

U.S. Figure Skating

How to Form a Club



Revised 2009

About U.S. Figure Skating

Mission Statement: As the national governing body, the mission of U.S. Figure Skating is to provide programs to encourage participation and achievement in the sport of figure skating.

U.S. Figure Skating, the governing body for eligible figure skating on ice in the United States, is comprised of member clubs, collegiate clubs, school-affiliated clubs, Basic Skills Programs as well as individual members. The charter member clubs of U.S. Figure Skating numbered seven in 1921 when the association was formed and when it first became a member of the International Skating Union, the body that governs the sport internationally. Today more than 700 member clubs and 900 Basic Skills programs cover the country from coast to coast and from border to border, and the number of skaters who register on an annual basis total more than 175,000.

Tests – moves in the field, free skating, pairs and dance – are the measurement of progress in the various disciplines of the sport. Official test sessions are conducted by member clubs for their members and members of collegiate clubs as well as for individual members. Under certain conditions, members of other skating associations may also take the U.S. Figure Skating official tests.

Competitions on every level are a principal incentive for figure skaters to train, develop and improve their proficiency. By ascending the competition "ladder," competitors registered with U.S. Figure Skating gain entry into international figure skating events, among them the Olympic Winter Games and World Figure Skating Championships. All figure skating competitions in the United States, especially the regional, sectional and U.S. championships, the steps that must be taken to qualify for international competitions, are sanctioned by U.S. Figure Skating and are conducted by member clubs.

Carnivals, exhibitions and ice shows showcase the talents of figure skaters. Member clubs are eligible to hold figure skating performances in the United States with the sanction of U.S. Figure Skating. Members of member clubs, collegiate clubs, individual members and Basic Skills programs are eligible to participate in such events. In addition, a member club, at its discretion and subject to conditions prescribed in the official rules, may also invite the participation of nonregistered skaters and professionals.

The rules which govern the sport of figure skating on ice – the curriculum, test structure, competition regulations and all related informational material – are the result of the labor of countless dedicated figure skaters throughout the world since the birth of the sport. The official rulebook of U.S. Figure Skating contains this information as well as related educational and instructional material. It is available not only to members of the association but to all who are interested in figure skating on ice to encourage their greater participation in and enjoyment of the sport.

As required by the U.S. Figure Skating bylaws, clubs may not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, gender or national origin.

HOW TO FORM A FIGURE SKATING CLUB

Qualifications for Club Membership - Provisional Membership

Items of Consideration in Forming a New Club

- A. U.S. Figure Skating Rulebook
- B. Mission Statement
- C. Club Programs, Services and Membership Benefits
- D. Board of Directors
- E. Officer Job Descriptions
- F. Bylaws
- G. Dues
- H. Strategic Planning
- I. Developing a Communication Plan
- J. Working with your Coaching Staff
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Application for Provisional Membership

QUALIFICATIONS FOR CLUB MEMBERSHIP

Provisional Membership

1. The applicant club shall have been skating as an organized club six consecutive months prior to the date of application. A club is deemed to be organized when an election of officers and directors has taken place, and bylaws have been approved by the members of the club. The bylaws should be in a form similar to the sample drafted by U.S. Figure Skating legal counsel, or in such form that will be acceptable to the Membership Committee, and which calls for the election of officers and directors in accordance with generally accepted parliamentary procedures.
2. The principal skating headquarters of a club shall be the address of the rink in which the club conducts the majority of its skating sessions/business. This address will be recorded in the U.S. Figure Skating database. A club may only name one principal skating headquarters. (MR 2.04)
3. The applicant club shall have made arrangements for exclusive ice time either at a rink or some other place where ice is available for use exclusively by the club (principal skating headquarters). This requirement begins no later than the date of approval for provisional membership. A copy of the ice contract or letter of such agreement shall be submitted at this time.
4. The applicant club shall have not less than 25 home club members, 10 of whom are adult members over the age of eighteen (18) years.
5. A payment of \$50 shall be included with the application.
6. An applicant club may be granted provisional membership by the Membership Committee at any time during the year, if the application has been investigated and approved.
7. For the application to be considered for full club membership at the next meeting of the Governing Council, it must be postmarked not later than Dec. 31.
8. As a provisional club, you will be able to sanction exhibitions, carnivals and ice shows, hold test sessions, and your club members are eligible to compete representing your club. There are two things that you **cannot** do until you are a full member club: 1) Host a qualifying competition and 2) Vote at Governing Council.
9. Until the applicant club has been approved, members who wish to compete or test should join U.S. Figure Skating through another member club or as an individual member.
10. During the six-month formation process, provisional status or the first year after full membership is granted, the applicant club must complete club education requirements as specified by the Membership Committee.

