

# Parent Guide



**A guide to help you and your child discover the fantastic sport of Speed Skating.**

# Speed Skating Canada

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## INTRODUCTION

*Fun, Fast, Speed, Competition and Exercise* are all used to describe the sport of Speed Skating. This Parents Guide is an introductory resource to be used by parents and/or skaters. The guide is meant to supplement other information provided by your local club or available on the Internet. Readers are encouraged to seek further information from other skaters, coaches or parents.

## OBJECTIVES

To provide young skaters and their parents with a resource to learn more about the exciting world of speed skating.

To provide an introduction to the fun and challenging programs that Speed Skating Canada offers to skaters.

To inform the parents of the many speed skating clubs in Canada and how to access one in their area.

To provide participation guidelines and identify ways to promote parental involvement.

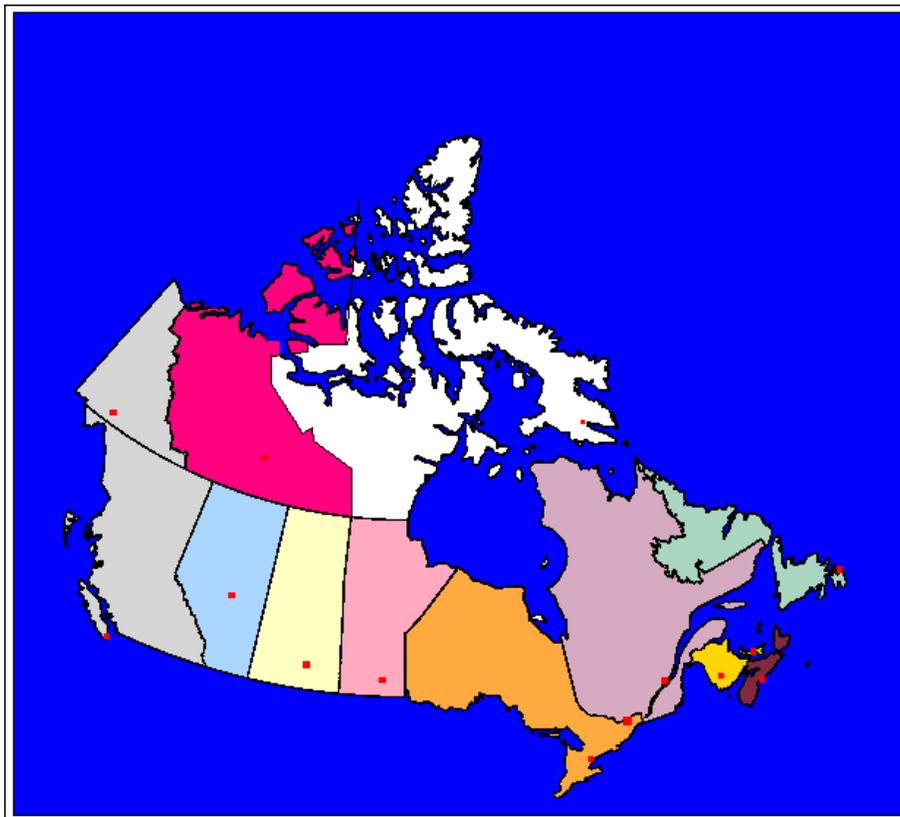


Allison Boniface and her father Tim.  
Photo by: Shauna Boniface

## HISTORY OF SPEED SKATING

The roots of ice skating date back over 1,000 years to the frozen canals and waterways of Scandinavia and the Netherlands when men laced animal bones to their footwear and glided across frozen lakes and rivers. By the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the sport had attracted a mass following in many parts of the world.

Canada's first recorded ice skating race took place on the St. Lawrence River in 1854 when three British army officers raced from Montréal to Québec City. Speed skating races became a regular feature of winter life; and by 1887 the Amateur Skating Association of Canada, the young country's first sport association, was formed. In 1887, the first official championship was staged by the Amateur Skating Association of Canada; and in 1894 became the first non-European body to join the ISU. The name was changed to the Canadian Amateur Speed Skating Association in 1960, then to Speed Skating Canada in 2000. Currently Speed Skating Canada consists of over 8000 members from Coast to Coast to Coast. With 150 clubs in our Country it is one of the fastest growing sports in the world.



