

How to Increase Your Chances of Success in Testing, Competitions, and Shows

Testing, competitions, and shows in the ISI (Ice Skating Institute) system emphasize fun, making friends, and doing your best. Here are some suggestions for improving your chances of “doing your best.”



◆ UNDERSTANDING THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN “TESTING” AND “COMPETITION” SKILL LEVELS

Myth: Since I passed Beta, I’ll do well against other skaters of my same age and skill level.

Fact: Passing Beta means that you can perform the required maneuvers to a “passing” level, which is a score of at least 5 out of 10. However, you’ll be competing against other skaters who not only passed Beta, but probably have improved their skills through continuous practice, so that if they were to test Beta again, they would probably score an 8 or 9 out of 10.

Preparing for a competition requires a much higher degree of preparation and practice than just testing. Testing means you can do the MINIMUM skills required for that level; success in competition requires SUPERIOR skills and polish through repetition and attention to details such as posture, speed, and presentation (i.e., smiling, costume, arm movements, rhythm, music choice, props, and more).

◆ PREPARATION FOR TESTS OR COMPETITIONS

GROUP LESSONS ALONE -- NOT ENOUGH

Group lessons are designed to give students the testing criteria for each level, an understanding of the passing standards, and individualized help as much as possible. However, there is no substitute for practice. Students who take advantage of the practice ice the day of their lesson as well as the extra public session each week excel much faster than students who only attend group lessons and rarely practice on their own. A child with all the talent in the world will never achieve his/her potential without practice.

Avoid Comparisons

Different children progress at different speeds and at different times, sometimes in spurts, sometimes in slow, subtle ways. Some children need to analyze moves first before learning to do them well. Others watch another skater and mimic what they see. Some skaters are better spinners than jumpers, some have better posture or footwork, some are more musical – each child is different. This is why it is important to avoid comparing your child’s progress to another’s. A good skater may be slower to progress through the basic levels for a variety of reasons, but that doesn’t mean they won’t ultimately achieve as much as the skater who seems to be rocketing through the skill levels. The one who

progresses more slowly at first may also learn greater power and control, laying a strong foundation for the higher-level maneuvers and earning better scores when they do take and pass a test.

Tests are graded on a 10-point scale for each maneuver. Skaters can pass a test element with a “5”, but they should aim to make at least 7s and 8s. Practice is the single most important factor in mastering skills, but attitude is the key. **A child who wants to learn will learn.** Help your child understand that it’s okay to take a little longer to pass a certain level than another skater.

Learning to skate is not a race; it’s an art.

Freestyle (after Delta) versus Basics Testing

Testing is a little different in Freestyle than in the basic levels. For Tots and Pre-Alpha through Delta, the testing is done during regular classes by the class instructor, and the cost is included in the group lesson cost. Once the skater has passed Delta, there are 10 levels of Freestyle ahead. For Freestyle testing as well as Dance and Pairs, testing is held at a special session once a month, and there is a \$ 20.00 fee. There are two stages of Freestyle testing -- after you pass the compulsories, you must skate a continuous program skating the required maneuvers to music.

For Freestyle 1 & 2, skaters can choose to attend the Monday evening Intro to Freestyle classes, and we will prepare a program for you. The alternative is private lessons where skaters learn a program from an instructor of their choice. If you choose to have private lessons, you will need to pay the Ice Chalet for the ice time for a Freestyle session (see the “Skaters Guide to the Ice Chalet” for times and cost) as well as pay the private lesson instructor directly for his/her services. Be sure to dress nicely, as if you are competing, to show your professionalism and to show off your posture and skills.

START PREPARING EARLY

Myth: My skater is “a quick study” and can learn a program in a couple of weeks, and that’s good enough to win first or second place.

Fact: Although this strategy can occasionally work, most skaters will have a consistently better experience with early preparation and repeated practice.

How to Increase Your Chances of Success in Testing, Competitions, and Shows (continued)

Start working on your programs at least *three months* ahead of the competition date. The most successful competition programs have been refined and polished, tested in competition, evolved with a student's skills, and used for more than one year!

Note: Due to the limited availability of freestyle practice ice time, coaches' private lesson schedules can get filled up early in the season, especially as we get closer to competition and testing dates. "Freestyle practice" times are the only ice times for playing music for students to run through their programs. Private lessons are 20 minutes long. The rest of the practice session should be used for practice!

