



Parent Handbook



Something happens the moment your kid's skates touch the ice.

It's beautiful. Surreal. Empowering. It's the experience where kids learn much about skating, and themselves.

Your child learns glides, swizzles, edges and crossovers.

Your child learns positivity, confidence, and personal strength.

Lessons in skating become lessons in life.

Like learning anything new, there will be plenty of peaks and valleys your child experiences. And that's okay. It's more about the journey and the process along the way that will shape our children to one day become great people.

They will discover what interests them and be encouraged to cultivate their true passions.

You need to be there for your child. This guidebook will provide you the knowledge you need. It will give you the resources you need.

It gives your child everything he or she needs to succeed in the first year. And beyond.



Everything skaters learn on the ice soon becomes invaluable off of it.



The Lifelong Rewards of Ice Skating.

For every child who chooses to pursue ice skating, good news. He or she will excel in ways that will carry them far in life.

- Appreciate active, healthy lifestyle
- Develop physical skills: endurance, stronger muscles, better coordination and flexibility
- Develop self-esteem, self-confidence, self-discipline, and self-reliance by mastering and performing skating skills
- Learn how to manage stress, perform under pressure and test emotional and physical balance
- Develop positive, supportive and sustained relationships with other adults
- Contribute to others through their volunteer involvements
- Develop social skills with other children and adults
- Learn about managing success and disappointment
- Learn respect for others

What is *Learn to Skate USA*?



Our comprehensive, ongoing method teaches everything from the basic fundamentals to advanced skating skills with every class emphasizing mastering the individual elements.

Learn to Skate USA skaters can attend classes anywhere coast to coast, learning the same elements with similar requirements. It's the successful system where many of our World and Olympic Team members had their first starts.

To make this program successful for your child, we ask parents and visitors with young skaters to follow a few rules.

- Please watch from the bleachers for your safety and the safety of the skaters. Any pictures or videos you wish to take should be done here versus rink-side.
- Skaters need to stay focused with their instructors, so it's important to be on time to avoid creating distractions. Have your child's skates tied and fastened a good 15 minutes before class begins. Then bring your child to the representative at the door and we'll take care of the rest.

It is our goal to have your child graduate from the program, fall in love with the wonders of skating, and continue on with this sport for their entire lifetime. So thank you for enrolling in *Learn to Skate USA*.

Now let's find the program right for your child.

The Learn to Skate USA Curriculums

Look at the many different ways to enjoy the majesty of skating. Find the one that appeals most to your young skater—or give one a try that becomes a lifelong love.

Snowplow Sam

Designed for kids six and younger, Snowplow Sam classes give them confidence early on in a safe, positive environment where fun comes first. Imagine seeing your little one out on the ice learning the ABCs of skating: Agility, Balance, Coordination and Speed.

Basic Skills 1-6

These classes put the fun in fundamentals as your skaters enjoy learning forward skating, backward skating, stops, edges, crossovers and turns. Their confidence grows as this curriculum sets the stage for exploring activities such as figure skating, hockey and speed skating.

Hockey

Hockey classes teach proper skating techniques for the game of hockey. Skaters will develop skills to be more proficient and agile on the ice, including basic hockey stance, stride, knee bend, use of edges and other necessary fundamentals to play the game well.

Free Skate

Transitions, spins and jumps. More progressive skating skills like these give more determined skaters like yours challenges they crave. This positive, interactive group pushes one another to conquer these skills.

Ice Dance

This is the program that's as beautiful to see as it is to hear. Your skater learns the main components of the magic of ice dancing and reviews edges and turns while skating to music within this exhilarating, heart-pounding test structure.

Find out about the full curriculums at learntoskateusa.com.

Your child's first day of skating



We're going to let you in on a little secret. The first time your child skates—he or she will fall. All skaters fall. Olympic medalists have fallen hundreds—even thousands—of times. The best part, your child will get right back up.

Anything's possible when your child skates for the first time. So prepare yourself and your child for the expected and unexpected. You'll know how to plan ahead. You'll relax more. And you'll have more fun knowing you're comfortable and safe.

Be on time.

Arrive a good 20 minutes before class kicks off to check in at the registration desk and lace up your child's skates.

Bring lots of layers.

