

Teaching the Basics

Learn-to-Skate Coaching Toolbox



Content:

Page 3: Introduction to document creation

Page 5: Coach preparation

Page 6: Program preparation

Page 8: Programming for Stage 1 – New skaters

Page 15: Programming for Stage 2 – Steppers and Shufflers

Page 20: Programming for Stage 3 – Gliders and Movers

Page 26: Final notes

Introduction to document :

Material was originally developed during the first Atlantic Coaching Retreat held in Saint Andrews on September 27- 28th, 2008. Participants in attendance were from Speed Skate New Brunswick's Coaching Committee with the addition of Head and Assistant Coaches from all Seven Provincial Clubs. Sessions were facilitated by Derrick MacLeod.

- Greg Richard - Hampton
- Chris Carr - Hampton
- Roger Ouellette - Restigouche
- Sue Ellis Leparco – Saint John
- Felipe Garcia – Saint John
- Renaud Gionet - Caraquet
- Rachael Quinn – Saint John
- Andrew Cusack – Saint John
- Jerome Noel – Saint John
- Fernand Brideau - Caraquet
- Bill Peppard – Saint Croix
- Sarah Groom – Saint Croix
- Sacha Leblanc- Dieppe/Riverview
- Stan Barnett – Dieppe/Riverview
- Peter Steele – Hampton / SSNB
- Ann Evans - Fredericton
- Derrick MacLeod – Riverview/ Fredericton/ SSNB

Material from original retreat was compiled by Derrick MacLeod for distribution to all Atlantic Provinces clubs by October 2009. The event was sponsored by SSNB Coaching Committee and the Investor's group Insurance.

It is our goal that each of you will draw ideas from the documents we have compiled and add to it your own ideas so we can continue to make it better with future edits.

The document was updated in September 2024 by SSNB Technical Director Derrick MacLeod.

Questions: Write Derrick at TDCoach@speedskatenb.ca

Creation of an Atlantic based Learn to Skate program.

Format of 2008 workshop: Group workshop

Outcome: Currently all clubs are creating and managing Learn to Skate programs independent of one another. All have experienced the same challenges of Coach/Skater ratio, lack of proper on ice programming, and coach turnover. Let us amalgamate a program that all coaches can follow on ice regardless of location.

Reference: SSC LTD & current best practices & combined knowledge of 17 experienced Coaches



Goals:

- 1) Reduced attrition rate of participants and coaches
- 1) Providing a program that is second to none.
- 1) Learning in a highly dynamic, fun, and positive setting that is “kid focused.”

The Challenges (Group brainstorming)

- Coach/Skater ratio – What is recommended?
- Attracting coaches – strategies
- Length of program – thoughts?
- Props – create a kit.
- Let us get to work - workshop.

Coach Preparation

Coaches

- Register in the Locker at <https://thelocker.coach.ca/account/login>
- Sign up for future courses.
- Register as a Coach with Speed Skating Canada (Icereg)
- Those over 18 should get Criminal Screening (vulnerable sector) via RCMP, Local Police or mybackcheck.com
- Get familiar with [Safe Sport Practices](#) (SSNB) & [True Sport Principles](#)

Each day

- Come prepared – are you a leader or are you a helper – both are important roles.
- Be a friend to young athletes, no age is more rewarding.
- Be inclusive of all. Every child is different & every child is important.
- Talk to young athletes and make them feel included. Avoid coach huddles on the ice.
- Get yourself in the coaching mode!
- Be energetic, have fun and create enthusiasm with those you coach and those you coach with
- Be ready for the first few days as skaters & parents will often be nervous.

First day hints

- All coaches should be prepared and review the plan for the first day.
- Name tags are necessary for both Coaches and skaters.
- Parents should be off ice and rink-side.
- Show skaters how to stand – do not lift them and try to avoid buckets.
- Skaters must have knee pads, helmets (recommend cages), long sleeved clothing, gloves that fit, and sharp skates.
- How will you organize skaters on the ice – by color, by name, etc.

