



U.S. Figure Skating's Guide to Basic Skills and Beginner Synchronized Skating



Basic Skills and Beginner Synchronized Skating

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. WHAT IS BASIC SKILLS/BEGINNER SYNCHRONIZED SKATING?
 - *Basic Skills Synchronized Skating*
 - *Beginner Synchronized Skating Competition Program*
2. WHY SYNCHRONIZED SKATING?
 - *Why the U.S. Figure Skating Basic Skills/Beginner Synchronized Skating Program?*
3. RULES AND PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS
 - *Basic Skills badge requirements*
 - *Beginner team rules and program requirements*
 - *Beginner team program restrictions*
4. FORMING A TEAM
 - *Basic Skills synchronized skating group lessons*
 - *Forming a Beginner team*
 - *Choosing a level*
5. TRANSITIONING INTO STANDARD LEVELS
 - *Preliminary*
 - *Pre-Juvenile*
 - *Open Juvenile*
 - *Rules and Restrictions*
6. FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS
7. BASIC SKILLS/BEGINNER PROGRAMS IN ACTION
 - *Sugarland Ice & Sports*
 - *Synchroettes*
8. RESOURCE GUIDE
 - *Resources for Basic Skills/Beginner Synchronized Skating programs*



WHAT IS BASIC SKILLS/BEGINNER SYNCHRONIZED SKATING?

Basic Skills Synchronized Skating

Designed by U.S. Figure Skating, the Basic Skills Program is a beginning ice skating program that is fun, challenging and rewarding. Participation in the program will enable beginning skaters of all ages and abilities to learn the fundamentals of the sport and begin a lifetime commitment to health and wellness.

The Basic Skills Program synchronized skating curriculum is a fun introduction to the five basic elements:

- Circle • Line • Block • Intersection • Wheel

Skaters can earn badges in Synchro 1-4. A group can consist of six or more skaters to get started. The purpose of this curriculum is to introduce skaters to synchronized skating and to familiarize them with elementary holds, elements and transitions. The curriculum should be used as a teaching tool to give direction and structure to the instructor. The badges can be taught in a group lesson setting, or a beginner team can work on the skills in each level together.

It is not necessary to complete Synchro 1-4 prior to becoming a competitive beginner team. Rather, the beginner levels are a summary of the badges. Coaches can continue to go back to the badge program with their beginner team to perfect and learn new skills.

Beginner Synchronized Skating Competition Program

The beginner competition program is also part of the U.S. Figure Skating Basic Skills program. The beginner competition program is for Basic Skills level skaters who are interested in a first competition or "team" experience, taking the Synchro 1-4 badges a step further. Beginner teams compete at Basic Skills competitions and nonqualifying synchronized skating competitions around the country.

Levels

- Beginner 1: 8 – 16 skaters, the majority of the team under 9 years old
- Beginner 2: 8 – 16 skaters, the majority of the team 9 – 11 years old
- Beginner 3: 8 – 16 skaters, the majority of the team at least 12 years old

It is important for coaches and teams to understand what these levels are and what they are not:

Basic Skills/Beginner Synchronized Skating IS:

1. A place for Basic Skills level skaters to get a taste of what it is like to be on a synchronized team and compete in a skill and age appropriate level at a competition.
2. Part of the U.S. Figure Skating Basic Skills program. Therefore, the rules will not be found in the rulebook. They are found in the competition announcement and on U.S. Figure Skating online.
3. The best way to teach beginner skaters the fundamentals of synchronized skating and the building blocks for skills that they will need when they progress to the standard U.S. Figure Skating competitive program.

Basic Skills/Beginner Synchronized Skating IS NOT:

1. A substitution for preliminary, pre-juvenile or open juvenile.
2. For teams at one of the above levels that feel they want to stay back to be "more competitive"
3. A level that U.S. Figure Skating is considering to include at the Sectional Championships.

WHY SYNCHRONIZED SKATING?

If your club or Basic Skills program doesn't already have a team, here are some of the reasons why now is the time to start one:

1. Synchronized skating is the most popular competitive discipline in the qualifying structure:
 - In recent years, approximately 5,000 skaters on 300 synchronized teams have been participating in U.S. Figure Skating's qualifying competitive system. This represents about 9% of the regular membership. The next most popular discipline was ladies free skating, where just more than 2,000 athletes enter the regional championships annually.
2. Synchronized skating will allow your skaters to experience success and bring recognition to your club
 - Although the competitive structure is often said to be one of the best things about U.S. Figure Skating, a relatively small percentage of members get to experience it. Forming a synchronized team will offer your members a wonderful competitive experience that they may not have otherwise.
 - Approximately one-third of the teams (2,000 athletes on 100 teams) competing at the sectional championships will advance to the U.S. Synchronized Skating Championships.
3. Promotes club loyalty and team spirit
 - Being part of a team that represents your club will create a sense of team spirit and loyalty among your club members. Wearing their team's colors and cheering for teammates is one of the most exciting parts of synchronized skating competitions.
4. Increases business for the arena & club professionals
 - Team members are usually required to take private lessons and practice on their own between team practices to meet skill level requirements. Synchronized skaters are required to take moves in the field tests in order to compete in qualifying competitions. Good synchronized skaters need to be strong in dance, free skating and even pairs. Many of these skaters would have given up the sport if they hadn't joined their team.