SCHEDULE REGULAR PRIVATE LESSONS

Most students preparing for a competition have a weekly private lesson with their coach. If you prefer to only have a private lesson every once in a while, and not weekly, please make sure the coach understands this. Note that the slot that your student has this week cannot just be held "open" whenever you decide it's time for a lesson. Privates may be conducted during "freestyle" practice sessions or *uncrowded* public sessions, and admission to these sessions must be paid for separately from the private lesson itself. (For lessons held during public sessions, use of the music box is allowed only with special permission.) You will pay the teacher directly.

PAY FOR ICE TIME

Whether lessons are scheduled during "freestyle" practice times or uncrowded public sessions, skaters must pay for the ice time separately from the private lesson itself. (See the "Skaters Guide to the Ice Chalet" brochure for details.) To save money, skaters might consider the "Freestyle Stroking and Practice Pass" or our "All You Can Skate" program.

Cancellations

It is the skater's responsibility to notify the instructor of cancellations at least 24 hours ahead of time so that the instructor can schedule another student for the time.

Who Can Take Private Lessons?

Students enrolled in our group lesson program may take private lessons. Any adult (18 years or older) may take private lessons without being enrolled in classes. Skaters visiting from out of town may take private lessons for a maximum of two weeks.

SELECTING A PRIVATE LESSON COACH

Myth: All coaches teach the same way.

Fact: Learning and teaching styles vary from student to student and from coach to coach, and it's important to find the right "fit" for your skater.

Choose a coach carefully! Don't rely on one person's recommendation or just asking whoever happens to be in the lobby at the right time. *Discuss goals* -- do you want the skater to be pushed or just to have fun?

Select a coach because they have the right type of experience for your skater's needs and objectives, the appropriate instructive style for your skater's age and personality, and good rapport with your skater. Most skaters try to establish a long-term working relationship with one particular coach so that the skater and coach learn how to communicate well with each other and become familiar with the student's learning style and the motivational techniques that work for that skater.

Remember: There is no ONE correct way to teach most skating maneuvers; the coach and the student must work together to find the technique that brings the best result for the skater.

Please note that it is not considered ethical for coaches to solicit private lessons. The parent or student should approach the coach, not the reverse. See the "Private Lessons" brochure for more information.

MORE THAN ONE COACH?

Some skaters can benefit from multiple coaches, especially at the higher skill levels, but it is advisable to have one PRIMARY coach so that decisions about being ready to test a certain level or competition event choices can be made with full knowledge of the skater's skills and talents. Make sure the coaches communicate with each other regularly.

THE DECISION TO CHANGE COACHES

If you decide the current coaching relationship isn't working or if you decide you want to have multiple coaches, talk to the current coach *before* changing or adding coaches. Although we teach as a team, coaches are people, too, and it's hurtful to find out from someone else that "your student" has changed coaches. Professional courtesy and ethics require that a coach inform another coach when approached to work with a student who had established a prior relationship with the other coach. If the first coach isn't aware of the situation, it creates an uncomfortable atmosphere for everyone.



*Remember to smile
and have fun!*

◆ ENTERING A COMPETITION OR SHOW

CHOICES: MUSIC, COSTUME, PROPS, CHOREOGRAPHY

Myth: I've seen a lot of skating events, so I can just prepare a program and music myself.

Fact: There are specific rules for each event, including timing, maneuver limitations, and different judging criteria, and ISI-certified coaches have studied the rulebook and passed tests verifying that they understand these rules. Coaches have also seen what works and what doesn't. Even just the order of placing skills in the choreography can make a significant difference in a skater's success.

Our skaters are representing a proud tradition at our school, so we must at least have a certified coach review the program before allowing it to be competed.

Music

The correct music choice and the correct editing of that music are critical to the success of the program. Some music just isn't appropriate, or has the wrong beat, or may not be pleasing to the judges' ears. Most importantly, the skater can be penalized for exceeding the time limits. Our standard charge is \$10.00 for a piece of music with simple editing and one or two fairly simple cuts. The backup copy is an additional \$1.00. This should be paid to the person who made the cuts and produced the CDs.

Consult with your coach, discuss possible choices, and carefully arrive at a decision. Keep in mind that a new piece of music may not be recognizable to the judges. Your spotlight may seem very special and appropriate to the skater, but if the judges are going to wonder what that program was about because they don't understand the lyrics, you may be disappointed in the results.

