

Your First Speedskating Race

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Welcome to Shorttrack Racing



Although a skater may become involved in the sport of speedskating for fun or to improve skating skills, they may eventually want to put those skills to the test in a competition. As a parent suddenly confronted with the situation of entering your child in a competition, the following may offer some help. Our club is a teaching club and a competing club. Most youngsters look forward to racing against other children. We strongly encourage this for several reasons.

First, meets allow kids to measure themselves against other youngsters. This usually results in our skaters working harder to improve their skating skills. Secondly, meets are fun. They can be used as a reward for working at practice during the week. There is a sense of adventure in traveling to a big meet and to interact with other kids. This of course means time and expense on the parent's part. This can become an excellent source of quality family time spent with your children.

We realize that some youngsters may be afraid to enter competitions. That is always a concern and we never want to push anyone into doing what they don't want to do. We also realize that there are times when you as a parent will not be able to get your child to a meet.

We will do whatever we can to car pool so everyone that wants to go to a meet can do so. We will insure there are responsible chaperones. So, now that you (or your child) have decided to race, what steps do you need to take? What needs to be done?

Racing Memberships

It is always in your best interest to be a member of a speedskating club. There are many benefits to being a member of a club; Organized training, coaching, access to specialized equipment, and most importantly, camaraderie and team spirit. Skaters that are not members of a club are assessed higher entry fees for race registration.

In order to compete beyond the novice category you need to be a member of [US Speedskating](http://www.us-speedskating.org). This membership is required and must be obtained in advance. These minimal fees take care of your liability insurance and help support our skate programs at all levels. See the club president for this paperwork. When you fill out the race registration form (see below) you will be asked for your US Speedskating membership number.

General

When you enter a competition, you'll be placed in races with skaters of similar age and ability. Whether you're a novice skater or an experienced one, racing offers the opportunity to test yourself against others and to push your own limits. Most of all, it's a chance to go fast! Typically, in the course of a days competition, you can expect to skate in at least three or four races. At larger multi-day events you might even skate up to skate 6 – 12 times.

Race Registration and Entry Forms

Several weeks before the meet in which you plan to race, print out the entry form from the US Speedskating website. The competition schedule on the club website provides links to each upcoming race. Fill out the form and mail it, along with the entry fee, to the meet director (whose address will be indicated on the form) well before the entry deadline. One of the club coaches can help with any questions you might have about the registration form. Typical questions about the registration form include: What is my club? (IndySpeed); What is my association? (direct); what is a USS # ? (US Speedskating member number, see above); what is my racing age? (your age on July 1st, before the ice season started).

The Night Before

The night before the event, the skater should sharpen their skates. They should also make sure that all bolts are tight. Look for worn parts that might be a problem. Check the laces for wear and replace if needed. Be sure to check the blades for rock and bend. These things should be checked periodically, but especially before competition. You should not make any major changes to equipment the night before a race. Instead, you are trying to ensure that there will be no equipment failures during race day.

Pack your gear and include the following items:

Racing Checklist

MUST-HAVE ITEMS

- Skates (sharpened the night before)
- Skate guards and/or soakers.
- Skate towel.
- Safety Gear (Gloves, helmet, knee pads, shin guards, neck guard)
- Skin suit or racing uniform. If you have an extra, bring it.
- Warm-ups - if you have zippered or snapped warm-up pants bring those.
- Hat and jacket.....the rink is colder than you think, and you will be out in the cold for several hours.
- Snack foods and drinks. Keep junk food to a minimum. Choose foods that are easy to digest and give you energy. The rink will probably have some sort of snack bar, but bring something in case. Power bars or Multigrain bars are good for between races.

OPTIONAL, NICE-TO-HAVE ITEMS

- Make a copy of your registration and check, and bring it with you.
- Have your US Speedskating card information.
- Hairdryer....in case you get wet and only have one suit.
- Sharpening equipment (jig, stones, oil, etc...).
- Spare skate laces.
- Tools for blades.
- Safety Pins
- Ink pen & Highlighter
- Sport / Safety glasses

Race Scoring, Classes, Heats and Points:

At most meets everyone gets to skate in at least 3 and sometimes 4 or 5 final races. If the number of skaters in a class (division) is more than 5 or 6, they usually split a class into heats. That means they divide the class in half and run two races picking the top 2-3 skaters from each "heat" to skate in the "final." Making it to the finals will mean the skater has to skate in twice the number of races...which is cool since that is what we are here to do anyway. That is one reason we like to get lots of kids to the meets so we have more races.

