

LEARN TO SKATE USA

Responsibilities as a Parent

YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES AS A SKATING PARENT

As a parent of a skater or skaters, you want the best for your child. This document will help you do much more than survive your child's skating experience. It should equip you to enjoy it to the fullest - and help you make it fun and valuable for your child.

To do that you need first to understand your responsibilities as a skating parent, those include:

- Encourage your child to skate but don't pressure. Let your child choose to skate if he or she wants to
- Understand what your child wants from skating and provide a supportive atmosphere for achieving these goals
- Put your child's participation in perspective - Don't make skating everything in your child's life; make it a part of life
- Make sure the coach is qualified to guide your child through the skating experience
- Keep winning in perspective and help your child do the same
- Help your child set challenging but realistic performance goals rather than focusing only on "winning"
- Help your child understand the valuable lessons skating can teach
- Help your child meet responsibilities to the coach
- Discipline your child when necessary
- Turn your child over to the coach at practices and competitions - don't meddle or coach from the sidelines

HELP YOUR CHILD ENJOY SKATING

You can help your child enjoy skating by doing the following:

- Developing a winning perspective - Every decision parents make in guiding their children should be based first on what is best for the child and second on what may help the child to win.
- Building your child's self-esteem - Building self-esteem in your child is one of your most important parenting duties. It is not easy, and it is made even more difficult in sports by the prevailing attitude of "Winning is everything." Athletes who find their self-worth through winning will go through tough times when they lose.
- Emphasizing fun, skill development and striving to win - The reason you should emphasize fun is quite simple: without it, your child may not want to keep skating. Children don't have fun when they feel pressure to win and don't improve or learn new skills. Conversely, they do have fun when skating lessons are well organized, when they develop new skills and when the focus is on striving to improve.
- Helping your child set performance goals - Performance goals, which emphasize individual skill improvement, are much better than the outcome goal of winning because they are in the athlete's control and help the athlete improve.

BEING A GOOD ROLE MODEL

Children learn behavior from many different people - coaches, teachers, other adults and peers - but the people they learn the most from are their parents. Your child not only soaks up what you say; he or she soaks up what you don't say. Non-verbal messages often speak louder than words. Your attitudes toward your child and other people are not as easily hidden as you may think. Telling your child to respect others is great, but the message is lost if you don't model that respect. You'll have many opportunities as your child skates to model good behavior and attitudes. By putting your child's development and welfare ahead of winning, you'll be better able to display a healthy attitude toward sports and life - as will your child.

MODELING GOOD SPORTSMANSHIP

It's especially critical that you model good sportsmanship for your child. "Being a good sport" is much easier said than done - just look at the examples of certain professional and collegiate coaches and athletes who do the opposite. It's crucial that you maintain a cool head and a healthy attitude toward sport if you expect your child to do the same. Here are ways to model appropriate attitudes and behavior when you are at your child's practices and competitions:

- Encourage all skaters
- Control your emotions in frustrating situations
- Respect and accept judges' decisions
- Congratulate other skaters when they win

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