basic Beginner	Intermediate Beginner	Advanced Beginner
Fall down Get up Safety March and Coast Cannonball Dip Helicopter	Steer Circles Flamingo Braking V start Forward Scissors	Scooter pushes Stroking Steer quarter circles Kangaroo Hop Surfer	Backward scissors Stop backwards Steer half circles Two beat steps Crossovers	T start T Stop Shoot the duck Whole circles Turn forward Spread eagle Three beat steps

Nature of the Program

Depending on initial skill levels, most students progress through two or three levels during a four to six week class series. Some learn faster, and others may need a little more time. The SKATERY offers the following tips for a successful program:

- Skating centers should feel free to implement the program at a comfortable pace. The entire curriculum doesn't have to be completed at the onset. Instead, skating centers can offer a Pre-Skater class on Saturday afternoon for starters. Once instructors feel comfortable and demand increase, they can add other program levels.
- During the first class, instructors should appraise new students' skill levels, and group those with similar abilities. If a student has never taken lessons but is beyond the Pre-Skater level, he should enroll in the appropriate level.
- Teachers should come prepared to class with plenty of material. Doing so prevents boredom.

- Siblings of students and even parents may have an interest in taking classes offered for a family rate.
- Research shows that students can absorb up to three new concepts at a time. If more material is presented, they may become overwhelmed.
- Research also shows that an athlete must practice a new skill for at least 20 minutes in order to achieve muscle memory. As a result, teachers should encourage skaters to attend regular sessions and practice their skills between classes. (At the SKATERY, parents and siblings who are not in class also will pay for the session, which increases attendance and revenue.)

Remember: If they have fun, they will come! The FUN-damentals curriculum touches on beginner skating skills, so the program's goal differs from a competitive roller skating program. Students should strive for proficiency but not perfection. Approaching skills in this manner increases skaters' confidence and allows them to enjoy classes. Plus, when parents see their child enjoying the program, they will feel good about bringing them back to other classes and sessions.

This program is not intended to turn out competitors. But it can produce session skaters dedicated session skaters who will return often. Discover a prospective champion in the lot is gravy, yet the meat and potatoes always come from the session skater!

Scheduling Classes

A myriad of extra curricular activities are offered to youth today. With options ranging from scouts and little league to baton class and gymnastics, the possibilities are virtually endless, and often times, the choice becomes one of convenience for parents and children. So what can skating centers do to stand out in the crowd? They must offer roller skating programs that are conveniently scheduled and enjoyable for participants.

To accomplish this, beginner classes cannot be scheduled at 6:00 a.m. or late in the evening on school nights. Instead, skating centers should consider classes before a session. Doing so allows students to stay after and practice, and it also exposes session skaters to the roller skating program.

Following are several other suggestions to increase class enrollment:

- Instructors can offer a free 15 minute Pre-Skater class during a Saturday afternoon skate. The class will help them skate more confidently and introduce beginners to the fun of lessons.
- Complementary classes also can be offered during special sessions for churches, home school students and many other groups. In private parties, offering instruction also can help the novice enjoy skating more.
- Some rinks divide the floor to conduct a class, while the rest is used for skating.

Awards

As a rule, children participating in soccer, T-ball or football, for example, receive a trophy at season's end. When all is said and done, awards provide them with a sense of accomplishment that keeps them coming back year after year. Roller skaters need similar recognition, and those who don't may feel slighted and go elsewhere.

Students need to receive their first recognition early on ... within the first few weeks. Examples of recognition include small trophies, star appliques (available in fabric stores), Roller Skating Association or USA Roller Sports patches, certificates and participant ribbons. The RSA's two-level Super Skater program offers an award pin to skaters who complete a certain number of skills.

Here are a few more words of advice:

- A modest ceremony to present awards makes a good impression on students and parents. It also makes students' achievements seem more meaningful.
- A simple "performance" (like a dance recital) thrills the parents. Awards can be given out after performance.
- Taking photos of award recipients and sending them to local media serves as a reward in itself.

This beginner program is not intended to produce world class skaters or any other kind of champion. Rather, beginner class programs put students and families into a mode of frequent attendance at the rink. And if the beginner class is fun, they will be anxious to keep coming back.

Roller Skating Skills

FUN-damental roller skating skills are listed alphabetically for quick reference, but they should be taught according to skaters' skill level. In this guide descriptions include detailed directions for each skill with notes in italics. If the skill requires background knowledge on another skating position, the related positions appear in bold face type.