Points are earned in the final event for each distance, and no points are scored in the heats. In theory you could win the heat and still score no points in the final. For each final race the points are awarded as follows: The most common method uses the following: First place gets 1000 points, second gets 600, third gets 400, and fourth gets 250 points, etc.. Continuing down to 10th place and 60 points. At the end of the day, the overall winner is the one with the most total points. To avoid a lot of ties, there usually is a race designated as the "tie breaker" race. Pay attention to the race program to see which race is designated that way. In the event of a tie in points, the skater doing the best in that race wins the higher place.

When races are run with heats, the top finishers in the heats continue to the final. Imagine a race with two heats of four skaters. Typically the two fastest skaters advance from the heats to the final. This traditionally puts the four fast skaters in the final, and the four slower skaters are done for that distance, as they did not make the final.

Sometimes a race is run in **ALL-POINTS** format. In the All-Points format, the skaters that did not make the final compete against each other in a race called the **B FINAL**. The final for racers that did make the final is now called the **A-Final**. Sometimes this is confusing, since in the all-points format, a skater in the Open A class could be in the B-Final, and a skater in the Pony B race could have an A-Final.

RACE DAY:

You should not eat a heavy breakfast on race day. Eat a mixture of protein and complex carbohydrates. Nibble on snacks often as the day progresses. You might like scrambled eggs with salsa for breakfast, but salsa is probably not a good idea on race day. You may find that some foods disagree with you. If this happens, write these foods in your training diary to help prevent eating them in the future. The cold air of the ice rink is extra dry, and will dry out your throat and lungs. Drink sips often to stay well-hydrated. Sipping energy drinks are ok, and try to avoid carbonated drinks.

Arrive early, at least an hour before warm-up starts so you can check in at the main registration table and make sure they have you properly entered in the race. Mistakes are made at times and it is best to get them taken care of right away.

One of the things you will get at registration is your racing number. Number will be in one of 3 styles:

1) A helmet bib, 2) a number bib (vest) ,or 3) a pin-on number. It is common to charge a \$10 deposit on the helmet bibs and vests. When the competition is over, return you number to registration to get your deposit back. If you are a small skater, your number bib may be too big, and flap in the breeze. Use safety pins to get a more snug fit.

Keep in mind that changes are frequently made in the schedule. Sometimes groups are combined, meaning that you may not have as much time between races as you think. It is your responsibility to be ready to race when the time comes. They will not hold up the races because you are in the rest room or you don't have your skates on. Plan ahead and listen for announcements.

Make sure that you pick up a copy of the schedule when you are at the registration table. The Schedule should look something like what is listed below. Use the highlighter that you brought with you to mark your events. If you have other teammates that are racing, write their names on the sheet as well. Notice that even though Alex skates in event #8, several races have been combined, and he is in the second race of the day.

INDY SPEED SKATING CHALLENGE				
Event #	Combined Event	Class & Division		Distance
1	.Skates With Event 4	Tiny Tot (5 & 6)	Ladies	111
2	.Skates With Event 4	Tiny Tot (5 & 6)	Men	111
3	.Skates With Event 4	Pee Wee B (7 & 8)	Ladies	111
4	.Skates With Event 4	Pee Wee B (7 & 8)	Men	111
5	.Skates With Event 8	Pony B (9 & 10)	Ladies	222
6	.Skates With Event 8	Pony B (9 & 10)	Men	222
7	.Skates With Event 8	Pee Wee A (7 & 8)	Ladies	222
8	.Skates With Event 8	Pee Wee A (7 & 8)	Men	222
9	.Skates With Event 10	Pony A (9 & 10)	Ladies	333
10	.Skates With Event 10	Pony A (9 & 10)	Men	333
11	.Skates With Event 12	Midget B (11 & 12)	Ladies	333
12	.Skates With Event 12	Midget B (11 & 12)	Men	333
13	.Skates With Event 14	Midget A (11 & 12)	Ladies	500
14	.Skates With Event 14	Midget A (11 & 12)	Men	500
15	.Skates With Event 16	Juvenile B (13 & 14)	Ladies	500
16	.Skates With Event 16	Juvenile B (13 & 14)	Men	500
17	.Skates With Event 18	Special Needs A	Ladies	500
18	.Skates With Event 18	Special Needs A	Men	500
19	.Skates With Event 20	Master B (30+)	Ladies	500
20	.Skates With Event 20	Master B (30+)	Men	500

Alex

Find out when warm-ups begin, and where your club is setting up, or what locker room you will have. If you are in the area of the rink, you may be out in the cold for 4 – 7 hours. If this is the case, it is important to retain heat. Remember that you are slowly giving away stored energy and body heat. You may be tempted to not wear a jacket when the rink is 60 degrees, but 4 hours from now you will be shivering, and it will be too late to easily warm up. Consider looking for an area of the rink that is heated, such as locker rooms or the lobby, where you can hear the race announcer.