Items of Consideration in Forming a New Club

The first and most important thing to think about when forming a new club is that you are starting a small business. This is not a small task, nor should it be viewed as such. Use the following information as a reference tool while you are in the forming stages of your new organization. More detailed information can be found on the Clubs home page of www.usfigureskating.org.

A. U.S. Figure Skating Rulebook

Persons seeking to establish a new skating club should secure a copy of the current official rulebook and study, in particular, the Membership Rules (MR 1.00). The members should also be familiar with the rules on sanctions and eligibility, club ethics and the contents of this manual.

B. Mission Statement - Answers WHO are we and WHY do we exist? WHY are we committed to support that existence?

- **What is a mission statement?**

Every club needs to define its fundamental purpose, philosophy, and values. The mission statement clarifies the essence of club existence. It describes the needs the club was created to fill and answers the basic question of why the club exists.

- **Why have one?**

Without guidance, it is difficult to establish boundaries for appropriate course of action. The mission statement provides the basis for judging the success of the club and its programs. It helps to verify if the club is on the right track and making the right decisions. It provides direction when the club needs to adapt to new demands. Attention to mission helps the board adhere to its primary purpose and helps during conflicts by serving as a touchstone for every decision. The mission statement can be used as a tool for resource allocation. A powerful mission statement attracts donors, volunteers, and community involvement.

- **How to develop a mission statement?**

An effective mission statement is concise, to the point, realistic, operational, inspirational, motivational, informative, and even emotional. It is not too abstract or even too intellectual. The mission clearly states the purpose of the club. It is forward-thinking, positive, and describes success. It is clear and focused so that the reader can identify with the statement. It reflects the values and clearly enumerates the reasons why the club exists.

C. Club Programs, Services and Membership Benefits

Why should someone join your club? To be attractive, your membership package must provide clear benefits. Club programs and services are designed to meet the specific needs of its membership. Some of the benefits and services of member clubs include:

- ✓ Practice sessions for:
 - Moves in the field
 - Free skating
 - Ice dancing
 - Pairs

- Synchronized skating
 - Theatre on Ice teams
- ✓ Conducting U.S. Figure Skating test sessions
- ✓ Hosting Basic Skills, nonqualifying and qualifying competitions
- ✓ Hosting exhibitions, ice shows and other performances
- ✓ Hosting annual membership meetings and membership drives
- ✓ Fundraising activities
- ✓ Offering skater grants and financial support to members
- ✓ Rewards and recognition for member accomplishments
- ✓ Hosting judges, referees, accountants and technical schools
- ✓ Hosting training camps, clinics and seminars
- ✓ Conducting other programs such as off-ice training and educational seminars for skater development
- ✓ Offering coach development programs
- ✓ Delivering parent education programs
- ✓ Organizing social activities
- ✓ Member of an interclub association

D. Board of Directors – Serving on a figure skating board is not only a huge responsibility but a privilege. One needs to remember that he or she is an ambassador for the sport of figure skating as well as his or her local club. According to nonprofit corporation law, a board member must meet certain standards of conduct and attention to his or her responsibilities to the club. These are referred to as Duty of Care, Loyalty and Obedience. Here are the definitions:

1. DUTY OF CARE means using your best judgment and that you have exercised reasonable caution in making decisions.
2. DUTY OF LOYALTY means putting your personal and professional interests aside for the good of the club.
3. DUTY OF OBEDIENCE means being true to the club's mission.