Costume

The costume must be appropriate for the music, show the skater's body line, and give the impression that some care and thought was given to the choice of costume. It doesn't have to be the most expensive dress, but it shouldn't just be a practice dress, either. The right costume can boost the skater's self-esteem and confidence as well.

Props

For events that allow props, they are optional, but they definitely help. The prop must be easy to see (and read if applicable), easy to set up and take down, represent some thought and effort on the part of the skater and coach (and parents, too), and most importantly, the prop should be used effectively in the choreography. A prop that just sets the scene is okay, but it's better to have the skater interact with the prop in some way -- and the more interaction, the better.

Choreography

The opening and the ending moves set the tone for the program. The transitions between each move can make the maneuvers more or less difficult to perform and more or less pleasing to the judges' eyes. The choreography must match the music as well as the skater's own skating styles, weaknesses, and strengths. The pattern must cover most of the ice. These are just a few of the nuances involved in the "art" of choreography. However, skaters have different speeds, edge quality and control, power, etc., and sometimes the original choreography must be tweaked and refined over repeated run-throughs to eventually have a quality program ready for competition.

COMPETITION EVENTS; DIFFERENT JUDGING CRITERIA

Some competition events are judged by more objective criteria, others a combination of objective and subjective criteria.

THE MOST COMMON TYPES OF EVENTS:

(1) Basics and Freestyle, i.e., Tot 1-4, Pre-Alpha--Delta, Freestyle 1-10, etc.

This is a technical program with emphasis on the required maneuvers from the skater's current test level. No props. Judging Criteria: Correctness of required maneuvers, extra content, pattern, duration, rhythm, posture, and general overall.

(2) Spotlight -- Solo, Couples, Family

This is a routine that is entertaining, emotional, or a portrayal of characters. Costume and props are very important, as well as the choice of music.

Light Entertainment: The focus is on light-hearted entertainment using music, props (optional), comedy, dance, and skating moves.

Dramatic: This is a theatrical performance evoking an emotional response from the judges and the audience.

Character: The character must be easily identifiable, i.e., Pink Panther, Superman, Dolly Parton...

Judging Criteria: Music and choreography, costume and prop, originality, duration, and judge appeal.

How to Increase Your Chances of Success in Testing, Competitions, and Shows (continued)

The Robert Unger ISI Team Competition, held each Spring, is the oldest continuously running ISI competition in the world!

(3) Stroking

Skaters demonstrate their basic stroking skills to music selected by the host rink.

Judging Criteria: Cleanliness of edges, endurance, flexible skating knee and flow, free leg extension, proper push-offs, posture, and rhythm.

(4) Compulsories -- Solo or Team

Skaters perform three required maneuvers (for solo) or all of the required maneuvers (for teams) for their level. Solo events limit the skaters to the three required maneuvers and there is no music; Team events permit additional maneuvers and music.

Judging Criteria: Correctness of the maneuvers (solo & team), pattern, rhythm, team posture & presentation, duration (team).

(5) Artistic (Freestyle levels, only)

The emphasis is on strong edges, flow, choreography, innovative moves, and music interpretation. Technical maneuvers are not required or judged.

(6) Footwork

Skaters perform footwork sequences to music.

Judging Criteria: Variety of turns and sequences, presentation and posture, pattern, continuity and flow, music interpretation, originality/creativity, duration.

(7) Dance - solo or with partner

Skaters perform the compulsory dances for the highest level they have passed. Judging Criteria: Correctness, timing, interpretation, pattern, position and unison (with partner), and posture.

(8) Interpretive

Skaters listen to music selected by the host rink while they mentally choreograph a routine to it, then they perform it. Emphasis is on the choreography, not the maneuvers. Judging Criteria: Correctness, creativity, music interpretation, artistic impression, posture and carriage, choreography and pattern.

(9) Jump & Spin

Teams of 2 or 4 skaters perform their choice of a required jump and a required spin for their level. No music. Judging Criteria: Correctness of the jump/spin.

(10) Rhythmic

Skaters use one of three handheld props -- ball, hoop or ribbon -- in a choreographed program to music.

Judging Criteria: Music and choreography, use of prop, pattern, duration, and judge appeal.

