

Encouraging a Skater Who Does Not Pass

It won't always be possible to pass a level in skating every step along the way. Some levels will require more time and practice to master. Learn to Skate USA is built on a step-by-step skill progression. If you haven't mastered the prior skills, then it will become a future frustration in learning more challenging skills. For example, a forward outside three-turn is taught in Basic 4. A three-turn is comprised of three different fundamental skills:

1. Forward one-foot glide in Basic 2
2. Two-foot turn in Basic 2
3. Backward one-foot glide in Basic 3

If you haven't mastered balancing on one foot both forward and backward on the left and right feet, then learning a three-turn will be extremely difficult.

Every skating move has a prescribed passing standard. You should know what is expected before evaluation time (i.e., a one-foot glide needs to be held three times your height in a balanced position to be considered passing). Your instructor should be giving feedback every class about what you are doing well and what you need to improve.

If at any time you are not sure about the passing standard, ask your class instructor for more information.

There are three phases when learning new skills; introductory (skill is just introduced to the skater), developmental (skill is getting better and stronger), and mastery

(skater can perform skill 8 out of 10 times). Evaluations to move up to the next level should be done when skills are at mastery.

Many programs also give mid-session report cards, so you have a written record of your progress. An evaluation should never be scary or frightening. This is an opportunity for you to show off your newly acquired skating skills that you learned in class. If you don't feel ready on evaluation day, you can postpone for a short time so you can feel more confident and better prepared.

Other ways to enhance your skills are to attend public skating sessions or open practice times, practice the skills off-ice or ask an instructor for a supplemental 15-20 minute private lesson to help you. A rule of thumb that I have always used for private lessons is a three to one ratio. For every private lesson, practice three times. However, make sure you know what you are striving toward so this is considered deliberate practice and not creating bad habits by making the same mistakes over and over.

Both you and your instructor can turn a "needs improvement" on your skating report card into a positive experience by allowing you to know what exactly you can do for next evaluation time. Schedule an evaluation again as soon as you are ready. Remember to be proud of yourself for giving a solid effort. Victory is sweeter when you worked hard to achieve it.