Role of the Board

- Acts as the fiduciary and guardian of the organizational assets
- Reviews and approves club's annual budget
- Establishes short- and long-term goals
- Assesses progress toward goals
- Assumes stewardship responsibility for club finances
- Sets policies for the overall management and operation of the club

Expectations of Board members

- Attend regularly scheduled board meetings
- Participate in committee work
- Become informed about the policies and programs of the club
- Participate in fundraising activities and special events sponsored by the club
- Contribute financially according to ability
- Participate in board orientation activities

- Act as an informed advocate of the club

E. Sample Officer Job Descriptions:

President – It shall be the duty of the president to take charge of the club; to preside at all meetings of the club and of the Board of Directors. The president shall be responsible for the entire supervision and management of the club and its property, pending the action of the Board of Directors; have the power to suspend any member for violating the bylaws or regulations of the club, pending the approval of the board; may call special meetings and club meetings.

Vice President – It shall be the duty of the vice president to assist the president in the discharge of his/her duties and in the president's absence to assume his/her duties and officiate in his/her stead.

Treasurer – The treasurer shall have charge of the funds of the club and shall keep a record of all receipts and disbursements, and shall render a written report when requested by the president or Board of Directors. Specific duties include:

- Pay out reimbursements
- Keep track of check book
- Report to president on finances
- Be responsible for handling tax issue of club or for finding a resource to handle these issues
- Help in the budgeting process for the club
- Help provide for a checks and balance system for the club's finances
- Make bank deposits and do all bank dealings
- Attend board meetings and report monthly

Secretary – It shall be the duty of the secretary to keep the minutes of the meeting of the club and of the Board of Directors and to supervise all reports.

Other specific duties include:

- Supervise correspondence of the club
- Prepare and issue notices
- Reserve rooms for all meetings of the club and Board of Directors
- Responsible for club handbook updates
- Notify U.S. Figure Skating of club officer and board changes

Membership Chair – It shall be the responsibility of the membership chair to handle all applications for membership to the club and U.S. Figure Skating.

Other specific duties include:

- Distribute U.S. Figure Skating membership cards to club members
- Notify U.S. Figure Skating of address changes for club members
- Distribute information to prospective members
- Handle the yearly membership drive

Sanctions Chair – It shall be the responsibility of the sanctions chair to ensure that events being sponsored by the club are sanctioned, if necessary.

Test Chair - This person is responsible for the planning, executing and reporting of each session.

F. Bylaws

A set of bylaws is to be submitted with the application for approval by the national vice chair for rules and policies of the Membership Committee. Bylaws are the legally binding rules that outline how the board of a nonprofit will operate. All nonprofit organizations need these regulations to help determine how they are to be governed. In order to ensure that your club is fairly governed and legally protected, board members need clear and concise bylaws that address critical organizational issues. Bylaws are a guide and a reference on how a club is structured, what rights the participants/members have and the procedures by which those rights can be put into effect.

This document must be tailored to the particular needs of your own organization. There should be provisions for making changes to the bylaws if something has been missed on the first attempt. In addition, you must include a provision for conflict resolution in your club. The procedure can be part of your bylaws or the bylaws can point to an adopted procedure. To find a sample set of bylaws please go to

<http://www.usfigureskating.org/Clubs.asp?id=239>

G. Dues

The primary source of revenue for your club will be from the fees assessed to members. All member clubs set their own fees and membership categories. Your particular local requirements will dictate what the fees should be based upon the level of benefits or services your club offers. A portion of the fees collected from your members will be submitted to U.S. Figure Skating, making them both members of your own club and members of U.S. Figure Skating. Different membership categories to consider when designing your club include full home, subsequent home, associate, introductory, coaching, collegiate, alumni, supportive and Basic Skills. SKATING magazine is included for the first member of each family.

H. Developing Your Strategic Plan

Strategic planning determines where an organization is going, how it intends to get there and how it will evaluate its progress. Defining your mission and values are important first steps.