Program Preparation:

The coach to skater ratio:

Recommendations:

- Starters 1:1 (Parent/Older Skaters can be utilized if they have safety equipment on)
- Steppers/Shufflers 1:5
- Gliders and Movers 1:10

Attracting coaches – strategies

- Credit System for older skaters. Credits earned for coaching will result in rewards.
- Know your parents and see what they can bring to the program!
- Attract Coaches from other sports.
- Utilize parents off ice as well –Administration, Skate Care, general information.
- Use coaches from older groups.
- Attract coaches that can teach each athlete in their first language.
- Current coaches should always be active recruiters as well – Succession planning.
- Have current coaches mentoring new coaches.
- Provide all coaches with tools to be better coaches.
- Recruit “retired” skaters and former coaches.
- Honorarium for services
- Offer Skating time for coaching time.

Length of program

What are we recommending for the Learn to Skate age group?

- 30-45 Minutes per session
- 8-15-week program

Props – Create a Kit of what can be used on the ice.

- Board Pads
- Plungers
- Rings
- Hoops
- Sponges
- Balls
- Balloons
- Buckets/pylons
- Markers
- Skate Guards
- Mini Hockey sticks
- Pool noodles
- Rubber chickens
- Teddy bears & beanie babies
- Stickers
- Bean bags
- Holiday theme props
- Pin Pong paddles.
- Megaphone/Sound System
- Music
- Treats
- Basketball net
- Soccer ball

Group One Programming – New Skaters - Newbies

Description of Group:

Learning to stand on Ice

Some can move.

Most skaters are aged 3 to 5 years and have never skated or been on ice before. Often this group is apprehensive to adventure out on the ice or standalone without assistance.

Ice Surface - keep the activity area small.

Coach ratio recommended:

One to Three

Ideal One to One

General activities for group:

Falling and standing back-up

- Simon Says to Fall down.
- Teach them to get up with one knee up and the other knee on the ice and push up on the knee that is “UP.”
- Ring around the Rosie
- Fall on command.

Balancing Drills

- Learning to Stand and Keep Balance.
 - Stand and teach them to look around.
 - Look up.
 - Look down.
- Play Simon Says looking at the ceiling.
 - Look at the clock
 - Look to the ice
 - Progress to other levels by moving the body.
 - Touch your helmet.
 - Look left and right.
- Hokey Pokey- One foot in

- Penguins walk, soldiers walk.
- Games can be walking to an appropriate distance so the young skater can fetch an object (teddy Bear) and bring it back.
- Picking up objects- Get all the balls in a bucket (color coded)
- Throwing Balls –Basket Ball net idea
- Pushing the bucket
- Standing on one skate- kicking plungers. Use boards for support.
- Marching on the spot
- Make snow with their blades.
- Parachute Game (large colorful parachute)- Advance to having objects in the parachute and bounce them in the middle.

General Movement Drills

- Place different colored objects on the ice and skate to the “color.”
- Bucket activities
- Multiple “Islands of Two layers of mats and swim from mat “island” to mat “island.”
- Island Activity can progress to Flying from island to island.
- Follow the leader games around the mats.
- Obstacle Course idea where the skaters go from station to station with different activities at each station: Station ideas include making snow, falling, and getting on their belly and getting back up, fetching objects, and placing in buckets.
- Bucket ideas- Throwing balls in buckets.

Starting and Stopping

- Snow plowing – Stationary and Moving
- Red light, green light - paddle idea with skaters taking turns being the “Light.”

Sample Program #1: Newbies

Objectives:

- First session with the Newbies
- Teach them to be comfortable to stand alone on the ice.
- Develop a level of independence that will allow the parent to “let go.”

Props:

- Teddy Bears for the fetch game.
- Sponges and Buckets for the 2nd fetch or pick up the object game.