■ = Canada's Capital Cities

## **SHORT TRACK SKATING - THE SPORT**

Short track speed skating takes place on a 111.12 m oval track in indoor arenas (generally most hockey arenas). Safety is of a primary concern in short track as the skaters are going very fast on a small ice surface. The corners are tight and it can be difficult for skaters to maintain control. The boards must be covered by protective mats which are made from a water-resistant and cut-resistant material. The mats must be attached to the boards and each other to ensure no space is open.

## **SHORT TRACK SKATING - TECHNIQUE**

Short track speed skaters use many of the same strategies and tactics as track racers (e.g. running or cycling). Skaters may elect to lead from the gun hoping to wear out the competition. Others may choose to conserve energy for a finishing sprint, and some may throw in several sprints during a race in hopes of causing confusion in the pack. Whatever the strategy, a basic tactic for every skater is to be no worse than second or third with four or five laps to go. The result is plenty of passing as skaters seek to improve their positions in the pack. Passing requires instant acceleration, agility, good balance and nerves of steel.

## SHORT TRACK SKATING - EQUIPMENT

Safety equipment is mandatory for all skaters. They are required to wear a helmet which fits securely and snugly underneath their chin and must offer good impact protection and clear visibility. As well as shin guards, knee pads, neck protector, long sleeved clothing and cut - resistant, water - resistant gloves are required. This equipment helps to ensure that the athletes are safe and well protected. Contact your provincial association for purchasing equipment (see page 15).



Amélie Goulet-Nadon

Photo by: Peter Reath

## SHORT TRACK SKATING - BOOTS & BLADES

Short Track Speed Skates are designed for stability and durability. The correct boot and blade combination is crucial to the skater's enjoyment and success in the sport. Check with your club regarding rental possibilities or the availability of used skates.

The skate blades come in a variety of lengths. Blades must be kept dry and sharp at all times. Skates must be sharpened by hand on a specialized jig. Your club can provide assistance on sharpening.

### CARE OF BOOTS AND BLADES

The skate boot and blade are the most expensive pieces of equipment that a skater has. They must be maintained in optimum condition. Some tips to help maintain your skaters are:

- Skate blades must be dried after each use
- Blades should be stored in blade covers not guards between sessions
- Boots should be dried slowly away from direct heat
- Laces should be cotton and the proper length.
- Guards must be worn when walking in skates off of the ice.



Jean-François Monette

Photo by: Peter Reath

### SHORT TRACK SKATING - OFFICIALS

Like other sports, speed skating has many different officials who volunteer to organize competitions and make sure everything runs smoothly. The officials' responsibilities are as follows:

1. **Meet Coordinator** - responsible for the total organization of the meet
2. **Recorder** - Assigns skaters to heats

3. **Runners** - retrieve results from Timers and place judges and bring to the recorder
4. **Announcer** - Keeps everyone informed
5. **Referee** - Responsible for all aspects of the meet and decides on matters of dispute
6. **Starter** - In complete control of the start of race
7. **Lap Recorder** - Keeps competitors informed regarding number of laps remaining
8. **Chief Timer and timers** - Responsible for timing each skater
9. **Chief Place Judge and place judges** - Determine the finish positions of each skater
10. **Track Stewards** - Replace missing pucks during a race
11. **Clerk of Course** - Supervises draw for races.
12. **Bell ringer** - Rings bell identifying last lap

A lot of parents volunteer as officials as a way to get involved while their child/ren are skating and some continue to do so even after their child/ren have stopped skating.

### SHORT TRACK SKATING - THE RULES

Following is a summary of Short Track Skating rules.

Races are skated counter clockwise. Overtaking is allowed but the skater who overtakes is responsible for any collision or obstruction that results from the overtaking. If a skater is lapped, he or she may be moved to the outside track by the referee, and if lapped twice, must leave the race. A few basic rules govern passing. The lead skater has the right-of-way and the passing skater assumes responsibility for avoiding body contact. The most frequent passing infraction, called charging the block, occurs when a skater passes on the inside of the congested area near the top of the corner. An experienced skater won't let anyone sneak by the inside and can, by holding his or her track, force overtaking skaters to back off or go around the outside. Another common cause for disqualification is changing lanes or altering the course at the finish. Competitors are supposed to skate in a straight line from the end of the corner to the finish line; veering inside or outside to maintain the lead is grounds for disqualification.