Skill Levels

Pre-Skater	Beginner	Basic Beginner	Intermediate Beginner	Advanced Beginner
Fall down	Steer Circles	Scooter pushes	Backward	T start
Get up	Flamingo	Stroking	scissors	T Stop
Safety	Braking	Steer quarter	Stop backwards	Shoot the duck
March and	V start	circles	Steer half	Whole circles
Coast	Forward	Kangaroo Hop	circles	Turn forward
Cannonball	Scissors	Surfer	Two beat steps	Spread eagle
Dip			Crossovers	Three beat steps
Helicopter				

Roller Skating Skills

AIRPLANE POSITION

Stand very straight with head high and arms out straight (*like the wings of an airplane*) for balance. Head, shoulders and hips should be aligned directly over skates. Shoulders and hips are perpendicular to line of travel.

ARCH

Practice at the railing. Stand in **airplane** position, and arch back, keeping chin up and shoulders back. *The arch can be executed with both skates on the floor or with the free leg extended back.* Stretch free leg with toe pointing downward an inch or two above the floor. Hand position is optional. In class, practice the arch while rolling in a large circle

BACKWARD SCISSORS

Begin in the **airplane** position. Place skates in a reverse **V start** with toes together and heels separated slightly. Push heels apart a bit more, while bending knees slightly. Immediately bring them back together, straightening knees as you do. Repeat the process. *To maintain balance, keep your back straight, head up and eyes raised. Do not look down.*

BACKWARD STOP

Practice at the railing. Stand near the railing. Your back should be straight as you hold onto the rail with both hands. Bend knees and tip onto both toe stops (*like a curtsy*) Then, immediately replace the heel wheels on floor. (*Do not stay on toe stops too long or you will lose balance.*) Do this a couple of times. In class, instruct students to roll backwards slowly and do a backward stop.

The stopping technique should be repeated if they are still rolling after replacing their heels on floor.

BRAKING

Practice at the railing. Stand at the railing, holding it with one hand. Tip one toe stop down to barely touch the floor. *This skill is used to slow down if you know you are going to stop soon.* In class, have the students skate in a large circle. They should coast with their backs straight, squeezing the knees. When they've slowed down enough, instruct them to squeeze their knees together and tip one toe stop down to barely touch the floor. They'll drag to a stop. Keep your knees squeezed and back straight the whole time. *Do not jab your brake into the floor, especially when you are moving fast, or you could fall!*

BRAKING WITH INLINES

The procedure is the same as **braking**, except the heel brake is tipped down by lifting the toe to slow down. Repeat several times or play the "Stop and Go Game" or "Stop and Go with Mercy."

CANNONBALL

(Good for early levels of limbo!) *Practice at railing.* Stand with feet close together. Bend way down and hug the knees. Keep your eyes up. Your seat should be close to your skates. To rise again, place both hands on your knees and push, while holding your head up. Return to the **airplane** position. Practice a couple of times at the railing. In class, students can skate in a large circle and do the skill when the teacher calls out "cannonball."

CROSSES

Practice at the railing. Hold the railing with the left hand. Stand straight on the left skate. Bring the right shoulder, arm and hip forward while bringing the right skate forward. Bring the right skate around the left toe, and place it on floor, just the other side of the left skate. *Always lead with the toe. If you lead with the heel, you are likely to trip yourself while in motion.* In class, skate in a large circle at one end of the rink. Keep the right hand somewhat forward and left hand extended to the left (L position). Bring the right skate around in the same fashion as at the railing, and place it on the floor beside the left skate. *This move takes a lot of practice before it is perfected! It is easiest if skated in the L position.*

DIP

Practice at the railing. Start in **airplane** position. Reach down and touch you knees without looking down. Count to four, and then return to airplane position. Keep feet together and eyes up. In class, skate in a large circle. Take a couple of steps, then touch knees when the teacher says, "dip". Or, skate to "Downtown." Each time students hear "down" they should touch their knees and when they hear "town," they should return to airplane position, forming a "T" with their arms.

FORWARD SCISSORS

In **airplane** position, set skates in a **V start**. Push toes slightly apart and bend the knees slightly. Then bring the toes back together and straighten the knees. Keep the back straight and eyes ahead at all times. *Do not allow skates to get any further apart than the shoulders.*

FALL DOWN

When you feel yourself losing balance, move into **safety** position. If that doesn't work, try the **cannonball** position, and roll onto your side. If you do fall, make every effort to keep your hands away from the floor to prevent wrist injuries.

FLAMINGO

Practice at the railing. Start in **arch** position with feet on the floor side by side. Extend the left as in the **airplane** position. With right hand on the barrier, slide one skate up the other leg. Initially, the skate may only rise to the ankle, but gradually, it will slide up to the opposing knee. *Always keep the skate against the other leg. Don't let it wag around behind the engaged leg or it will act like a broken rudder causing loss of balance. Remind students not to bend in the middle as they raise their skate. Hips should be level.* Point the raised knee in the direction of travel. You can quite effectively steer with that knee. In class, students can skate in a circle or across the floor, lifting one skate each time the teacher says "flamingo."