Program:

- **Intro, warm-up and welcome** (Introduction of names, especially coaches)
- **Stationary Simon Says** looking at the ceiling.
 - Look at the clock.
 - Touch your helmet.
 - Look at the ice.
 - Look left.
 - Look right.
 - Progress to other levels by moving the body.
- **Show parents** how to help the children get up safely holding hands from the front, heads up.
- **Teach them to get up** with one knee up and the other knee on the ice and push up on the knee that is “UP.”
- Play the **Flopsy Rag Doll Game** –you pretend to melt on the ice and get back up.
- **Penguins walk, soldier walk** Games can be walking to an appropriate distance so the young skater can fetch an object (Teddy Bear) and bring it back.
- **Picking up objects**- Get all the sponges in a bucket (keep the distance of the bucket and balls close and increase the distance as the skater progresses). Use hockey face of circle radius to begin with.
- **What time is it Mr. Wolf?** Lunch time!

Sample Program #2: Newbies

Objectives:

- Continued Development of Basic Skills

Props:

- 6 Board Mats
- Pylons and any object for the follow the leader game.

Program:

- **Intro, warm-up and welcome.**
- **Stationary Simon Says** looking at the ceiling.
 - Look at the clock.
 - Touch your helmet.
 - Look to the ice.
 - Look left.
 - Look right.
 - Progress to other levels by moving the body.
- **Multiple “Islands of Two layers of mats and swim from mat “island” to mat “island.”**
- Island Activity can progress to flying from island to island.
- **Follow the leader** games around the mats.
- **Ring around the Rosie- Falling game** to teach them that falling is fun.
- **Follow the leader around objects (pylons, etc.)**

Sample Program #3: Newbies

Objectives:

- Continued Development of Basic Skills

Props:

- Bucket and Sponges
- Red Light, Green Light Ping Pong Paddle

Program:

- **Intro, warm-up and welcome.**
- **Play a game with the Names.** If your name is Rachael clap your hands, if your name is Fernand pat your knees, etc. with the other children follow by repeating the activity.
- **Stationary Simon Says** looking at the ceiling.
 - Look at the clock.
 - Touch your helmet.
 - Look at the ice.
 - Look left.
 - Look right.
 - Progress to other levels by moving the body.
- **Falling Game, Ring Around the Rosie**
- **Picking up objects-** Get all the sponges in a bucket (colorful sponges- do not have to be color coded)
- **Red light, green light ping pong paddles** as an idea of props. Verbal as well as visual cue instructions at the beginning so the children can identify how the game is played. This game helps the children learn how to skate with their heads up.

Sample Program #4: Newbies

Objectives:

- Development of Basic Skating Skills

Props:

- Colored sponges and buckets
- Parachute
- Teddy Bears

Program:

- **Intro, warm-up and welcome.**
- **Play the Name Game** with the children taking turns calling the names.
- **Stationary Simon Says** looking at the ceiling.
 - Look at the clock.
 - Touch your helmet.
 - Look at the ice.
 - Look left.
 - Look right.
 - progress to other levels
- **Hokey Pokey**- One foot in
- **Penguins walk, soldiers walk.**
Games can be walking to an appropriate distance so the young skater can fetch an object (Teddy Bear) and bring it back.
- **Picking up objects**- Get all the Sponges in a bucket (color coded with bucket for each of the colors, example green sponge in green bucket, red sponge bucket, ...)
- **Parachute Game** (large colorful parachute)- Advance to having objects in the parachute and bounce them in the middle.
- **“Simon says”** using the number of steps as the instruction or Simon says move up or down.

Sample Program #5: Newbies

Objectives:

- Development of Basic Skating Skills

Props:

- 6 Board Mats
- Buckets (one per child)
- Plungers
- Sponges or objects with

Program:

- **Intro, warm-up and welcome.**
- **Play the Name Game** with the children taking turns calling the names.
- **Stationary Simon Says** looking at the ceiling.
 - Look at the clock.
 - Touch your helmet.
 - Look at the ice.
 - Look left.
 - Look right.
 - Progress to other levels
- **Pushing the bucket**
- **Standing on one skate-** kicking plungers. Use boards for support.
- **Placing different colored objects** (Sponges) on the ice and skate to the “color.”
- **Multiple “Islands of Two layers of mats** and skate (or walk) from mat “island” to mat “island.”
- **Follow the leader** games around the mats.