## LONG TRACK SKATING - THE SPORT

Long Track speed skating comes in two varieties. Mass start, similar to Short Track, has several skaters on the line racing against each other with the placing results determining the winner. Olympic Style has 2 skaters each in their own lane racing against the clock and each other with the fastest time out of all skaters the winner.

Raced outdoors or in a few cases inside as in Calgary, long track is the original speed skating sport. Short Track came into being later on. Mass start is the type first raced by the younger skater. Olympic Style requires that the skater races against the clock and themselves. The aim is to skate a race at a given lap time each lap of the oval so that they will end with a final time that places them well in the meet. The skaters' times from each race are converted into a point system known as the Sammelag Point System, which simply means total points. Each racer's point total is based on his or her performance time over a given distance. The overall winner is the skater with the fewest points.

Mass Start race



Photo by: Louis Christ

Olympic Style



Justin Warsylewicz (front) and Dustin Johnson  
Photo by: Johann Wessels

## LONG TRACK SKATING - TECHNIQUE

Force is maximized in speed skating by adopting the crouched position which reduces air resistance and which is characteristic of the sport. The lower the crouch, the more the leg can extend to the side during the push, lengthening the time spent applying force to the ice.

With conventional, fixed-blade speed skates, good technical speed skating is almost soundless — except during the start — because the push is delivered through the middle of the skate, not the toe. The new clap-skate, however, permits skaters to push with their toe, thus utilizing their calf muscles more efficiently and generating more speed. "*Clap-skates*" also prevent the tip of

the blade from digging into the ice and more importantly, they let the blade stay in contact longer with the ice. The "*clap-skate*" produces a clap-clap sound as the skater skates by. Skaters can adopt a variety of skating start positions. Whatever the technique, all skaters strive for a smooth transition from the short steps of the start to the long, smooth efficient push of full speed skating.

### LONG TRACK SKATING - THE SKATE

Speed skates are designed for Efficiency, Power, and Speed. There are now two types of Long Track skates; the original model, which had a fixed blade and the newer high tech model, the "*Clap-skate*".

The Long track boot is made of soft leather with a rigid heel counter in the original models or with a composite boot, made of Kevlar, carbon fibre, etc. The length of the blades range from 30.5 cm / 12 to 44.5 cm / 17.5 inch in length, younger skaters use the shorter blades and progress to the longer blade length as they get older. Most provincial level skaters are using 41.9 cm / 16.5 inch to 17 inch blades. These blades are around 1 to 1.4 mm / 1/8 inch in width and made of a high quality steel alloy blade that holds a good edge, with a light tube with 2 brackets (cups) to mount the blade to the skate boot. The cups are riveted to the boot on original style skates and bolt to the bottom of the boot on the "*clap-skate*" models. The blade has less rocker (curve) than the Short track skate, around a 19 to 25 meter radius, since the 400 meter Skating Oval corners are wider and the straightaways longer, the lesser rocker of this skate means more blade on the ice which results in faster speeds. More Rocker means a blade is more manoeuvrable/slower, while less makes the blade faster/less manoeuvrable. The amount of rocker used should be selected for the age, ability and strength of the skater and type of skating, Distance versus Sprinter. Novice skaters usually begin with a stock speed skate then progress to better quality skates when they require them. Skaters now have a wide selection of boots and blades to choose from.

Elite level custom boots and blades for long track range in the \$900.00 to \$1500.00 Canadian dollar range. Club level skates from \$350.00 to \$650.00 range. Most clubs rent skates out to members for a very reasonable rate for the season. Most parents / skaters opt to rent until the child's feet stop growing, this saves them having to buy new skates every year.

The more advanced skaters customize their skates by buying the skates that they feel will give them the best performance. Then they rocker the blades to the rocker that best suits them.

The "*clap-skates*" are generally for more advanced skaters as good technical skills are required to get maximum performance. The blade of the "*clap-skate*" stays in contact with the ice for a longer time and calf muscles are used for power without digging the toe in.



Clap Skate



Fixed Blade

### LONG TRACK SKATING - OTHER EQUIPMENT

Long track skating has less of a risk associated with it as the area of the ice surface is larger and the corners are not as sharp. Therefore less protective equipment is associated with it.