Comfort and moving freely about are essential for new skaters. Choose sweatpants or warm-up pants instead of bulkier snow pants. Bring a jacket too, since indoor rinks do set thermostats at a brisk 50 degrees Fahrenheit.

Socks. Thin over thick.

Bulkier, thicker socks limit support and create unwanted bumps inside the boots. Go with lightweight socks or thinner tights.

Keep their hands warm.

Since kids are taught to fall on day one, gloves or mittens are imperative to prevent hands from getting all scraped up. If you forgot to bring a pair, sift through the lost and found box to find some your child can borrow during class.

Protect their head.

Wearing helmets for all beginning skaters is strongly recommended. Your neighborhood pro shop will give you advice to find certified helmets that provide a proper fit.

Do:

- Make sure the helmet fits comfortably and snug.
- Wear the helmet low in front to protect the forehead.
- Keep it level and immobile. Avoid tilting back or pulling low.
- Secure chinstrap buckle. Check the adjustment often for protection, in case of a fall or collision.
- Replace the helmet immediately if signs of damage are visible.
- Clean the helmet with mild soap and water only.
- Store the helmet in a cool, dry place.
- Have the helmet wearer present during purchase to test and ensure a good fit.
- Find recommended helmets through these classifications: ASTM F1447; Snell B-90A, B-95, N-94.

Don't:

- Wear anything under the helmet.
- Attach anything to the helmet.
- Wear a helmet that does not fit or cannot be adjusted properly.
- Leave a helmet in direct sunlight or in a car on a sunny day.

Fitting skates.

Rule of thumb: the closer the fit, the more control. Find comfortable skates that keep feet snug and immobile yet give toes plenty of wiggle room. Solid support is needed as staying upright takes a lot of strength.

Lacing skates.

Tap the heel way back into the boot. Gently pull the tongue up and secure it straight up and down before tucking it beside the foot. Pull the second or third sets of laces from the bottom tightly to close the boot well over the front of the foot. Laces should be snug through the ankle area and bottom two sets of hooks.

The top two hooks, meanwhile, can be looser to keep the ankle flexible. Cross the two extra laces over hooks neatly. Avoid winding them around the skates as loose flying bows often cause accidents. Effectively laced boots should provide enough room to stick a finger between the back of the boot and the leg.



Rent skates first, buy later.

Find a good fit through a pro shop that knows the ins and outs of ice skating. If you're looking to save money with used skates, check the boot's support level and blade for 'sharpening life.'

Take care of the skates.

Never walk on hard surfaces or concrete with uncovered blades. Wear hard guards to protect them. Dry blades with a towel after every use to avoid rusting.

Parents: fans, supporters
and teachers all rolled into one.

Your role in the world of skating.



Forget athletes. Dismiss television and movie stars. You are the best role model your kids could ask for.

Everything you do or say has a tremendous impact on your kids. A smile while clapping and cheering. An eye-roll followed by shaking your head in disgust. We're confident you know the former is far better than the latter.

It's likely you tell your child to respect others. But do you practice what you preach? Getting caught up in the heat of the action can do crazy things to people. Act with dignity and self-control. Putting your child's development and welfare ahead of winning is the path to a healthier, happy life.

Keep things in perspective.

Positive parenting gets the gold.

If your kids enjoy skating, they will continue skating. Part of this enjoyment comes from your positive approach toward the sport.

- Walk the fine line between encouraging and pushing too hard. Personal growth, effort and participation, and pursuing goals are the true victories.
- Teach your child about commitment, self-improvement, and dealing with success and failure properly.
- Go at your child's pace. Don't compare your child with other skaters or teams.
- Give your child unconditional love, no matter what.
- Listening is better than talking.
- Volunteer. Take an active role in your child's skating experiences.
- Smiles say volumes.
- Acknowledge all improvements.
- Always, always, always tell your kids how proud you are of them. Always, always, always support them.

Be a good sport.

Keep a cool head and a healthy attitude toward ice skating.

- Encourage all skaters and teams.
- Keep emotions in check, even in frustrating situations.
- Respect and accept the judge's/officials' expert decisions.
- Congratulate other skaters and teams when they win.

Tips for helping your child be a good sport.

They should learn to win without gloating, lose without complaining and treat their opponent with absolute respect.