Group Two – Shufflers and Steppers

Description

What level are they when they enter this group:

- Can walk and move around on ice.
- Can get up on their own.
- Comfortable and stable when standing
- Can play basic movement games.
- Can raise your legs and stand on one foot for a brief period of time.

Coach/Skater Ratio

- One to Five

General activities for the group

- Can already stand up and move on their own.
- Stable without the use of aid (bucket)
- Get up and down from ice surface.
- Use props – throw items down and bring them back to a bucket (skate guards, balls...) – try and do it quickly, faster than the last time. Use props – throw items down and bring them back to a bucket (skate guards, balls...) – try and do it quickly, faster than the last time.
- Instruction with use of props on how to bend down using the basic position, leaning the weight over the knee and toes, and getting center of gravity at the right location. Use age-appropriate items that smaller kids can pick up.
- Game – statues
- Funny starts – ex: start sitting down, get up, turn around once, and go...variations on this them.
- Get them to move on skates pretending there are diverse types of animals.
- Incorporate basic skating techniques - use games such as tunnels for basic position, limbo sticks, obstacle courses.
- Use activities in the SSC First and Fast Strides Program
- Get them in basic position, have someone else push so they can get the feel when turning – use older skaters to help in pushing.
VERY IMPORTANT – Learn to do it in both directions.
- Backwards day – whole practice is done in reverse.
- Do different variations from one session to the next but have drills in place that they are familiar with and therefore look forward to each session.

- ATTEMPT TO do basic skills such as gliding on two skates, on one skate.
- ATTEMPT TO show them how to step away from the skate in a basic pushing motion – not the skate moving away from the body.
- Push off game – for gliding. Push off backwards from the board and see how far they can glide...
- Partner pushes, train like... to practice gliding basic.
- Keep hand eye coordination exercises in mind, not just skating skills. Basic motion skills.
- Practices must rely heavily on game-based skills – keep them interested.
- Make time to talk to the kids in a group and give them basic general dos and don'ts – explain starts, what to expect in a competition like the starter's pistol, what is acceptable and not (pushing others, basic respect for everyone, values)
- Use a ball that must be held between belly and leg and hold it for a certain length to emphasize basic position (vary size of ball). Can also be done at ankle level.
- Throw a squishy ball between two skaters as they were gliding.
- Baseball on ice
- Use 4- and 6-meter tracks.
- Off ice training? Activities for agility, flexibility...
- Try to be accommodating to children with special needs (if possible one on one)

Other helpful Hints

- Use Name Tags on first session to identify skaters. Everyone loves to be called by their first name.
- Establish a list of basic objectives and give out stickers or certificates as they accomplish a certain basic skill – should be done from the very beginning of the LTS program.

Things to avoid at this level.

- Instruction time should be age appropriate for their attention span and ability level.
- Do not have too large groups.
- Do not let them stand around - keep them moving – limit idle times where nothing is happening on ice.
- DO NOT EXPECT OLYMPIC PERFORMANCES FROM A 5 YR. OLD KID.
- Do not let them pick their own team.

Shufflers and Steppers - Lesson Plan #1 (ice time = 30 to 45 minutes)