(11) Open Events -- Freestyle, Pairs

There are no required maneuvers. Skaters must perform a well-balanced routine featuring jumps, spins, footwork, and gliding moves. Judging Criteria: Correctness of jumps, spins, turns and edges, variety of moves, presentation, music interpretation, choreography and pattern, duration, and posture.

(12) Team Events, i.e., Synchronized, Ensemble (group spotlight for 3-7 skaters), Production Numbers

A NOTE ABOUT POSTURE

Notice how often "posture" is listed as one of the judging criteria? Even a high and fully rotated jump can be ruined by poor posture on the landing. A great arabesque is not so great if the toe is not pointed. Basic posture rules: Head up, back straight, arms out, palms down, knees and ankles bent, free leg extended, and toe pointed.

COMPETITION EXPENSES

Competition expenses include event fees paid to the host rink, the coaches/judges fee paid to the Ice Chalet, plus travel and lodging costs. The Ice Chalet Skating Club of Knoxville often holds fundraisers to help with team expenses for some out-of-town competitions.

◆ AT THE COMPETITION

COACHING AND JUDGING DUTIES; TEAM COACHING APPROACH

Coaches are required to serve as judges at ISI competitions, so they may not be available to put their own skaters on the ice for each event. We coach as a team, and we make every effort to ensure that at least one of our coaches is in the chaperone area for our skaters as they compete.

Parents -- Please Sit Back and Enjoy!

Note that the chaperone area is reserved for coaches and students. *Please allow your child to focus on the directions being given by the coach/es. Giving instructions from the stands or rinkside can be confusing for the skater and very distracting to others.* If we have done our job properly, the skater should know their program. They just need a reassuring smile and supportive shoulder or hug, and we will do our best to make sure that younger skaters have a coach rinkside for moral support.

“If you can meet with Triumph and Disaster and treat those two impos-
ters just the same.... yours is the
Earth and everything that’s in it.”

-- *Rudyard Kipling*

Smaller Competitions

At smaller out-of-town competitions, we may only be able to send one or two coaches, but that person will be well-qualified to coach all of the skaters participating in that competition. Our coaches are experienced enough to know what the judges are looking for, or what might result in a penalty, so please let the team coach do his/her job without interference. Even if that coach is judging, they will get off the judging stand long enough to prepare the younger skaters for their events.

I DID EVERYTHING RIGHT, BUT I STILL LOST!!!

Ultimately, we can’t control the outcome. Even the best prepared student can still place low in the standings. Some judging criteria are subjective, and judges may not agree on the outcome. That’s why there are three judges -- so that only one judge’s opinion will not control the outcome. Also, the judging criteria are divided among the judges on each panel -- one judge may be scoring the waltz jump, and another the dance step sequence, or one judge may have duration and another rhythm.

Even if they are all judging the same element (which varies with different events), judges may have personal preferences for the way a skill is performed above and beyond the minimal testing requirement. For example, in an arabesque, the book only requires that the free foot (the one in the air) must be at least as high as the skating hip (the hip of the leg on the ice). As long as that requirement is met, judges can disagree about whether it’s more important to get the free leg higher or to keep the back and head up. The judging panel for that set of events, the skaters against whom that skater is competing, ice conditions, lighting conditions, sound system clarity, minor variations in skater performance on that particular day, skaters’ posture, and many other issues can affect the outcome.

What if the results don’t seem fair?

Talk to your skater’s coach or the team coach. In extreme cases, if they can’t explain the results, they may consult with the Competition Director. There is a specific procedure for a review of the scores, but it is rarely used because there is usually a hefty fee. Ultimately, the results shouldn’t matter that much if the parent and skater focus on their own performance, and not their placement with regard to other skaters.

GOOD SPORTSMANSHIP: EVERY SKATER IS A WINNER

Focus on the skater doing his or her best, and not the medals, and everyone is a winner! Learning how to handle placing fifth is just as important as learning how to win gracefully. Skaters and their parents represent our team, and we expect them to represent the Ice Chalet team with dignity, compassion, and courtesy.

