

The background features a large, white, right-pointing arrow shape. The background is composed of several overlapping geometric shapes in various shades of red and pink, creating a layered, abstract effect. The text is centered within the white arrow shape.

Program and Class Management

Retention

Skater Retention

Keeping current skaters costs far less than recruiting new ones. *Learn to Skate USA* programs should aim for 60 percent of current skaters signing up for the next set of lessons. Retention of 80 percent or higher is excellent.

If your return rate is lower than 50 percent, you need to investigate why, and fast. Are your skaters dropping out after hitting a certain level or age? Is the chemistry off with certain instructors? Are the expectations too high? Are there scheduling conflicts? Monitoring retention rates session to session will reveal insights into actions to remedy the decline.

Ideas on retaining skaters:

- Quiz parents during program evaluations if they'd recommend the program to peers.
- Be sure your program offers package deals, and focuses on fun at every level.
- Camaraderie and friends go a long way toward kids' enjoyment.

Basic 4-6 and the difficulties of learning an Axel typically trigger drop-offs. This is a good time to offer supplemental private lessons (booster lessons for 15 minutes), second class half-off discounts or special workshops like 'Axel Class' to help retain skaters who might need additional support.

Your current customer base is one of your best resources for increasing enrollment and retention. Encourage loyalty and progression by offering referral packages, family discounts, or repeat-enrollment discounts. On your end, reward instructors with high retention rates!

Best Practice Exercise: During the next session, pay attention to your own class retention rate. So if you start Basic 2 with 10 skaters, how many are still attending week three, four and at evaluation day? The skating director should always have the pulse on this number.

Customer Service

Communicate with parents constantly. Always evoke a fun, positive environment with your instructors. Ensure all lessons start and end on time. Everything matters when it comes to superior customer service.

Learn to Skate USA students are the future of our sport and our business. The welcome mat should be laid out for all families who step into the rink. They should feel valued.

Tips on giving the best customer service:

- Offer easy access to program information: emails, text messages, handouts, volunteers at a registration table.
- Keep the program straightforward and understood by participants and front desk staff.
- Make it easy and comfortable for skaters to check in, get their skates and know where to meet their teacher.
- After day one, do skaters know where to go day two?
- Be open to evaluations and input from customers.
- Communicate with parents relentlessly through emails/newsletters loaded with photos and reports.
- Follow through on incidents and inquiries in a timely manner.
- Update your website regularly.
- Offer a fair price for services with the inclusion of public skating practice passes and free rental skates as a benefit of enrollment.

What To Expect

Communication

Instructors need to feel comfortable communicating information to skaters and their families. Keeping participants in the loop constantly becomes a common pitfall, yet can be overcome through simple tactics.

Brightly colored flyers, bulletin boards in lobby areas, your website, information posted at skate rental counters, and email blasts/text messaging all work wonders. Staffing your registration/welcome table each week with a knowledgeable employee capable of answering most questions also helps. It all starts by having deep, accurate knowledge of your program policies.

Body language matters. Smiling counts. Be cognizant of your movements and tones with skaters and parents. They're more likely to remember your behavior and demeanor. Actions do speak louder than words.

Registration Procedures

Charge a fair price for lessons, re-evaluating fees semi-annually. Inform families of all fees (including sessions, competitions, exhibitions, and ice shows) and any adjustments you plan to make.

Give customers the option to register by phone, online, mail, in person and walk-ins on the first day. Waiting lists are not recommended. If you use one, prorate fees once the session has started.

The First Day

Chaos likely will ensue with confused parents, poorly-tied or bad-quality skates, poor choice of attire from overdressing to shorts, parents running late, crying or lost kids—you get the gist. You need to be the rock. Smile through every situation and handle with grace and professionalism.

Imagine the worst-case scenario and how you would tackle it. But don't go at it alone. Have help ready in a pinch by training your volunteers well in advance.

