

Hiring Your First Private Coach

There are many reasons why your family might want to hire a private coach: to excel at a faster pace than in group lessons, to supplement your group lessons with an occasional private one, to get assistance on a difficult skill or to begin training more seriously. Whatever the reason, the information here will help you with choosing a private coach.

Ask your local program or skate club for a list or brochure of local coaching staff for the rink and figure skating club. Select two or three potential coaches from this list and set up face-to-face meetings. A meeting gives you the chance to ask important questions and find out how you and your child interact on a personal level with the prospective coach. Things to consider when selecting a coach are personality, learning and teaching styles, experience, and technical know-how. A few questions we recommend asking include:

- How long have you been coaching?
- What are your greatest coaching accomplishments?
- What is your skating background? Do you specialize in coaching certain disciplines (singles, pairs, ice dancing, synchronized skating)? What levels have you passed? Did you skate competitively?
- Are you a member of U.S. Figure Skating and the Professional Skaters Association?
- Are you compliant per the rules of U.S. Figure Skating?
- How do you stay current with the sport and the profession of coaching?
- What are your rates for lessons, competitions, cutting program music, etc.? How often do you bill for charges? When do you expect to be paid?
- What is your policy if we must cancel a planned lesson?
- Are there any other policies that we should be aware of in advance?

Even if your child only skates a few days a week, your skater's coach will have a significant influence on his or her life. Therefore, it's important that you and your child are comfortable with the person you choose. Take as much time and talk to as many people as necessary until you are satisfied that you are making a good choice.

What Makes A Good Coach?

- Knows the sport — **and** kids. He or she must understand the physical development of boys and girls and what children are and are not capable of doing.
- Knows about differences in personality — what is right for one child is not necessarily right for another.
- Understands motivation for skating. Some kids are very serious about competing; others are there because a good friend is skating.
- Understands and can deal with differences in physical and emotional maturity and appreciates each child for his or her individuality.
- Is sensitive to children from various social, economic and ethnic backgrounds. The coach must give attention and instruction to all the skaters and make them feel a sense of accomplishment. A good coach has more than just winning in sight. Long-term goals of helping young people develop physically, psychologically, and socially should take precedence over winning.
- Is skilled at teaching the fundamentals of skating. Skill development is the major reason kids participate in sports — most want to improve their abilities. Improvement is the primary source of enjoyment for athletes.
- Teaches young athletes to enjoy success and respond to failure with new determination.
- Emphasizes improvement, competence and striving for excellence.
- Teaches and models behavior that reflects desirable basic values.

Choosing the Right Coach

Private lessons can be a valuable part of a skater's development. After acquiring foundational skills, skaters may begin private lessons to progress more quickly, receive focused support on specific skills, supplement group lessons, prepare for testing or competition, or deepen their commitment to the sport. Whatever your reason, choosing a coach is an important and personal decision.

Greenville Figure Skating Club does not employ private lesson coaches and does not assign or recommend a specific coach for any skater. Coaches are independent professionals, and families are responsible for selecting a coach and making arrangements directly with that individual. As a starting point, families may review the coach contact information provided on our website.

Take Your Time

A coach can have a meaningful influence on a skater's experience, confidence, and love of the sport. It is important that both the skater and family feel comfortable with the coach they choose. Take time to talk with prospective coaches, ask questions, and consider what type of support your skater needs.

Trial Lessons

Some families choose to schedule one or more trial lessons before making a decision. During a trial lesson, consider whether the skater connects well with the coach, enjoys the lesson, understands the instruction, and feels encouraged and motivated.

Types of Coaches

As you or your skater progresses, you may discover an interest in a particular discipline, such as singles, skating skills, or ice dance. Many coaches have specialized areas of expertise, and it is not uncommon for skaters to take lessons from more than one coach to support different aspects of their training. In these situations, we strongly recommend choosing one coach to serve as your or your skater's head coach, helping to coordinate training and provide overall guidance. Some skaters also travel occasionally to work with specialized coaches or attend clinics and seminars to broaden their experience.

Talk to Others

Ask other parents and skaters at the rink what they love about their coaches. Keep in mind that what works for one family might not work for yours.

Changing Coaches

Over time, a coaching relationship may no longer be the best fit. If you are considering a coaching change, we encourage you to communicate respectfully and directly with your current coach before making new arrangements. While coaches provide instruction, guidance, and support, you—as the skater or as your child's parent/guardian—ultimately make decisions about your skating journey. A positive coaching relationship is built on mutual respect, open communication, and support for the skater's goals.