The next step, your SWOT analysis, examines the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats facing your program. Divide a piece of paper into the four sections and brainstorm each one, taking into account internal and external factors. An internal strength could be a reliable staff, while an external threat could be the national economy. Consider as many information sources as possible. To find a template of a SWOT analysis, go to <http://www.usfigureskating.org/Clubs.asp?id=239>

Next, define your goals and strategies for the year. Aim for turning your opportunities into programs and overcoming your weaknesses by using your strengths. Don't waste time worrying about factors you cannot control. Instead, consider creative ways to

address them. Here is a list of questions to begin your first strategic planning session:

Fifteen Questions for Strategic Planning:

1. Do we need to exist? If so, why?
2. What is our image?
3. What would we like our image to be?
4. What impact would we like to have?
5. Whom do we serve?
6. What are the needs of our constituents?
7. What do we do?
8. What programs are we going to need to develop?
9. What are our strengths?
10. What are our weaknesses?
11. What are the threats facing us?
12. What are our opportunities?
13. What trends are taking place that will affect us?
14. Who is our competition?
15. What is our strategic advantage?

I. Communication Plan – Internal and External

It is extremely important that there be established means of communication between the leadership of the club and its members. Keeping your web site relevant and distributing a monthly e-newsletter serve this purpose, and they are an inexpensive method of keeping your members aware of schedule changes, new programs, etc.

Still another way of communicating with your members is one that is often overlooked: setting up an official club bulletin board in the rink and keeping it current. Educate members as to the informational value of the bulletin board. It is also important visibility within the rink and provides potential marketing opportunities for your club.

It is essential that you also establish a good working relationship with the media that are responsible for covering your local area. The media are in the information-for-profit business, and your role is to assist reporters and editors by being a resource for them. The media relations contact person should have a good understanding of the sport of figure skating and a desire to learn about and work with the media. Good writing and communications skills are also important but not required.

The key to building a good relationship with the media is to be professional. Although you may be a volunteer, you should be perceived not as a volunteer but rather as a professional publicist.

It is equally important that you understand that the media may pass at your first attempts, but don't be afraid to try again. It is OK to be persistent if you have not heard back, especially if you approach them with a new angle. Be sure to explain to them how this affects the community and, in turn, their readers. Try asking, "Do we have a special story to share about our members or club programs?" such as a member who has overcome adversity and is still

pursuing their skating goals or someone who has contributed in an unusual way to the program. Give them different angles to work with beyond the sport alone.

J. Coaching Staff

A strong figure skating club is a direct result of the quality of professional coaches and instructors associated with it. Most important, your staff must be qualified, well trained and be an asset to your club. There are many different ways to establish a strong working relationship with your coaching staff. Staying current on all coaching regulations will help ensure your success. To find more specific information on hiring and working with your coaching staff, please go to <http://www.usfigureskating.org/Athletes.asp?id=227>

Employee vs. Independent Contractor

Skating coaches can either be hired as an employee of the rink, club or municipality, or treated as independent contractors. Generally speaking, group lesson instructors are normally classified as employees of the program (rink, club or municipality operated), and private lesson coaches are independent contractors. Consult with your state employment office to find the rules in your state. There are 20 factors indicating whether an individual is considered an employee or independent contractor by the IRS. A person does not need to meet all criteria. Make sure the tax status of your staff is correct! If coaches are working in your facility as independent contractors, they should provide your facility with a copy of their certificate of insurance naming your rink as an additionally insured.

K. Rink Relations

One of the most essential components of any successful club operation is the ability to work well with your local rink. The relationship that the club is able to develop with the rink is a true partnership and should be approached this way.

The club and the rink have many of the same goals and objectives. Together they will be able to provide a greater overall service to the paying customer while achieving these goals. Among these common goals is the desire to have a large and consistent flow of customers into the facility to support all skating programs. This will allow for a steady revenue flow for the rink and a continuous source of new members for the club. It can bring long-term financial benefits to both the club and the rink.

Each rink operation will be different and offer unique opportunities. Some rinks will rent the ice to the club and let the club operate figure skating and possibly even the Basic Skills program. Other rinks will operate their own figure skating and Basic Skills sessions, allowing the club to conduct the test sessions and competitions. It is the option of the rink manager to decide which operation they select. Either way, the club and the rink need to establish a positive working relationship. Both methods of operation can work well for the club, provided there is a good relationship.