- Make sure they know, respect and play by the rules.
- Manage anger and avoid arguments.
- Respect other skaters' and teams' efforts. Good athletes do not knock the other skaters or teams down.
- Make sure your child encourages other skaters. They praise when something goes well. They comfort when something goes wrong.
- Accept judgment calls by the officials.
- End the competition smoothly.
- Follow, listen to and respect their coach.
- Support your athlete in so many ways.



Rationale to retain:

Helps create a more positive environment overall and fosters respect for the sport, and thus inspires kids to be on the ice longer.

Prepare your child to enjoy skating to the fullest.

Make it fun. Make it valuable. Make it the best experience possible.

1. Encourage your child to skate without pressure. Let your child make the choice to skate.
2. Understand what your child wants from skating, and be supportive in helping him or her achieve goals.
3. Put your child's participation in perspective. Don't make skating everything in your child's life; make it a part of life.
4. Make sure the coach is fully qualified to guide your child through the skating experience.
5. Keep winning in perspective and help your child do the same.
6. Help your child set challenging but realistic performance goals rather than focusing only on "winning."
7. Help your child understand the valuable lessons skating can teach.
8. Help your child meet responsibilities the coach gives.
9. Discipline your child when necessary.
10. Turn your child over to the coach at practices and competitions. Don't meddle or coach from the sidelines.

How can you help your child have a healthy outlook on ice skating?

- Develop a winning perspective.
- Build your child's self-esteem.
- Emphasize fun, skill development and striving to do better.
- Help your child set realistic performance goals.

Successful skaters gain and share these traits.

- Persistence
- Perspective
- Self-confidence
- Desire
- Courage
- Concentration
- Self-worth

What are the values kids learn through skating?

Great things come out of skating when local skating clubs, coaches, officials and parents work as a team. Once we leave our egos and visions of winning gold at home and we put our kids' interests first, that's when the real victories start to come:

- Acquire an appreciation for an active lifestyle.
- Develop self-esteem, self-confidence, self-discipline and self-reliance by mastering and performing certain skills.
- Learn to manage stress, perform under pressure and test emotional and physical balance.
- Develop social skills with other children and adults.
- Learn about managing success and disappointment.
- Learn about fair play and being a good sport.
- Learn respect for others.

The dos and don'ts of skating parents.

Do focus on effort, participation, fun and skill building.

Do practice good sportsmanship.

Do teach your child to be gracious in defeat.

Do support your child and other skaters with interest and enthusiasm.

Do keep your emotions in check.

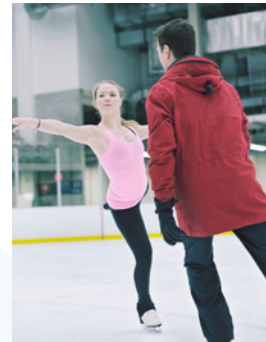
Don't be the coach. Just be the best parent you can be.

Don't compare your child with other skaters.

Don't focus on winning.

Don't make negative comments to skaters, parents, officials or coaches.

Lesson one: Learn to love the lessons.



Accomplishing comes from trying. Group lessons are not about who's the best of the bunch. It's about all of the kids working as a team, pushing each other to succeed. Your child can do a few simple things to make the most out of the group lesson.

Be attentive and be smart.

It's just like school. Pay attention to the instructor and your child will go far in life.

Try the skill again and again.

Nobody expects your child to nail a drill on the first try. Your child shouldn't either. It's falling in love with the journey, not the destination, that makes mastering a skill truly enjoyable.

Express preferred learning styles.

Ask instructors to break down skills to a few easy steps that apply to the skater's most comfortable style of learning.

- Visual learners need to see the skill demonstrated.
- Auditory learners need to hear the skill described.
- Tactile learners need to perform the skill to properly execute it.

Be patient.

Group classes are the place to build a solid foundation for developing ice skating skills. There are no shortcuts nor fast tracks here. If you do not feel comfortable with the skill at hand, tell your instructor to go at a slower, safer pace. The goal for your child is to master the skill, not fake through it.

Be polite.

Your child needs to think about the safety of other student skaters in the class. He or she needs to stay in control and within boundaries of the class to avoid interfering with others.

Skaters should:

- Maintain a smart, safe distance from other skaters
- Stay against the wall to wait for help and instructions
- Maintain a safe speed
- Stay with the class and instructor in their designated 'classroom' area

Recognize class and session expectations.

