Spring 2026 PARENT INFORMATION GUIDE
Pre-CanSkate

Dear Parents and Skaters,

The Thunder Bay Skating Academy is excited to welcome all of our new and returning members of our Learn to Skate Programs. We are excited to spend the next **6 Saturday sessions** (April 25th at FW Gardens; May 9th, 16th, 23rd, June 6th & 13th at Port Arthur Arena - **no skating** on May 2nd & 30th) with you for what we expect to be a very exciting, quick and eventful season.

What can you expect from a typical session?

1) On your first day of skating please enter the rink and **follow the posted signs** to make your way to our hanging name tag boards **located near the entrance to the ice gate** which will contain your skater's **name tag**. The coloured **"star"** on your skater's name tag indicates which group they are in (this is subject to change after our initial assessments on the first day). Our name tag boards also act as "hanging mailboxes" and will be a place to pick up your name tag at the start of **every** session as well as a place to receive notices and reminders as applicable. We ask that you please have the name tag visible on your child's jacket as this will assist us in grouping the skaters. Once you have picked up your skater's name tag you can then proceed to get them ready for the ice by putting their skates & helmets on (you may use available dressing rooms or the stands to get ready).

2) We will begin each session with a **5 minute off-ice warm up**. Please **meet the coach leading the warm up near the entry gates** at each arena. Once the skaters enter the ice surface they will join their groups, as indicated by their coloured star sticker on their name tag and the signs on the ice. Each group is clearly identified by a start marker with the coloured flag. Skaters match their sticker to the flag.

3) Our Pre-Canskate Program is the launch point into our CanSkate (Learn to Skate Program) which is based on circuits. Each group will start in the same place every session and begin the 15 minute "Lesson" segment of the session with their assigned Coach. After the first few weeks (& dependent on progression) groups will start to use more & more of the ice surface until circuits can be implemented.

4) To conclude our session skaters will be involved in a 7 minute **"FUN"** activity or game before heading to the exit gate to have their name tags collected and receive their incentive for the day.This allows skaters of all levels to be a part of the group as a whole and to be able to have time to cool their bodies down prior to leaving the ice.

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Please trust our program. We realize that the first few sessions may seem overwhelming. Please encourage your skater to know their colour and to stay with their group for the most optimal learning.

Here are some tips to make the maximize your sessions:

The goal of the Pre-Canskate session is to ensure that your skater feels comfortable on the ice. It is not meant for the Coach/Program Assistant to always carry around, support, or hold up the skaters for the whole session. Our goal is to eventually have all the skaters achieve independence on the ice.

DOs

- Do celebrate the small successes (falling safely, standing up, balancing on their own)
- Do allow your skater and tell your skater that it is okay to fall
- Do allow your skater to struggle and tell them it's normal & to keep trying their best
- Do encourage your skater to listen to their coaches & follow the circuit (obstacle course) - they have been designed to teach your skater the progressions of the basics of skating. Your skater's circuits will be focusing on the Pre-Canskate level.
- Do explain to your skater that it is ok for the coaches to ask & give them "hands on" assistance - this will help them not only start to feel more comfortable on the ice but also start to become more independent.

DON'Ts

- Don't expect that your skater will be assisted/held up the entire time - it is important to teach them that falling is acceptable and everyone needs to learn how to get up (most skaters struggle with getting up on their own at first, keep encouraging them to try on their own, coaches will help only if needed).
- Parents, please don't stand at the boards (either by the glass or in the player's benches area) - it is important to have the skaters be independent on the ice so that they aren't distracted and will be focused on what the coaches are teaching them.
- Under **NO circumstances are parents allowed onto the ice surface**. Coaches will bring skaters to their parents if the situation warrants.

What do I need to bring?