GET UP

When skaters fall, they should get up as quickly as possible. Doing so prevents other people from falling on them, which could lead to further injury. Sit on the floor as if you have fallen. Roll over on your hands and knees. Make fists so that there is no danger in someone rolling over your fingers. Put one skate with all four wheels on the floor close to the other knee. Put both hands on the knee that is sticking up. With head up, push straight down on your knee, and stand up straight. In class, check students' positions as they get up.

GLIDE

While stroking, hold your free leg back. Glide for a count of two, three or more in the **arch** position. *Try not to wave arms around; it only makes you lose balance.* In class, practice gliding on the circles.

HELICOPTER

Practice at the railing. Stand very straight in the **airplane** position. Do tiny marching steps as you turn around in place (only one revolution - not a spin). In class, students can try different hand positions once they have their balance. *(Helicopter is a foundation for spinswill n. As a result, form is important now and later on.)*

KANGAROO HOP

Practice at the railing. Stand in the **airplane** position. Bring both skates close together. Bend knees slightly. Push upward and clap hands as you leave the floor. Thrust hands outward again as you land on all eight wheels with bent knees. Keep the back straight and head up. In class, after practicing at the railing a few times, try the skill rolling slowly forward. *Do not bend in the middle before, during or after the hop.* Students also can skate in a large circle. Each time the teacher says "hop", they can do a kangaroo hop. Or play the "Bunny Hop," and instruct students to do three hops at the appropriate points in the music. *The kangaroo hop starts to build a foundation for future jumps, so make sure they maintain good form or it will be harder to learn more difficult jumps later.*

MARCH

Practice at the railing. Start in the **airplane** position. Pick up one knee (wheels about 12 inches off floor). Place the skate back on the floor right next to the other. Do the same thing with the other knee. The pattern is knee up, skate down. with all four wheels hitting the floor simultaneously. In class, students can march across the floor with their arms out, head up and back straight. Repeat "knee up, skate down" a few times and remind them to watch where they are going. *Marching helps students get their feet off the floor, in preparation for **stroking**. Placing the skate on the floor right next to the other prepares them for the "and position" in*

dances. Skating is not like walking, so be sure students don't place the skate on the floor ahead of the other one. They will have difficulties later if they do.

MARCH AND COAST

Take only four marching steps. Then with both skates close together coast for the count of four. March and coast all the way across the floor. In class, you can count for students or let them do it together.

SAFETY POSITION

Practice at the railing. When you feel you are losing your balance, you can assume the **safety** position. Start in the **airplane** position. Push hands out firmly and slightly forward. Bend the knees while keeping the back straight and head up. *Doing so brings the center of gravity lower and can sometimes prevent a fall or minimize injuries. Do not bring hands too far forward, as wrist injuries may result from a fall.*

SCISSORS

(see **forward scissors**)

SCOOTER PUSHES

Start **forward scissors** with a **V start**. When your skates are together coast for a second. Pivot one skate, and push backward with the inside wheels as you bend the knee on which you are rolling. Bring the skates together and push again with the same foot. Always begin with your skates in parallel position. Repeat a total of three times. *Remember to bend the skating knee as you push with the other one.* When the skates are next to each other again, shift weight to the skate you have been pushing with, and push with the other skate three times. Repeat, changing feet after three pushes. In class, repeat the pattern of movement for students, "together and push, together and push." Once they are comfortable pushing three times, change to two times. (See **stroking**).

SHOOT THE DUCK

Practice at the railing (Skaters should be confident with the cannonball before attempting this move.) Sit on a small step (about 7 inches) sideways. Half of your seat should hang over the edge, and one leg should be propped up on the step. Tuck the other leg under yourself, and position your hands under the calf of the extended leg with your chin over the engaged knee. Once you have a feeling of this position, shoot the duck is simple.

If you have no step to work with, begin in the **cannonball** position. When you have your balance, extend one leg forward until it is straight out in front of you. Wrap one arm around the knee on which you are skating. Place both hands under the calf of the extended leg to support it. The chin is directly over knee of the rolling skate. The toe of extended foot points straight up and the knee is straight.