Parents can observe classes of all levels, skills and ages from the stands or designated areas. You should avoid standing in doorways or near the players' benches.

For beginning skaters, marching across the ice is the first skill taught. Some skaters push and glide with ease. Others will play the cautious card by taking small steps.

Learning to fall and stand up again will also take precedence. Instructors will spend several minutes on day one perfecting this skill.

After the first class, all beginning skaters should feel confident enough to demonstrate the ability to skate reasonably well independently. They should get up from falling, attempt to stop while moving slowly, and navigate a public session well.

Repeating a class is not unusual for skaters. All skills need to ladder up to move skaters up to the next level, so mastering them first is necessary. Some skills come quickly. Some, not so much.

At season's end, instructors should provide written feedback on the skater's progress, which should include accomplishments, opportunities to improve, and recommendations on which class makes the most sense to register for next.

Making up a class.

Ask the director about the policies surrounding what happens if the skater misses a lesson. Many group programs do offer a makeup session if a similar class is offered on a day shortly after. Special exceptions may be permissible.

Set up supplemental private or semi-private lessons.

For those seeking more attention, you may hire a coach for a private or semi-private lesson. A booster lesson like this may be a good thing if assistance is needed to overcome a specific skill the skater is struggling with. If interested, inquire about private lessons with the Skating Director.

Set up extra practice time.

Practicing is the road to improving. After each lesson, skaters should practice the skills taught at least once.

Use public skating sessions or ask if club-sponsored or skating sessions are open. Obtain a list of things to practice from the instructor, or bring a record book to write down what needs improvement.

Encouraging your child when they do not pass a level.

It happens to many skaters. Sometimes, skaters hit roadblocks as they pass through levels of skating along the journey. For some, certain levels simply require more time and practice to master.

But you can't simply skip. Without mastering the prior skills, it will set up future frustration in learning more challenging skills.

Learn to Skate USA progresses their skills step by step. Every skating move has a prescribed passing standard and children should know what is fully expected before evaluation time. (For example: a one-foot glide needs to be held three times your height in a balanced position to pass the level.)

After every class, instructors should give positive feedback about achievements along with constructive feedback as opportunities to improve on other areas. Ask the instructor questions yourself if the passing standards seem unclear to you.

Children go through three phases when learning new skills:

Introductory – skill is new to the skater.

Developmental – skill is getting better and stronger.

Mastery – skater can perform the skill 8 out of 10 times, and ideally this is when skaters should move up to the next level.

Progress reports are written and handed out mid-session. Don't view these as scary or nerve-wracking. See these as the chance for your child to show off newly acquired skating skills gained during class. Still, if your child's unprepared for an evaluation, postpone for a short time until he or she is confident to receive full feedback.

Anything that does need improvement on your child's skating report card could and should be treated as a positive experience. Set goals for what needs to be accomplished. Then schedule a future evaluation for your child when ready. Make sure your child is proud of his or her efforts. Victory is so much sweeter once they know they've worked hard to achieve it.

Prior to evaluation, your child can enhance his or her skills by attending public skating sessions or open practice times. Practicing skills off ice or asking an instructor for a supplemental 15-minute private lesson can also help.

Private coach: should you hire one?

There's no rush to hire a private coach. *Learn to Skate USA* teaches each skater the basic skills necessary to grow within skating and eventually accomplish more difficult jumps and spins. Each new level builds upon the skills learned from the previous level. Many parents consider a private coach to push their children along faster or to play catch-up. But the best reason to hire an instructor is to help them perfect their skills.

So when the time's right, consider a few things to make choosing the right coach go smoothly.

Will the coach be a good role model?

Will the coach instill healthy character traits?

Will the coach treat my child politely and with enthusiasm?

Does the coach possess and demonstrate a standard of ethics?

Does the coach understand and adhere to safety considerations at all times?

Does the coach have a specific plan to teach the appropriate technical skills?

Do you know the coach's philosophy?

How may I best contact the coach?

What is the coach's education background?

What is the coach's background in instructing, including years coaching and the achievement of his or her students?

Make sure you match complementary personalities and solid foundation for your child. Despite their great accomplishments, championship-level skaters are not always the best choice for basic skills coaches.

Rinks and skating clubs usually have policies for distributing information regarding professionals or assigning students to them. Skating Directors or head professionals take ownership in asking you questions and guiding you in undertaking the proper procedures.