Why the U.S. Figure Skating Basic Skills/Beginner Synchronized Skating Program?

The U.S. Figure Skating beginner program is designed to be started from the very beginning, in a group lesson setting. It is the only program to give coaches specific structure and rules to follow, making the playing field completely fair and making it simple for the coach to choreograph a technically sound program. The requirements were specifically designed to give beginner skaters the skills they need to make a simple, seamless and successful transition into standard U.S. Figure Skating synchronized skating levels.

RULES AND PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

1. Basic Skills Synchronized Skating 1-4 Skills

(See U.S. Figure Skating Basic Skills Instructors Manual and Lesson Planning Manual for more information)

LEVEL	CIRCLE	LINE	BLOCK	WHEEL	INTERSECTION	OTHER
SYNCHRO 1	Forward pumps clockwise and counter clockwise	Forward skating, covering the length of the ice, followed by a snowplow stop	Shoulder hold, forward skating, 10 steps in a simple block formation, followed by a snowplow stop	Two-or-four-spoke wheel with backward pumps	(NONE)	Holds: Shoulder-to-shoulder, hand-to-hand
SYNCHRO 2	Containing a transition from forward to backward skating	Forward skating with at least one forward crossover R over L and one L over R	Forward skating including basic steps and turns from Basic 3-6	Four-spoke or two-spoke with backwards skating	One line forward intersection	Transition: Wheel to circle
SYNCHRO 3	Containing a forward inside mohawk and a forward outside three-turn	Covering the ice, including at least four different elements from Basic 2-6, such as forward slaloms, bunny hops, lunges, forward edges, forward stroking and crossovers, etc.	Containing two configurations	Parallel wheel (Two-spoke if not enough skaters)	One line forward intersection with one-foot glide at point of intersection	Transition: Circle to line, line to intersection
SYNCHRO 4	A circle including combination move (element c) from Basic 8	Forward line transitioning to backward line	Containing two configurations and steps from Basic 3-8	Wheel of choice	Practice intersections from synchro 2 and 3.	Transition: Combine at least three elements of choice

2. Beginner Competition Rules and Program Requirements

LEVEL	CIRCLE	LINE	BLOCK	WHEEL	INTERSECTION
BEGINNER 1 Majority under 9; 1 ½ - 2 minutes	Must contain a two foot turn. Must contain a forward inside and/or forward outside edge glide.	Must cover the ice and must have only forward skating.	Must cover the ice, and must have only 1 configuration.	4-spoke or "S" wheel with backward pumps.	Two lines facing each other, 2-foot glide at point of intersection.
BEGINNER 2 Majority 9 – 11; 1 ½ - 2 minutes	Must include the combination move from Basic 8. (1 direction only, don't need to repeat)	Must cover the ice and may include forward and backward skating.	Must cover the ice and must have 1 or 2 configurations.	Wheel of choice with backward pumps.	Two lines facing each other, 1-foot glide at point of intersection.
BEGINNER 3 Majority 12+; 2 – 2 ½ minutes	Must include the combination move from Basic 8. (1 direction only, don't need to repeat)	Must cover the ice and must include forward and backward skating.	Must cover the ice and must have 2 or 3 configurations.	Wheel of choice with backward pumps, chasses, or crossovers.	Two lines facing each other, 1-foot glide or forward lunge at point of intersection.

Beginner Restrictions

All of the synchronized skating "illegal elements" found in Rule 7160 of the U.S. Figure Skating rulebook apply to Beginner 1, 2 and 3.

(These are the basic rules, such as no jumps, no highlighting, no lying on the ice, etc.)

Restrictions in Beginner 1 & 2:

- Additional elements are not allowed (the team must do only their required elements).
- Teams may only use hand-to-hand and shoulder-to-shoulder holds.
- Wheels and circles may not travel or change rotational direction.
- Beginner 1 teams may not do steps higher than Basic 5
- Beginner 2 teams may not do steps higher than Free Skate 1

Restrictions in Beginner 3:

- Wheels and circles may not travel or change rotational direction.

The emphasis of the Beginner competition is on mastering the "basic skills" of synchronized skating:

- Control of rotation in wheels and circles.
- Straight lines in lines, blocks and intersections.
- Unison and use of skills such as guiding and shadowing.
- Incorporating skills from the Basic 1-8 levels to strengthen skating skills.
- Learning how to do transitions and skate to music.
- Learning skills that will be the foundation for higher levels.