The Group Warm-up

Check the race schedule for the time of your age group's ice warm-up. Be ready to go on the ice at that time. Often-times, the warm-up will only be 10 - 15 minutes, so it is really important to be ready to go for the warm-up. Jog, jump, stretch, or dry-land, whatever is your warm-up routine, you need to be warmed up and ready for the group warm-up. The warm-up is short, so it is important to have skates on and be ready to get on the ice promptly at warm-up time.

The warm-up is short, so it is important to be prompt with your warm-up tasks and not dawdle. Remember that this is not a workout or training session. The warm-up is provided to help you: loosen up from the drive, get the feel of the local ice, and warm up your skating muscles. The warm-up is not a race, so do not do anything exhausting.

Warm-up the same way that we start each skating session, by doing some easy laps, power accels, frequency accels, "J"-drills, "H"-drills, some practice starts, and finally a few easy, warm-down laps. Remember that all of this warm-up needs to be completed in about 10 minutes.

Between Races:

After the warm-up and once racing has begun, pay close attention to the race schedule which should be posted (but try and get a copy to have nearby). This will let you know when to get ready for your race. Keep your warm-ups on until your heat is called to the ice. Do not let your muscles get cold. Jog, jump, stretch, or dry-land; whatever your routine is, to keep your muscles warm for the next race. Remember to sip and nibble throughout the day.

Let the coaches know when you are racing so they will be ready. The coaches are usually on the side of the rink in an area called the coaches box. They can talk strategy with you and you will want to listen for their tips during the race.

You should start to get things together and head to the race staging area about 15 - 20 minutes before your race. You may also hear an announcement calling you to the heat box, around this time as well.

The Heat Box:

Before each of your races, you and your competitors will be called to the "heat box". This is the staging area for the skaters and it is located near the entrance to the ice. Make sure to notice where the heat box is located. This is the area where each race waits before going onto the ice.

Look at the schedule and listen for announcements as to when you need to be in this area. Remember that if you are in a large class that will have heats, your heats are the first events to be run even if the schedule shows that your race isn't scheduled until a later part of the program. They do this to insure that the skaters have a rest period between skating in their heat and skating in the final.

When your class is called to the heat box, be seated on the benches and listen to the instructions given by the heat box official. They will have you draw for starting positions on the start line. Normally you will pick a number for your position on the line or be assigned your position on the start line. Position #1 is nearest the center of the rink, and position #7 is closest to the rink wall.



Skaters wearing helmet bibs wait in the heatbox. The Clerks are wearing light-blue jackets.

The heat box official will write this starting information on a card and usually give it to the skater that draws starting position #1. This skater will hang onto the card, and take it onto the ice with them, then give the card to the starter just before being called to the line. The heat box official will usually want to have about four to six classes of skaters sitting on the benches. This is so that races will happen promptly. This also means that you may be sitting for 10 – 20 minutes before you go onto the ice. Stay bundled up, keeping your body & muscles warm. Some skaters take blankets to the heatbox, to help stay warm. While waiting in the heat box, watch the starter. Each one has different habits and different timing. Try to learn these habits.

When it is about 2-3 minutes before your race goes onto the ice, the heat box official will tell you to get ready. Take off your warm-ups, and blade guards. Put them under your seat, so that you can get them after your race. Sometimes there will be a box for you to put your gear into. Do some leg squats to help warm-up your legs. Put on your helmet and gloves before going onto the ice.

Pre-Race

The door to the ice is kept closed for safety reasons. Wait for your race to be called onto the rink. At that time, the door will be opened for the race that has just finished, for those skaters to leave the ice, and for your race to enter the ice. Congratulate any teammates that may be leaving the ice as you enter.

Try to get onto the ice before the exiting skaters come through the door. If you can do this, you will get an extra 30 seconds of ice before you are called to the starting line. This is enough time to skate a lap or two. If you are the last skater in your race to get onto the ice, you will not have this opportunity, and will need to go straight to the starting line.