TIME

| | | |
|------------------------|-----------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 0 to 5 min. | Warm-up | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Free skate few minutes • Gather at Center Circle • Stretches, arm rotations, touch toes *** done as a game, check equipment as they are stretching like touch the helmet, neck guard, pads... |
| Few minutes | Technical skill | <p>Learn correct body position to get up and down. Place knee over toe, bring skates directly under – alternate leg that they get up on</p> |
| 5 to 15 (5 to 20) | Games | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Move a plunger, skate guard (or something that does not roll) Get the items and bring back on or in a bucket – at this stage, keep the distances short. • Christmas tree – coach stands – kids decorate coach by picking up plungers and place them on the arms, head... of the coach. • Noodle book <p>Make them go around the track (or in a straight line), whistle stop & drop and get up quick.</p> |
| | Drills | <p>Step over the line – show them how to step away from the skate. instead of pushing the skate away from the body</p> |
| 15 to 25 (20 to 35) | Games | <p>Capture the flag modified Push off game. Hand shake Assisted gliding drills – coach pushes so they get a little speed and feel a glide</p> |
| 25 to 30 (35 to 45) | | <p>Glide through tunnels Obstacle course...</p> |

Shufflers and Steppers - Lesson Plan #2 (ice time = 30 to 45 minutes)

TIME

| | | |
|------------------------|-----------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 0 to 5 min. | Warm-up | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Free skate few minutes • Gather at Center Circle • Stretches, arm rotations, touch toes *** done as a game, check equipment as they are stretching like touch the helmet, neck guard, pads... |
| Few minutes | Technical skill | <p>Attempt basic position – show the correct position, body placing, keep head up, bend knees, place a plunger on the helmet... Give them a small push to see if they are stable.</p> |
| 5 to 15 (5 to 20) | Games | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Missile toss (at their level) ... plunger is at a complete stop by the time the skaters get to it – more of an obstacle. • Stretchy man – arms end to end in a line. small groups... go through and under the arms (works if you have older kids on ice or help from parents – more room for kids to go through and around) • Dive (or drop) on mats – try and make mats move forward – in groups and have them, one by one, dive and try and get the team’s mat to the blue line. • Never ending bucket fill – throw items like balls on ice, they must try and bring the balls back to the bucket while coach tries to empty. |
| | Drills | <p>Try and back-up...if possible, glide a little bit Push off boards.</p> |
| 15 to 25 (20 to 35) | Games | <p>Statues – every moves around, must stop and make a statue at whistle – best pose gets points.</p> <p>Soldier game – coach just points in a direction, and they must move accordingly – no talking. Follow the leader / Simon says.</p> |
| 25 to 30 (35 to 45) | | <p>Balloon game</p> |

Steppers and Shufflers - Lesson Plan #3 (ice time = 30 to 45 minutes)

| TIME | | |
|------------------------|-----------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 0 to 5 min. | Warm-up | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Free skate few minutes • Gather at Center Circle • Stretches, arm rotations, touch toes *** done as a game, check equipment as they are stretching like touch the helmet, neck guard, pads... |
| Few minutes | Technical skill | <p>Gliding and lift and reposition leg. Walk while exaggerating the knee height, marching drill, vary march speed (try to get single blade on ice for a longer period) Lifting leg and step across, using board for support</p> |
| 5 to 15 (5 to 20) | Games | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Push off game – for gliding. Push off backwards from the board and see how far they can glide... • Partner pushes, train like... to practice gliding basic. • Movement down ice pretending you are different animals |
| 15 to 25 (20 to 35) | Games | <p style="margin-left: 20px;">Drills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Backwards drills... skating backwards using hip swivel. • Show them how to stop backwards. • Never ending bucket fill – throw items like balls on ice, they must try and bring the balls back to the bucket while coach tries to empty. |
| 25 to 30 (35 to 45) | Game | <p>Slalom Obstacle Course using plungers and Mats.</p> |

Group Three – Gliders and Movers

When to Advance to this group.

- Skater has a good glide component.
- Can transfer weight from one skate to the other.
- Can move backwards.
- Able to stop.
- Cannot do crossovers.
- Can Skate on inside edges.
- Still in hockey skates

Coach Ratio Recommended

1 to 10

General Activities for this Group

- Soccer
 - Play traditional soccer, end to end.
- Equipment check
 - Head to toe at beginning of practice
 - Designated parent off ice to address concerns.
- Board pad games.
 - Tunnel
 - Push relay races, develop pushing off.
- Plungers or beanie babies on helmet/back
 - Relay races
- Ability, Balance, Coordination, little bit of speed (LTAD)
 - Buckets different spots on ice
 - Skate around, put plungers in buckets.