Value Sportsmanship

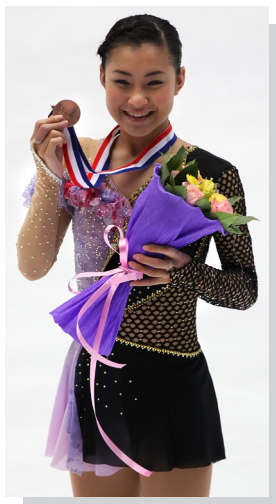
The best skaters in the world achieve more respect for their good sportsmanship than for their technical skills. The way Michelle Kwan handled coming in second to Tara Lipinski in the 1998 Olympics is a prime example. She was favored to win the gold medal, and when she won silver instead, everyone would have understood if she had shown her disappointment or complained about the judging. Michelle smiled and talked about how proud she was of her achievement. As a result, she endeared herself to audiences worldwide. Everyone is a winner if we focus on doing our best, regardless of how the outcome is judged by others.

Teach Your Skater How to Lose & Win With Grace

At competitions, skaters will usually lose some and win some. It’s important to teach your skater that losing is just a way of motivating us to do better next time. If a skater or parent is upset about their placement, use this as a learning experience. What can they do next time to improve their performance? Was it just a matter of nerves? Is there a technique issue? A lack of power? Learn from it! Controlling our emotions (despite our natural disappointment) is a valuable lesson in the path to maturity. Remember those losses when you do win – someone else may be feeling disappointment while you are enjoying your good fortune.

Help Build Leadership and Team Spirit

Each group of new skaters brings its own mix of personalities, quirks, insecurities, fears, jealousies, and friendships. Parents contribute to the mix, too. Eventually, a few skaters show leadership and exhibit a special team spirit that is contagious to the whole group. If students or parents think that one or two skaters are getting favorable treatment or breaking the rules with impunity, jealousy can dissolve the camaraderie that is necessary for true team spirit. The staff places a high value on that camaraderie and would not intentionally do anything to damage it. Ideally, every skater and parent should be cheering on every other skater, putting aside personal differences for the sake of the team. Any concerns should be brought to the attention of the skating school director, not gossiped about in the lobby or even at home. **Your child listens to what you say;** they may repeat it to their teammates without understanding that their actions are a detriment to the team.



*Good
Sportsmanship
Looks Good
On You!*

*Can you tell she
placed third?*

TIPS

Grooming Tips

Skaters should be neatly groomed and dressed. Do not allow hair to fall loosely; we suggest a ponytail, braid, or bun. Tuck laces in to the top of the boot or under tights -- do not let them dangle like spaghetti! Do not wear baggy clothing that obscures the body. Be sure that underwear doesn't show under skirts (snowing) and that straps don't show. For over-the-boot tights, be sure that they are secured and not riding up around your boots. Go easy on the make-up. Minimize or omit jewelry -- they can get in the way or fall off during competition, creating a hazard.

What If You Forget Your Program?

If you stop during the first few seconds of your program, you can re-start your program without a penalty. Make sure the judges understand that you would like to start again.

What If You Fall?

If you fall, get back up as quickly as possible and continue skating your program. A fall is *not* a disaster! It may not affect the scores as much as you might imagine. Skaters are allowed to attempt a maneuver again. We believe this is an important "life lesson" for our skaters: what matters most is that the skater gets back up and completes the program (as long as the skater is not hurt, of course).

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CODE OF CONDUCT

The Ice Chalet is committed to ensuring that all skaters have the opportunity to participate in a safe and welcoming environment that is encouraging and promotes their overall development. This includes a standard of behavior that is expected when our team competes out of town as well as at home. Skating parents, guardians, and skaters will abide by the following code:

- **I will conduct myself in a responsible manner consistent with the values of fair play, integrity, open communication, and mutual respect.**
- **I will be positive and friendly at every opportunity.** This means to support all skaters and coaches from our rink as well as other rinks. Congratulate fellow competitors and applaud the accomplishments of other teams as well as our own.
- **Doing my best is more important than winning, so I will never feel defeated by the results of a competitive event.** Praise positive accomplishments, even if it's just getting back up from a fall. Learn from mistakes, and always show good sportsmanship. Praise builds self-esteem; jealousy destroys it. I will place the desire to do my best ahead of the desire to win.
- **I will treat all skaters, coaches, parents, rink employees, and skating officials and their property with dignity, courtesy, and respect.**
- **I will encourage my child to skate in a safe and healthy environment.**
- **I will be a positive role model.** Refrain from any behavior or comments that are profane, insulting, harassing, sexist, racist, abusive, disrespectful, or otherwise offensive.
- **I will follow the rules set by the Ice Chalet or the host facility.** Keep the ice facility clean, and always pay for ice time, classes, practices, and private lessons.
- **I will appreciate all volunteers.** There are some people who work really hard to make each skating club and rink work. If at all possible, help when you are asked to volunteer.
- **Parents are asked to focus on parenting, not coaching.** Teaching from the rail may cause unnecessary conflict. Let your coach do the coaching. Trust your coach and/or the team coach to do his or her job. Your team will do their best to provide coaches when needed. At competitions, coaches work as a team because they often need to serve as judges and cannot control individual schedules.
- **I will never encourage another skater to leave his or her existing coach.** Soliciting for any coach is not acceptable. Discuss any intention to change coaches or to add additional coaches with the existing coach first.
- **I will resolve conflicts with other skaters, parents, coaches, and others privately or bring the issue to the attention of the team coach, skating school director, or rink manager.** Don't take part in gossip or spread rumors. Help us build team spirit, not break it down.
- **I will smile when I'm at the rink or at a competition or event!** Be friendly and help those new to figure skating. Make a new friend, and support everyone involved in the sport.

Out-of-Town Competition Checklist

What to bring on your trip:

- Extra batteries or chargers and smart cards for camera, camcorder, CDs, etc.
- Your coaches' cell phone numbers
- Maps to rink and motel
- Hotel confirmation numbers
- Medical insurance info
- BACK-UP MUSIC!!!

Prepare for your trip:

- Decide what dresses you will wear. Test any new outfits on home ice for fit, comfort, and safety.
- Know what hairstyle you will use, and practice it at home. Hair should be pulled up away from the face. Make sure that bobby pins will not fall out. It is best to criss-cross two together. Use lots of hairspray and gel.
- Get lots of sleep, and eat healthy foods.
- Notify school if days off are required.
- Make hotel reservations early.
- Schedule practice ice as soon as it's available for purchase. Some sessions fill quickly. Ask your coach when he/she can attend.
- Polish your skates. Rubbing alcohol will remove marks, and skate tape covers gouges.
- Good communication with your coach is priceless!
Talk about your expectations, where to meet, practice ice, costumes, concerns, etc.

What to bring for the locker room:

- The skates -- both of them!
- Dress (pants/shirt if male) and back up dress in case of rips, stains, etc.
- Competition tights (plus a back up pair).
- Practice dress and tights (pants/shirt) for practice.
- Other costumes and/or props if applicable.
- Matching scrunchies, hair accessories, etc.
- Hair ties, bobbie pins, hair spray, glitter, gel, brush, curling iron, hot rollers.
- Make up, if desired.
- Warm up jacket, gloves.
- Blade guards.
- Medications, inhaler, cough syrup, etc.
- Spare laces.
- Hand soap, tissues, hand sanitizer, toilet paper.
- Clothes to wear after competing or going home.
- Water and possibly a snack.
- Your sense of humor and adventure!

Emergency kit, which may include:

- A small sewing kit.
- Pre-glued velcro for last-minute costume fixes.
- Extra skate laces.
- Rubber bands.
- Band-aids or other OTC meds.

What to expect to spend/prepare for:

- Lodging and gas.
- Money for concessions and meals on the road.
- Videos of your skater's programs.
(In some cases you must register in advance.)
- Action photography.
- Commemorative t-shirt; vendors' special wares.

When you arrive:

- Go to registration and check in.
Turn in your music and ask if there are locker room assignments. You may want to buy a program.
- If there are multiple rinks know their names and where you will skate. Locate bathrooms.
- Arrive AT LEAST 1 hour before your 1st event.
- Check in with the ice monitor, ask if they are running ahead/behind schedule.
- Find the area where the results will be posted.
- Make sure you have your back-up music handy.

Miscellaneous....

When ever possible try to watch your fellow skaters and cheer them on, and try to make new friends. Realize that your coach may have a very tight schedule. If there are multiple rinks, your he/she may need to be in two places at one time and may need to serve on a judging panel. Usually another team coach is available to put your skater on the ice. Before you leave, go back to registration and pick up your music.

It's up to you to set the proper tone for the competition. Not every event will be your skater's best skate, but it can always be fun. Set a personal goal other than the outcome of the competition, such as a number of revolutions in a spin or great posture -- something that will help the skater feel good about his/her skate, regardless of the placement!