

Bridge Program – Introductory Membership

What is it?

A Bridge Program is designed to teach skating skills at a faster pace in a group lesson format and to introduce the benefits of club membership. Offering this type of an affordable package program with one set fee is the best way to entice new skaters to participate. Remember these are still beginner skaters looking to become more involved in the sport of figure skating. Keeping these skaters together in a group format for a longer period of time; working together on skills, creating friendships, and keeping it affordable for families, is the real magic behind a Bridge Program.

Think of this as “Figure Skating 101” with both on- and off-ice components. This type of program introduces skaters to a “training program” and offers them an introduction to all of the elements in skating and what is required if they choose to continue to skate recreationally, begin taking national U.S. Figure Skating tests, and participate in competitions. Parent meetings are essential to the success of this program as they provide information about future opportunities in the sport.

Who will love it?

Basic Skills skaters (and their parents) who are hooked to skating and are motivated to learn at an accelerated pace. The target group of skaters for your Bridge Program is based upon the make-up of your membership. You may be able to attract skaters in Basic 3-8 or you may have to limit it to beginning Free Skate levels.

Figure skating is a three step process – Basic Skills is the first step that teaches skating fundamentals, a figure skating club is the last step where skaters make more commitments to the sport and a Bridge Program is the most important middle step that gets them from one place to the other.



Membership:

A Bridge program can be run by either the Basic Skills Program or the figure skating club. Participating skaters should be current members of U.S.

Figure Skating; either as a Basic Skills member or full member using the new introductory membership category developed to help families make the transition to club membership. The introductory membership is a new full membership available to first-time members at a discounted rate of \$25 (second and subsequent members are \$15). This way when they are ready to test their Pre-pre moves and FS, they will be eligible.

Program Design:

Like other bridges, a Bridge Program must be custom designed to meet the needs in the specific area, be relevant to the ability of the skaters enrolled, and fit into the facility schedule. Much depends upon how many hours per week and/or when in the season you can offer it. You can use this format to develop a new beginner synchronized team, offer it for first time competitors called Learn to Compete class, or focus entirely on MIF and at the conclusion of the session the skaters who are ready can test their Pre-pre Moves if desired.

A Bridge Program can be successfully delivered in a variety of programming options. These options include, but are not limited to offering the Bridge Program as a one day or weekend mini-camp, a week long camp, as an 8 week session that is incorporated into the group program or offered on designated free skating practice sessions. When time permits, incorporate special workshops where the concentration is on one specific element or discipline. Create a catchy name for your Bridge Program like Rising Stars, Finer Edges, Junior Club, Team _____ (location); something to make it different and special.

Essentials to get started?

After all of the skaters are registered, sort them into smaller groups by ability. It is suggested that groups be kept to no more than seven skaters each to allow for group and individual instruction periods. Be sensitive to how you divide the skaters to ensure that everyone will have a positive experience in the program. Sort first by ability and then age, if possible.

The on-ice skating curriculum includes a sampling of the following:

- Proper stretching techniques
- Warm-up and cool-down activities
- Stroking, edges and power skating
- Pre-pre and preliminary Moves in the Field
- Introductory ice dance
- Beginner Synchronized team
- Spins – two foot to flying spins
- Jumps – bunny hops to doubles
- Artistry in Motion – beginning choreography and style



Parent meetings:

Schedule an introductory meeting before the first class to discuss the goal of the program, policies, and to introduce the coaching staff. Include other meetings if possible and invite special presenters if you can such as the local club president, a boot and blade expert and a certified judge to explain these topics in more detail. Parent education sessions are essential to the success of a Bridge Program.

Sample topics include but are not limited to:

- Proper equipment fit/purchase and attire- where to shop in local area
- Ice etiquette
- Ice utilization and good practice habits
- U.S. Figure Skating testing and competitive structure
- Joining a figure skating club
- Club functions
- Volunteering
- Preparation for first competition
- How and when to select a private coach
- Ways to support your child in skating

General Information:

Skaters should be encouraged to attend a practice session at least one other time during the week to practice on their own and/or begin supplemental private lessons. Evaluations should be done at the conclusion of the session and badges given for levels earned in all disciplines (Free Skate, Dance 1, AIM 1, Synchro 1).

The fees for the program should be higher than the group lesson fees in your area but not high enough to discourage people from participating. Encourage a mix of Basic Skills staff and club professionals to instruct this type of program so the skaters have some familiar faces yet will be introduced to some new ones.

It has been the experience of most clubs that over half of the Bridge Program participants stay in skating; either free skating, dance or become a member of the synchronized team.

Resources:

Sample formats, agendas, lesson plans, ability divisions, warm-up/cool-down activities, and parent education resources can be found on the Bridge Program web page. Go to 'Clubs' then 'Bridge Program'. If you have any questions please contact Susi Wehrli-McLaughlin at swehrli@usfigureskating.org or (719) 635-5200.