Communication with the rink management is essential to establishing the team approach. Developing this relationship is not always easy and may take some nurturing. Many rink managers do not understand the needs of figure skating and must be educated. Here is where a positive and helpful posture can assist in the club developing this positive working

relationship.

Being involved with the management team of your facility is the only sure way to have good communication and a solid working relationship. In almost every negative situation, the issues come down to a lack of understanding of each other's concerns. Invite the rink management to attend your board meetings. If they take an interest in your club and learn more about your issues, you will help them to understand the way you operate.

Be aware that the rink manager has to deal with other ice users in the facility. Hockey and public skating are very strong revenue streams for most rink operations. The rink manager will typically protect these areas of strong revenue. As a result, you should be realistic in the approach to obtain figure skating ice time. It is also important to establish a relationship with the other user groups within your facility, including the youth hockey club. A strong relationship will benefit the club when seeking extra ice time for competitions or test sessions, and will also help the club when trying to unload excess ice time.

About Serving the American Rinks (STAR):

STAR is a membership association that provides education, training and resources to rink members, professionals and vendors in the rink and arena industry. Created as a joint venture between USA Hockey and U.S. Figure Skating in 2000, STAR also works with the facilities around the country to help promote the ice and inline sports, and increase communication within the industry.

STAR offers a comprehensive package of programs designed to make facilities work more effectively, including technical and management training, quality programming, expense reduction and insurance coverage programs. STAR has been designed to create relationships with arena owners and managers in order to support their efforts to operate their businesses profitably and efficiently.

For more information about STAR and membership benefits, go to STARrinks.com.



APPLICATION FOR PROVISIONAL CLUB MEMBERSHIP

1. Name of proposed club _____

2. Name and physical address of skating headquarters _____

3. Club contact name/phone/email: _____

4. Names of present officers: (Officers must certify that they are eligible persons. See Eligibility Rules in the official rulebook.)

President _____ (Print Name) _____ (Signature)

_____ (Street Address) _____ (email)

_____ (City/State/Zip)

Vice President _____ (Print Name) _____ (Signature)

_____ (Street Address) _____ (email)

_____ (City/State/Zip)

Secretary _____ (Print Name) _____ (Signature)

_____ (Street Address) _____ (email)

_____ (City/State/Zip)

Treasurer _____ (Print Name) _____ (Signature)

_____ (Street Address) _____ (email)

_____ (City/State/Zip)

5. Date of last election of Directors _____ Elected or appointed by whom? _____

6. Date of last election of Officers _____ Elected or appointed by whom? _____

7. Number of members

a. number of adult members (minimum of 10) _____

b. number of members under 18 years of age _____

8. Date present membership started skating as an organized group or club _____ (determined by the date of election of officers and directors and adoption of bylaws and constitution.)

9. Has club made arrangements with the rink for private time to be used exclusively by the club membership?
Yes__ No__ Weekly__ Monthly__ Season__ Other _____

10. Annual club dues are \$_____.

11. Does club ____ or rink ____ employ skating instructors?

12. Name of U.S. Figure Skating member club(s) whose principal skating headquarters are nearest the skating headquarters of your proposed club.

The following is to be signed by the president and secretary of the applicant club:

We have read the rules in the current edition of the official rulebook. If applicant club is admitted to membership in the association, it hereby agrees to abide by the rules of U.S. Figure Skating and acknowledges the right of the association to determine the eligibility status of any of its members.

By _____
President Secretary

Date _____

You may elaborate on any answers or supply any additional information you desire. Please refer to questions by number where applicable.

Note: Send completed application and the following enclosures to: U.S. Figure Skating, 20 First Street, Colorado Springs, CO 80906.

1. Check or money order for \$50.00
2. Copy of Constitution and/or Bylaws
3. Membership Roster
4. Board of Directors & Officers roster
5. Minutes of the organizational meeting and election or appointment of officers and directors
6. Verification of arrangements for exclusive ice time

MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE ACTION

Date Application Received _____ Approved ____ Disapproved _____

Membership Committee Vice-Chair _____ Date _____

Membership Committee Chair _____ Date _____