- Balloon games
 - Tap balloon, keep in air from end to end.
- Buckets
 - Leaning on bucket while skating
 - One child on bucket, another pushes
 - Bucket tag, child sits on bucket and propel themselves.
- Starts & stops.
 - Practice stopping in both directions.
- Line drills
 - Push-ups, sit ups, knees down, full body down (at each line)
 - Red light, green light (use ping pong paddles)
- Pool noodles
 - Pulling drills
 - Gliding drills
- Rubber chickens
 - Use your imagination.
- Permanent markers & Bingo dabbers
 - Draw lines, numbers, shapes on ice.
- Plungers
 - Smaller radius circles
 - Pivoting, turns, crossovers.
 - Kick plungers, end to end.
 - Plunger next to foot, practice pushing off.
 - Slalom drills
- General games
 - Mini hockey
 - Soccer

- Bucket soccer
 - Ringette
- Rings, hoops
 - Small hoops one foot in push with other
- Stickers
 - Reward attendance, effort.
- General
 - Music
 - Pictures, post around locker room
 - Edge control
 - Backwards skating
 - Falling and getting up
 - Balance on one foot, then other
 - Jumping drills
 - Arm swing drills, standing still, then while moving
 - Introduction of competitive drills and skills

Gliders and Movers- Sample Practice Plan #1

- Warm-up (5-10 min)
 - Equipment check
 - Stretching – dynamic
 - Arm circles while skating.
 - Marching on skates
 - Sculling (bubbles)
 - Up/down drills
 - Fall on knees, get up.
 - Two laps each direction
- Skill development (20-25 min) - Gliding
 - Agility end-to-end
 - Glide on two feet
 - Push drills in partners.
 - Basic position
 - Balance – knees over toes
 - Tight slaloms – edge control
 - Glide between mats.
 - Arm swings after one or two pushes.
 - Balloons end to end
 - Games:
 - Torpedo plunger toss.
 - Jail house tag.
- Cool down.
 - Two laps each direction

Gliders and Movers- Sample Practice Plan #2

- Warm-up (5-10 min)
 - Equipment check
 - Stretching – dynamic
 - Arm circles while skating.
 - Marching on skates
 - Sculling (bubbles)
 - Up/down drills
 - Fall on knees, get up.
 - Two laps each direction
- Skills (20-25 min) – Stopping.
 - Make snow piles.
 - Use boards for leverage.
 - Agility end-to-end
 - 360 turns at each line
 - Full stop at each line
 - Snow plow (pizza slice)
 - Hockey stop
 - Fall and get up at each line.
 - One knee
 - Two knees
 - Belly
 - Games:
 - Red light green with music
 - Mr. Wolf
- Cool down.
 - Two laps each direction

Gliders and Movers- Sample Practice Plan #2

- Warm-up (5-10 min)
 - Equipment check
 - Stretching – dynamic
 - Arm circles while skating.
 - Marching on skates
 - Sculling (bubbles)
 - Up/down drills
 - Fall on knees, get up.
 - Two laps each direction
- Skills (20-25 min) – Skating backwards.
 - Agility side-to-side in smaller groups
 - Demonstrate compressing ankles (squish laces)
 - Practice pushing with ball of feet in a c-shape (backwards)
 - Skate forward, switch backwards at each line.
 - Partner pushing backwards - gliding.
- Cool down.
 - Two laps each direction (backwards, 1 lap)

Final Note

A huge Thank You to the 17 coaches from across the province who came together in September of 2008 to start the process that led to the creation of this booklet as well as other initiatives.

We came together with the basic goals of:

- Coming together as coaches in a relaxed environment
- Sharing knowledge in the hopes of gaining knowledge
 - Amalgamation of concepts and ideas

Derrick MacLeod

“The achievements of an organization are the results of the combined effort of each individual.”

Vince Lombardi