They are required to wear:

Gloves

Skin suit or close comfortable clothes

Long Track Skates

Warm-up suit

It is also very important that the athletes **DRESS WARMLY FOR OUTDOOR TEMPERATURES!**

Canada can produce some pretty chilly days in the winter!

### LONG TRACK SKATING - THE RULES

Skaters are allowed only one false start before they are disqualified. They are not allowed to skate inside their individual lane markers. The inside skate may cross the lane line when entering a corner, providing the gliding skate, the one bearing the skater's weight, remains outside. Skaters must cross

over on every lap. The skater moving from the outer lane to the inner lane has the right-of-way when both skaters exit the corner simultaneously.

For races Pairs are selected by a draw held by the referee the night before the first race. As a rule, skaters are grouped by performance. A random draw designates the starting lanes, inner or outer, and the starting order for each group. Separate draws are held for each race. Group one, the fastest skaters, usually races first. The skater starting in the inner lane wears a white armband and the skater in the outer lane wears a red armband.



Mike Ireland

Photo by: Peter Reath

## THE CUTTING EDGE - SSC BADGE PROGRAM

The Cutting Edge Badge program provides motivation and incentive for all skaters young or old, experienced or inexperienced to improve their skating skills. The program emphasizes the development of confidence and competence with basic skating skills. The program is primarily concerned with the development of basic skating skills within a speed skating context. Skills range from falling down and getting up to actual speed skating techniques. There are eleven different levels for skaters to achieve.

-  Pivot sequence, glide while partner pushes, backwards slalom, crossover, fall and recovery, glide around arc of track.
-  Slalom, pivots, turns, backwards cross-over.
-  Backwards glide, backwards slalom, ability to sharpen skates, glide with leg extended, stop.
-  Glide turn, airplane, backwards glide, basic position, recovery phase, arm swing.
-  Figure eight, backwards glide, gliding in an arc, lifted leg extension, two foot jump, one foot jump, stop and go, left and right foot stop and turn.
-  Scull, cross over weave, backwards glide, parallel stops, v-stops, basic position arm swing, weight transfer, race distances and relay.
-  Forwards to backwards, two foot slalom, basic position with leg extension, leg extension while gliding, partner relay, crossovers.
-  Turns on two feet, partner push on two feet, parallel stop, corner push while gliding, gliding in basic position, backwards skating and gliding, backwards v-
-  Gliding, cross over walk, demonstrate start and basics of skate care, backwards gliding, corner push.
-  Basic position, balancing unassisted, over and under, start position, snowplow stop, two foot glide, pushes.
-  Standing, falling/getting up, balancing, side stepping, t-position, gliding, half snowplow.

As the athlete completes the different skill sections and they are assessed on it by their coach, they receive the appropriate pin and move up the levels.

## YOUR CLUB NEEDS YOU

Your club exists thanks to the efforts of volunteers, as a skater or parent you can assist your club by participating in the following activities:

- Become an on ice or off ice official
- Help skaters with skates before practices
- Help at practices by filling water buckets and getting protective mats on and off the ice when required.
- Help at trade shows or promotion events
- Serve on the executive of your club or district
- Coordinate or assist with fundraising events
- Assist with first aid if required
- Applaud the efforts of all skaters
- Help out with your clubs special evenings i.e.: Christmas parties, year end parties and club races or fun skates.

**FIND A CLUB NEAR YOU!**

Alberta  
2500 University Drive N.W.  
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### FAIR PLAY CODE FOR PARENTS

1. I will not force my child to participate in sports.
2. I will remember that my child plays sport for his or her enjoyment, not for mine.
3. I will encourage my child to play by the rules and to resolve conflicts without resorting to hostility or violence.
4. I will teach my child that doing one's best is as important as winning, so that my child will never feel defeated by the outcome of the race.
5. I will make my child feel like a winner every time by offering praise for competing fairly and trying hard.
6. I will never ridicule or yell at my child for making a mistake or losing a competition.
7. I will remember that children learn best by example. I will applaud good performances by both my child and their opponents.
8. I will never question the official's judgement or honesty in public.
9. I will support All efforts to remove verbal and physical abuse from children's sporting events.
10. I will respect and show appreciation for the volunteer coaches who give their time to provide sport activities for my child.

*FAIR PLAY - IT'S YOUR CALL!*





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