

With your child's first skating lesson just around the corner, here are some helpful hints to make your first taste of ice-skating a positive and memorable experience.

Ready to wear! What players wear under their equipment is a personal preference. Long pants and long sleeve shirt are great in the beginning when they spend a lot of time on the ice and when the skater isn't moving around much. However, it may be too hot as they advance in skating ability. Socks are a must have, especially for rental skates. **All** first time skaters will be spending time sitting, kneeling and/or crawling on the ice so all bare skin should be covered until your child gets used to the cold, wet ice! Your child's instructor will teach them the proper way to fall and get up but slips do happen from time to time. If your child does fall, **Do Not Enter** the ice in your shoes. Your slip will probably be worse than your child's. Remember, when your child falls it is more of a scare and given time to rest, they will be ready to join their class again!

Personal Space! While some skaters may dress at home, others will use the designated locker rooms for changing. Cell phones and cameras are **NOT ALLOWED. NO EXCEPTIONS!** Pictures can be taken off-ice near the entrance to the ice surface.

A stitch in time! Get to the rink 20-25 minutes early on the first day of class. Be prepared to try on several pairs of skates. The correct skate size will guarantee your child's success on the ice. Arena staff will be on hand to help you with your skates. A proper fitting boot should be as snug as possible without "smooshing" the toes. You should be able to fit no more than one finger behind your child's heel. Please remember that we have many first time skaters so please use the locker rooms to put skates on. The skate counter is not intended for this.

Tied up in knots! Skates should be tied-up tight around the ankle and then a little looser as you move up the boot. The top eyelet is tied snug enough to not allow a finger under it but not so tight that the blood supply is constricted to the foot (it will fall asleep). With correct sizing and lace tightening your child should be able to stand up on the floor **without** the skates falling to the outside or inside. If the boot and blade are not straight up and down something **is not right**. Usually this indicates a boot that is too big.

Ouch...the hurts! Be prepared for complaints from your child about their feet hurting. New boots are **not** comfortable and as long as the fit is correct, the pain will mostly go away on the ice! Don't be fooled by getting a pair of skates that are too big, which makes them less painful in the short term, but more painful in the long run. This is not good for the child's feet or their skating.

Absence does not make the ice grow fonder! The first two weeks of your child's skating classes are without a doubt the most important. Being late to class is disruptive to all skaters and puts your child at a disadvantage. Please have your child ready to skate at the beginning of every class.

Car 54-where are you? Each class will meet their instructor **off the ice** for the first two weeks. Signs will be designated where each class will meet. Off-ice time can take 5-10 minutes depending on the skaters' ages. **Please be patient** with off-ice instruction, it is needed to help build the trust and confidence your child will need to step onto the ice! After a week or two (at the instructors discretion) all classes will meet directly on the ice in a pre-designated area.

Look, but don't touch! As a parent, your joy of skating will be when you watch your child accomplish one new skating maneuver after another. Please enjoy! But remember not to compete with the instructor for your child's attention. You should be visible to your child **but not accessible** to them. Tot parents, should your child begin to cry and cannot be consoled by the instructor, they will be brought back to you for reassurance and positive reinforcement. Don't force them to rejoin the class until **they** are ready. This behavior will soon pass in most cases and eventually it will be impossible to get them **off** the ice!

Time out! Class instructors will not tolerate bad behavior by any skater. Although a very rare occurrence, skaters will be sent off the ice if their behavior disrupts the class. Normally, logic and a quick reprimand are all that are needed, (followed by positive reinforcement for behaving nicely).

Patience is a virtue! With all of our planning at the Saginaw Bay Ice Arena to keep everything smooth and easy for you, sometimes things go wrong. If you experience any difficulties, please let us know and we will address it in the timeliest manner possible. Please be patient. Our goal is not only to provide your child with solid ice skating instruction, but also provide a pleasant and enjoyable experience for you!

I hope this better prepares you for your child's first day of class. Call if you have any additional questions. See you very soon.