For *Learn to Skate USA* recognized programs, we believe in having coaches of the highest caliber by assuring they have annual requirements for coaches with high credentials.

All coaches undergo meticulous background screening to ensure a safeguarded environment.

All coaches also must demonstrate top-notch education by completing mandatory training. This sets the standard of education to give kids the very best.

Skating can be more than just skating.

Mastering the skills of ice skating is an exhilarating act in itself, but it also opens up a world of opportunities for skaters. Some become rockets on ice as speed skaters. Some become modern gladiators battling their way to the back of the net as hockey players. Some even take their skills into competition before the oohs and aahs of audiences everywhere as they launch themselves into the air and land with grace and power.

Olympic national governing bodies, U.S. Figure Skating, USA Hockey, and US Speedskating support *Learn to Skate USA* for the many health, social and developmental benefits gained through ice skating.

Why should your kids have all the fun?

Skating programs for adults.

Ice skating is not just for your kids. It's for the kid in all of us.

It gives you the freedom, the strength and the confidence to push yourself mentally and physically, and it's a wonderful way to share lifelong memories with your kids.

Learn to Skate USA gives newcomers the basic skills to engage the ice. Likewise, skaters absent from the ice for years or decades get the refresher courses to rekindle their love affair with the ice. Through our programs, participants will learn and appreciate the basic elements (forward, backward, turns and stops) before advancing to more challenging skating moves.

- Build your leg muscles and gain better balance
- Improve joint flexibility
- Great endurance for all activities
- Great cardio and solid weight management (burn up to 650 calories an hour)
- Relieve stress and enhance mental fitness

Learn more about our programs specifically designed for adults now at learntoskateusa.com.

Enjoy the advantages of being part of *Learn to Skate USA*.



Anyone can sign up. By becoming a member of *Learn to Skate USA*, the experiences become greater and greater with every glide. Enjoy all of the benefits by signing up today.

- Be a member of the best skating program, endorsed by U.S. Figure Skating, USA Hockey and US Speedskating.
- Gain great information to make sure your first glides on ice are successful ones.
- Access full listings of where we skate to sign up for skating classes.
- Receive a welcome packet in the mail that includes a record book to track your progress through the lessons, a logo and year patch, secondary sport accident insurance, and a quarterly newsletter filled with helpful information about all aspects of skating.
- Participate in lessons, performances, competitions, and all activities associated with *Learn to Skate USA*.

Sign up now at learntoskateusa.com.

Keep your child connected with learntoskateusa.com.

If you're looking for even more opportunities for the young skater in your life, learntoskateusa.com is the place to go.

- Discover the full variety of skating offered through *Learn to Skate USA* programs. Find the one that's right for you.
- See all of the advantages of becoming a member of *Learn to Skate USA*.
- Find rinks right in your neighborhood.
- Learn about and participate in events in your area.
- Connect with more skating material through social media formats.

Additional resources for your skating journey.

Your Skating Director and instructor are your best go-tos to answer your questions. But where do you go when they are unavailable?

Learntoskateusa.com: Use this to learn of the variety of programs, one that's just right for your child.

The SkateCoach App: Use this in helping your child master a particular skill.

Learn to Skate Frequently Asked Questions

LEARN TO SKATE PROGRAM PROGRESSION

Q: *What skills will my child learn in their class?*

A: Class criteria, skill sets and the program progression chart can be found at learntoskateusa.com. Instructors work with and encourage your child to simplify core skills.

Q: *How many sessions will it take for my child to progress to the next class level?*

A: Typically kids advance after one or two sessions. But every student is unique and will progress at his or her own pace, possibly going through spurts of progress followed by plateaus. Just remember to tell your child that this is fun and remember that mastering a skill set may take time until they are comfortable on the ice and ready to advance. Please see your class instructor and/or the Skating Director with questions about progress.

Q: *Is there an appropriate time to talk with my child's class teacher?*

A: Instructors may be available to discuss your questions before or after class depending on how programs are scheduled in your arena. You can also contact the Skating Director, who may also assist you or pass on your contact information.