If the extended skate gets above the knee of the rolling skate, you will lose balance. To recover from a shoot the duck, place both hands on the knee that is sticking up and slowly bring the extended skate under your body as you push straight down with your hands. *In class, remind skaters that they are so close to the floor that, they are not likely to be hurt if they fall.*

SPREAD EAGLE

Practice at the railing. Face the railing with both hands on it. Place skates heel to heel but not quite in a straight line. Keep the back straight, head up and arms out at your sides. When you have the idea, turn so the left skate is next to the railing. You should be in **airplane** position.

Reach right hand forward and left hand back like the **surfer** position. Turn to the left as you lift heel wheels of the left skate slightly off the floor. The left skate will rotate naturally into spread eagle position. Place your heel wheels back on the floor. *Skaters will not be able to remain in this position more than a few seconds at first. Once students have tried it at the barrier a few times, have them try the spread eagle while skating in a counter clockwise circle.*

STAND UP STRAIGHT

Always keep head, shoulders and hips over your skates. Never let your nose get in front of your toes. In class, demonstrate how leaning forward on skates makes you roll backward. A good acronym for this is NOB, which stands for Nose Over Belly button.

STEER THE CIRCLES

Stand in **airplane** position, where the two circles come together. Prepare to do a V start (or T start after you have learned it). Use arms like handlebars on a bicycle. Shoulders and hips should be perpendicular to the line. Look in the direction you are traveling.

Pre-Skater: March around two circles.

Beginner: Do scissor around two circles.

Basic Beginner: Stroke (on one foot as much as possible) at least quarter circles at a time.

Intermediate Beginner: Glide on one foot at least half circles at a time.

Advanced Beginner: Glide on one foot full circles (Figure 1).

STROKING

After learning **scooter pushes**, stroking almost comes naturally. Use a **V start**. As you bring your skates together, coast for a second on both skates. Pivot one skate and push backward with your wheels as you bend the knee on which you are rolling. Don't bend at the waist. Bring the skates together. Shift weight to the last skate you pushed with, and then push with the other skate without bending at the waist. Repeat, changing feet with every push. *Remember: Always let the new skate reach the floor right next to the other ("and position"). The sequence is together and push. Change feet. Together and push.*

SURFER

Practice at the railing. Grasp the railing with your right hand. Place your right foot directly in front of the left with all eight wheels on the floor. Point your right arm straight ahead and the left arm backwards. Once you are comfortable with the position, do a couple of **scissor** position steps to get rolling in a counter clockwise direction. Coast on both skates and extend the right hand in front and left hand behind. Slide right skate forward about one skate length in front of the left. Keep back straight and head up. In class, students should try the skill in the counter clockwise and clockwise directions. They can do a couple of scissor steps to get rolling in a clockwise direction, and then coast on both skates. They'll extend the left hand out front and right hand behind. Next, they'll slide the left skate forward about one skate length in front of the right. *Generally, it is more comfortable to have the hand and skate nearest the wall move forward while the other goes back.*

T START

Practice at the railing. Place one skate against a step or wall. Place the heel wheels of other skate at the instep of the first one, forming a "T" with the toe pointing in the direction you'll travel. Keep your back straight, head up and arms out. Bend both knees slightly. Straighten your rear leg, pushing the wheels straight down into the floor. Hold the pushing skate behind the rolling skate until you are ready to step again.

T STOP

Practice at the railing. While holding the barrier with one hand, place the free skate's instep against the heel of the other skate. Hold the wheels just above the floor, and slowly lower the rear skate. Keep it tightly against the other until all four wheels are touching the floor. On the floor, slow down first, by coasting on both skates. Next, place your free skate insteps against the heel of the rolling skate. Hold the wheels just above the floor. Slowly lower the rear skate, keeping it tightly against the other one, until all four wheels are slowing you. *Do not jab the wheels into the floor; you could lose balance.*

TURN FORWARD FROM BACK.

Practice at the railing. Your right hand should be on the railing. Point left hand to the left in an L position. The right arm is the bottom of the L. Look toward your left hand. Pick up left skate turning toe in the direction of left hand. Place your left skate on the floor and pushing with the right skate straight into the floor, just like a **T start**. In class, skaters can do a **backward scissiors**, and repeat the above procedure while moving. *Note: Do not lean forward when stepping forward. This could result in a loss of balance.* Once the students understand this move, have them try it in the opposite direction.

Stand near the railing, with the left hand on it. Point the right hand to the right in the L position with the left arm forming the bottom of the L. Look toward your right hand. Pick up the right skate, turning the toe in the direction of the right hand. Place the skate on the floor and push with the left skate, pushing straight into the floor, just like a T start. Next, do a backwards scissiors, and repeat the above procedure while moving.

V START

Stand in the **airplane** position. With heels together and toes slightly apart, you will form a "V" with your skates.

(See **forward scissiors**)