At the registration table, all skaters should check in and receive a name tag to wear. The name tag should show the skater's name, class time and level, marked with easy-to-see colors or symbols. Your instructional staff should have name tags too. From here, volunteers should escort skaters to the class area.

Orientation

All classes on the first day should first meet off ice. Have instructors greet the class, and discuss proper fitting of skates and proper attire (gloves, helmet and sweatshirts). For all beginning levels, talk about proper falling techniques, recovery, marching, placement of arms, proper alignment of the body, listening and the importance of practicing.



Forms and Evaluations



Attendance/Evaluation Forms

Have instructors keep accurate attendance records, noting attendance dates, test results, drop-outs, and class changes and additions.

For attendance, instructors should mark initials next to the skater's name and the lesson date. Marking initials is important to quickly refer to the sheet should your skating director suddenly be questioned. The attendance roster is an official document of your teaching activities.

Use test elements while evaluating each skater. Use a 'P' for pass or 'NI' if the element was insufficient. The bottom of the test sheet lists elements of each level. You may use shorthand to reference strong or weak elements by a '+' or '-'. Also use '?' if another opinion is needed.

Skill Evaluations

The *Learn to Skate USA* program believes all skaters should progress through the curriculum at their own rates. They should never feel overwhelmed or discouraged, nor unchallenged and bored. Evaluations should be completed on the first session and either the second-to-last or the last session day to determine proper class level reassignments. Move skaters accordingly at the discretion of the skating director and/or class instructor.

Every skating move has a prescribed passing standard and you should know what is expected before evaluation time (e.g., a one-foot glide needs to be held three times your skater's height in a balanced position to be considered passing).

Learning skills happens through three phases:

- Introductory – new to the skater
- Developmental – skill is noticeably better and stronger
- Mastery – skater can perform skill 8 out of 10 times

Only when skills are mastered should a skater be allowed to move up to the next level. See detailed descriptions of skills in the Instructor Handbook and within the Skate Coach App.

There are three main practices instructors or skating directors should follow when evaluating:

- Only the skating director evaluates all skaters
- Each instructor tests their own classes
- All instructors switch classes for evaluations for fresh perspectives

When evaluating, be mindful of any perceived or real biases, avoid any questionable situations and stay consistent. Communicate your evaluation process to all skaters throughout the session and the procedure to their parents to prevent fear, frustration, or hurt feelings.

Tip: Make sure the regular class instructor agrees with the results of the evaluation before the skaters receive the results of their test.



What if the skater does not pass?

Handle with positivity and tact.

- Be honest! Keep to the standard that you are looking for and explain why the skills have not matured yet.
- Explain what was good and what needs improvement.
- Tell them exactly what they need to do to pass the skill/level:
 - what was wrong with it (not strong enough, not a long enough glide, toe picking, poor technique...)
 - be specific
 - give them ideas to improve the skill
 - offer supplemental private lessons or extra practice time
- Keep evaluations from being scary. They should encourage skaters to polish their skills and learn new ones to avoid quitting.
- Give any skater unprepared for feedback a report card, and tell them to skip the formal evaluation until next session.



Learn to Skate USA Record Books

To track each skater's progress. Certain pages list all elements that need to be performed at each level. When the skater passes a specific level, the instructor signs and applies gold stickers to the appropriate page, indicating that the skater mastered all required elements.

Report Cards and Badges

Distribute report cards both midway and at the end of each session with comments about their performances, both positive, constructive and encouraging. A well-written evaluation helps the skater and his or her parents.

Any skater who completed a class should receive a badge/certificate. Any skater who did not should receive a participation award or ribbon. These, along with report cards, are distributed by headquarters at your request.

Award stickers to skaters exhibiting good efforts and good behaviors. Award badges when they pass a level (make it free of charge, a small cost that's invaluable to participants and a source of free advertising). All skaters should leave with report cards, re-enrollment forms, and smiles. Big smiles.