Q: *My child eventually wants to play hockey. What is the procedure that we follow to get him/her into that program?*

A: We recommend that your child start with the *Learn to Skate USA* classes first and move to Intro to Hockey, Learn to Play or similar programming offered by the local USA Hockey-sponsored association or facility. The fun, positive atmosphere in the beginning group classes will help prepare them for a successful transition to a hockey program after learning the essential basics of skating. A Learn to Play program focuses on skating skills, but also teaches the basic skills of stickhandling, shooting and passing. Remember, they must learn to skate before they can learn to score. USA Hockey offers Try Hockey for Free days twice a year across the country for those that wish to learn more. For more information about USA Hockey, please go to www.usahockey.com or email comeplayyouthhockey@usahockey.org.

Q: *When is the right time for my child to join a figure skating club?*

A: Most figure skating clubs sponsor monthly or weekly ice sessions and test sessions with judges for skaters to advance, and host ice shows, exhibitions, fundraising activities, social events, awards banquets and competitions. Check with your Skating Director or the rink's bulletin boards for information about joining the local club. Some areas have more than one to choose from, so get information from all of them and shop around. Every club offers different membership packages and benefits. Joining a club is an important step in a figure skater's life, as this becomes your training home. Once a skater is ready to take official U.S. Figure Skating tests or compete in competitions beyond the *Learn to Skate USA* level, joining a club becomes necessary. Skating clubs are run mostly by volunteers. If possible, take time to volunteer with your club. You will learn more about skating, and at the same time, you and your child will make lifetime skating friends.

Q: *Can I get supplemental private lessons for my child to help him/her progress quicker in classes?*

A: Yes. Most programs have instructors who teach private lessons and some also have specialized programs to facilitate one-on-one instruction. Skating Directors can refer you to the right instructor or program.

PREPARING FOR CLASSES

Q: *Are helmets required for class? What kind of helmet is acceptable?*

A: Protect their head.

Wearing helmets for all beginning skaters is strongly recommended. Your neighborhood pro shop will give you advice to find certified helmets that provide a proper fit.

Do:

- Make sure the helmet fits comfortably and snug.
- Wear the helmet low in front to protect the forehead.
- Keep it level and immobile. Avoid tilting back or pulling low.
- Secure chinstrap buckle. Check the adjustment often for protection, in case of a fall or collision.
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- Have the helmet wearer present during purchase to test and ensure a good fit.
- Find recommended helmets through these classifications: ASTM F1447; Snell B-90A, B-95, N-94.

Don't:

- Wear anything under the helmet.
- Attach anything to the helmet.
- Wear a helmet that does not fit or cannot be adjusted properly.
- Leave a helmet in direct sunlight or in a car on a sunny day.

Q: *What size and type of skates should my child wear?*

A: Any single blade skate is appropriate; however, hockey skates can be more challenging to a beginner because of the blade shape. If your child is using rental skates, come early to allow time to find the right fit. If you're purchasing skates, make sure your child is there to try on the skates in the store. Sizing varies depending on the manufacturer and type of skates.

Q: *Where can I purchase skates and skating apparel?*

A: Most athletic stores carry skates while skating attire can be purchased at skating or dance stores or even online. To ensure a good investment, talk to a staff member first and ask for a retail referral before purchasing skates. Many figure skating clubs and hockey associations host equipment sales throughout the year.

Q: *How do I put the skates on my child?*

A: Make sure that the skater's foot is fully in the boot by asking them to stand up in the skate. Make sure the skates are on the right feet. Tighten the laces over the foot so they are snug and don't pull if you run your finger over them. Work your way all the way up to the top making sure that all hooks or loops are used, then tie the laces like you would a shoe. For further assistance, please see a staff member.

ON THE ICE: SKATERS, INSTRUCTORS AND LESSONS

Q: *What can I expect to happen on the first day of class? What is the procedure for checking in?*

A: Arrive early and look for staff members to assist you. Read literature before class and pay attention to posted signage to make it easier for you and the staff.

Q: *How are the classes grouped together?*

A: The class levels in our curriculum represent skill sets appropriate for the ages and abilities listed. These skill sets often are building blocks for skills in later levels. Skating Directors may combine or split the registrants of class levels to create groups that allow classes to run and/or participants with like age and ability to learn in a more comfortable environment. Changes are most often solidified by week two.

For more information on any of these items or the programs and events of *Learn to Skate USA*, contact the Member Services Department at:

20 First Street, Colorado Springs, CO 80906

t: 719.635.5200

www.learntoskateusa.com

Notes:





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