Ice is a very expensive commodity and your group will be called to the starting line rather quickly. The starter can give you a warning or disqualification for delaying the start of the race, so be prompt getting to the starting line. The group is called to the starting line, and the skater with the heat card gives it to the starter. The starter checks the card to make sure everyone is in the right lane, and that there are no missing skaters. Once the starter confirms that the judges & timers are ready, the race is ready to start.

As you approach the start, you should already have thought about what kind of start you need to have. For shorter distances the start is very important. The skater needs to work extra hard to be the first one to leave the starting line, as well as be the first skater through the first turn. For longer races it is ok to be the second or third skater off of the line, realizing that you will need time to pass later in the race.

The Start

The start should be familiar to everyone. The big difference at a race is that a pistol is used to start the race, instead of a whistle. This can often make a skater nervous, or fearful of the starter's pistol. Often it is helpful to think to yourself: "Go with the gun, go with the gun". Oftentimes a skater will think to themselves: "Wait for the gun", which slows down their start.

The commands are given the same as in practice. Remember that you can be given a warning or false start for any of the following reasons:

- Taking too long to get to the starting line.
- Allowing your blade to touch or cross the starting line before the gun goes off.
- Starting to race before the gun goes off.
- Getting into your crouch too slowly after the ready command.
- Not posing perfectly still after getting into your crouch.



Waiting for the gun . . . **BANG!**

Every skater is allowed 1 warning or false start. On your second warning or false start, you are disqualified from the race. After the start, a double pistol shot stops the race and brings it back to the start.

Restarts

As mentioned above, a race may be restarted if the starter decides to do so. There are only 2 situations where a starter may consider this:

- 1) During the start, and before the apex marker, if a skater is interfered with AND falls, the starter may restart the race. Notice, that the starter is not obligated to restart the race.
- 2) After the start, and during the race, if a skater falls and is unable to continue racing, for safety reasons the race can be stopped. Once the fallen skater is removed from the ice, the race is restarted. The fallen skater that caused the stoppage is not allowed to restart the race.

The Race

When the race begins, there are two important components to the start: First, is that you want to be the first skater to the first block. You need to work hard, and not back down. If you start on the far outside, you need to move left as you run towards the first block.

The fastest track is one that is close to the blocks, and away from the wall. Pick a racing line that is close to the blocks, especially in the turns.

Next is to remember that the start is an attack that lasts at least one-half lap. During this time you need to charge hard and not back down, losing momentum. If you enter the turn side-by-side with another skater, continue to accelerate alongside that skater, rather than backing down to fall into line. If you get to the first block, and yield six inches to the skater alongside of you in the start, you will need to work an extra five feet, plus perform a pass to get back those six inches you gave away at the start of the race. In the excitement of the race it is easy to get carried away with the competition. You need to be working at your racing, but you also need to be focused enough to be able to think about what is going on around you.

As the race continues, you may get touched, bumped, pushed, shoved, or even tripped. This is normal, especially during the start. Usually these things are not intentional. You need to protect your personal space by not backing down, or changing your line. However, do not push back if bumped or shoved. Racing rules state that you are "in the right" when you hold your line, and maintain your pace.

When passing, remember that the front skater has the right of way. To perform a "clean pass" you will need enough speed to create an extra 6 feet of space in about half a lap, going from 3 feet behind, to 3 feet in front of the skater you are passing. Passes take a least a lap to set up, so take your time, and think about what needs to be done.

Falling happens more frequently during racing. Skaters are nervous, on unfamiliar ice, with competitors around them. Add to that, the desire to go as fast as possible. Falling usually happens for one of several reasons: First, you rushed too quickly to do a pass. Skating at 100% leaves no room to think: Slowing down slightly will give you some "free space" to think.

A second reason for falling is that you are out of position. We talk all the time about the hip being in, not being on our toes or pushing back, and keeping a low base position. At race speeds, any and all of these skill flaws can cause a skater to lose balance and fall. If you start to feel that you are losing your balance, **GET LOW!** And try to return to a low, base position.

And finally, skaters fall because of the unexpected: Hitting a track marker or rut in the ice, or trying to avoid other skaters that are out of position. This is similar to above, except that the actions of another skater cause you to "break your rhythm" or lose concentration. Having good position helps prevent this type of fall. Part of avoiding others is a confidence issue. Another consideration is to realize that since shorttrack is all left turns, whenever there is a fall, you should try to pass the fall on the left, since in most cases skaters will slide to the right after they fall.