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When preparing for the first session, it is a good idea to dress in light layers and wear clothing that allows for active movement. Water resistant pants and a jacket on the ice along with waterproof gloves/mittens - **NO** jeans or restrictive snowpants please (wearing bulky or tight fitting clothing can hinder a skater's ability to perform the skills)

****The use of skating training aids/walkers is not permitted**

***please ensure the fabric of the mittens/gloves you choose will not "stick" to the ice surface!**

****Fuzzy mittens/gloves are not permitted as they can stick to the ice leaving strands of the material on the ice making it extremely slippery and unsafe while also causing skaters (& coaches) to slip and fall unnecessarily.**

Please be aware that we do require that all skaters on the ice have on a **CSA approved hockey helmet as well as proper skates**. As per our governing body "Skate Canada" all skaters must wear a CSA approved hockey helmet at all times while on the ice surface. **There are no exceptions**.

Please ensure that your skater has supportive skates to ensure success in our programs. **Single bladed, leather lace up figure or hockey skates are preferred**. Molded skates are not recommended as they are inflexible. Avoid buying a skate too large, poor fitting equipment will cause discomfort. Skates typically fit one size smaller than your shoes. Please make sure the boot does not have any wrinkles. Ensure that your skater can wiggle their toes slightly and that their heels do not lift inside more than ¼ inch. Any excess laces should be tucked in or tied up so that they do not hang loose or drag on the ice.

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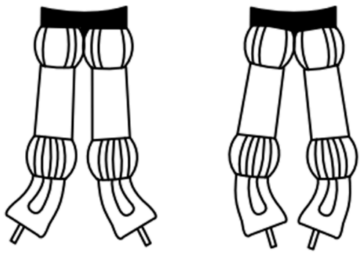
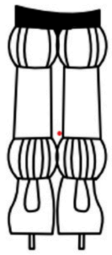


Poorly equipped skater



Properly equipped skater

Equipment Care

To protect the skate blades, hard skate guards should be worn in any area that is not protected by rubber mats. At the end of every class, the blades should be wiped with a dry cloth and protected by blade covers (also known as soft guards) ****DO NOT put the hard guards back onto the blades after drying them as this will cause the blades to rust.** Skates should be sharpened as soon as they are purchased and then every 5-6 weeks thereafter. The bottom pick on figure skates should never be removed during sharpening - the pick is part of the design and is essential to proper balance.

Should you have any questions about skate fit, the proper way to tie your skater's skates or anything else pertaining to your skater's equipment please don't hesitate to speak with the Lead Coach at your arena.

Schedule

Attached in a separate pdf is a complete **ice schedule** for your skater's session. This schedule will include any dates where the ice was not available, time changes, theme days and all other necessary information. These will also be posted on our website under our schedules tab if you misplace this initial copy.

	Pre-Can Skate
Skills Required	• Fall down & get up
	• Balance on 2 feet
	• Move forward
	• Make snow
	• Move backward
	• 2-ft twist
	• 360° march
	• 2-ft jump

Evaluation & Assessment

Skate Canada has an extensive reward system to track your skater's progress. Our Pre-Canskate program focuses on mastering the skills in the PreCanSkate Ribbon before beginning the CanSkate program, which has three strands to each badge level: Agility, Balance and Control (the ABC's of basic skating). Once a skater has achieved all three strands gaining all three colour ribbons, they will receive their Stage Level Badge.

Coaching Staff

All coaches are nationally certified coaches trained specifically in teaching the mechanics and proper technique of skating. They have extensive training by Skate Canada and the Coaching Association of Canada, along with a completed BackCheck and First Aid Training. Each rink is assigned a **Lead Coach** to oversee

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the operations of the rink along with other coaches who run the circuits at each station. Our coaches are clearly visible in a grey Thunder Bay Skating Academy jacket.

Where Can I Get More Information?
Be sure to stay tuned to your emails for news and events. Our website and social media pages are always full of information about upcoming events, time-changes and fundraising initiatives. Check us out at **thunderbayskating.com**, like us on Facebook & follow us on Instagram!

If you have any questions or concerns please don't hesitate to contact us.

Thank you for your interest in Pre-CanSkate, Canada's premier learn-to-skate program.

Yours in skating,

Thunder Bay Skating Academy

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