A speedskating race has lots of water on the track, to help the ice heal more quickly and to make the ice faster to skate on. If you are in the middle or back of your group during your race, you may get ice chips or water splashed onto you. Because of this, many skaters wear safety glasses to keep the water out of their eyes.

The Finish

The finish of the race is determined by when your ice blade crosses the line, not your body, or arms, etc...

At the finish of the race, you are not allowed to throw your body across the line, or to kick either of your skates into the air. If you do these things, you can get disqualified. Your blades need to stay on the ice, or in normal skating motion as you cross the finish line.

Once you cross the finish line, stand up as you coast around the rink. This lets the officials see your number, allowing them to write it down, in case they could not read it during the finish.



The proper way to finish. Do not “kick out” your skates.

When your race is over, leave the ice quickly so that the next group can enter the ice and start their race. Put on your skate guards and warm-ups so that you do not lose heat.

Be aware of the schedule. Your next race may be twenty to sixty minutes away. You need to know if you have time to take skates off, if you have time for a snack, or time for a restroom break. Be very aware of the schedule.

Remember to wipe down your blades with your skate towel.

PENALTIES:

False Start: A skater is permitted one false start. If the same skater false starts a second time, they are disqualified. A skater can receive a false start for:

Taking too long to get to the starting line.

Allowing your blade to touch or cross the starting line before the gun goes off.

Starting to race before the gun goes off.

Getting into your starting crouch too slowly after the ready command.

Not posing perfectly still after getting into your crouch.

Un-sportsmanlike Conduct: Acting in a manor not befitting an athlete or role model. This includes swearing at other competitors or officials, kicking your feet, striking other skaters or officials etc.

Equipment: Not wearing the proper safety equipment, losing or removing equipment during the race, or exposure of skin other than on the face or neck.

DISQUALIFICATIONS:

Impeding: Pushing, blocking, or causing an impediment for another skater.

Off Track: Skating with one or both skates on the left side of the curve, marked by track marking blocks.

Cross Tracking: Deliberately cutting in front of a competitor who is attempting to pass.

Team Skating: Conspiring with others to determine the race result. This does not apply to relay races.

Kicking Out: Raising a foot while trying to reach the finish line faster, creating a dangerous situation.

Assistance: Giving and/or receiving assistance during a race. This includes touching / grabbing the wall for balance, support, or to use the wall to rise up from a fall. This does not apply to teammates in a relay race.

RACE RESULTS:

As the races are run, there will be an area where results are posted. It normally takes about 20 - 30 minutes to post results, so do not worry if you do not see them right away. If you are not sure if you made it to a final of a heat, ask the heat box official. If there is an error in the posting, point it out to your coach.

The officials at our meets are all volunteers that do their very best to insure a fair race. Sometimes they make mistakes. They never intentionally make a mistake. Errors in interpretation of the rules should be brought to the attention of your coach. Let your coach know what the mistake is, and let them speak with the officials on your behalf.

At the end of the day, the awards are given out. Normally there is an area just for the awards. Sometimes awards will trickle out, as the officials finish the paperwork, but usually they are all done together at the end of the competition. From the time of your last race, until the awards ceremony is typically 30 – 60 minutes. When your last race is complete, you usually have time to change clothes, pack your gear, and to take it to your car before the awards ceremony. If you have a deposit on your number bib, return it now, getting your deposit back. Remember to dress appropriately for the awards, have a neat appearance, and wear your team uniform.

RESULTS, EXPECTATIONS, MORAL SUPPORT AND SETTING GOALS:

Many skaters are nervous and anxious at their first race, as well as being excited at the same time. They may have difficulty focusing. Try to calm your skater.

It is common for a new skater to fall at their first competition. Often this is from trying too hard, or by not relaxing. Remind the skater that good form with power will produce positive results.

Sometimes a concern of new skaters is their perceived expectation placed on them by their coach or parents. Many children are afraid to compete because they may equate winning with love / acceptance on the parent's or coaches part. It needs to be made clear that the coaches are still going to like that skater the exact same amount whether they finish first or last; or whether they race or not.

Many youngsters know they are not going to win a race. Some may actually never win a race. Setting realistic goals can be a way for every child to "win." Before going to a meet, discuss with your child what goals he or she has set for themselves. It can be anything from staying on their feet for the entire race, or taking a few seconds off their best time, or simply trying as hard as they can. Set specific goals and then review them after the day is done to see how they did and where they can improve.