Teams will NOT be judged on difficulty- they will be judged on how well they are executing the basic skills of synchronized skating. Your job as a coach is to give the skaters a good foundation for the future.

FORMING A TEAM AND COMPETING

Basic Skills Badges: Synchro 1 – 4

Any U.S. Figure Skating Basic Skills program can offer group lessons for Synchronized Skating 1-4. Programs can increase skater interest in these classes in many ways. A free trial of classes can be offered during the practice time of group lessons. A beginner class can also be run on public or club sessions in a section separated by cones if given permission by the rink and/or club. Advertising around the rink and asking other coaches to recommend the class to students that might enjoy skating with a group are good ways to get enough skaters involved to form a class. Once a class has formed, skaters can perform demonstrations or exhibition programs at exhibitions or basic skills competitions at your rink to increase awareness of the class and the sport to potential members. Skaters may also earn synchronized skating badges while skating with a competitive beginner team. Tips for teaching the skills required on these badges can be found in the U.S. Figure Skating Lesson Planning Manual.

Beginner Teams

The skills learned in Synchronized Skating 1-4 transition easily into the skills required to compete in the Beginner 1-3 levels. Beginner teams may represent a Basic Skills program or a U.S. Figure Skating club. If a team forms at a rink that does not have a Basic Skills program or a club, the team can register a new Basic Skills Synchro School to represent at competitions. It costs \$50 to register the program, and you can get a form from U.S. Figure Skating Headquarters. List the head coach as the "Skating Director". Skaters on beginner teams may be regular members of U.S. Figure skating or may be members of the U.S. Figure Skating Basic Skills program. If a team has formed their own Basic Skills Synchro School, then skaters may register with U.S. Figure Skating as Basic Skills members through the school for a fee of \$10.00 per year.

Beginner teams must register with U.S. Figure Skating by filling out a Synchronized Team Registration form. This will give the team a U.S. Figure Skating # that will be used when registering for competitions throughout the season. This costs \$25 per year and gives the team access to all information that is sent to synchronized skating teams through the season.

Competing at the beginner level

Beginner teams may compete in nonqualifying competitions that have been sanctioned by U.S. Figure Skating and Basic Skills competitions. All synchronized skating competitions and many Basic Skills competitions offer beginner synchronized skating events.

U.S. Figure Skating introduced the **Synchronized Challenge Series** program during the 2008-2009 season. This program is open to synchronized teams at the beginner and developmental levels. Teams participating in at least three nonqualifying competitions of their choice will have the opportunity to compete for overall standings in their respective Challenge Series.

Teams select a minimum of three nonqualifying competitions within their section they intend to compete in, and will earn points for their placements in these competitions. The points earned per event are added together throughout the season. The athletes on the teams placing 1-3 receive a medal and all competitors receive a pin for participating. The standings are published on www.usfigureskating.org and in SKATING magazine. Registration for this program begins annually in September.

Choosing a level

The skill level of skaters in beginner 1, 2 and 3 is very similar. Skaters in all three levels should be able to safely execute skills found at the Basic 5 level but may not have passed the preliminary moves in the field test. The beginner synchronized skating levels are divided primarily by age. Coaches should choose a level based on the age of the majority of the skaters on the team. Teams do NOT have to compete in all three levels before moving on to U.S. Figure Skating standard levels. The requirements of the beginner levels are designed to allow teams to move up to preliminary, pre-juvenile or open juvenile with little to no change to their programs. Teams are allowed to start the season in a beginner level and move up before the end of the season if they are ready. Coaches should determine the team's progression based on their ability and goals.

Teams competing in beginner 1, 2, and 3 generally practice 45 min – 1 hour each week and skaters pay an average of \$1,000 per season* to be members of the team.

TRANSITIONING TO STANDARD LEVELS

The Beginner Synchronized Skating program was designed to allow teams to easily move up into the standard U.S. Figure Skating levels of competition. The requirements of each beginner level allow teams to use the same program in preliminary, pre-juvenile or open juvenile that was used in beginner 1, 2 and 3. Once skaters have outgrown the restrictions placed on beginner teams, coaches are encouraged to consider moving the team into the appropriate standard level. A beginner team would most likely transition to the preliminary, pre-juvenile or open juvenile levels depending on the age and skill level of the skaters.

It is allowable for a team to advance, or even move between levels in one season. For example, a coach could design a program for beginner 2 and compete in an early competition, then move up to pre-juvenile for a spring competition. The team could keep the same program and add features that they were restricted from having in their beginner 2 program for the later competition.

When you do make this transition, it is important to read and understand the rules for these levels that are found in the U.S. Figure Skating rulebook. The rulebook is available to all coaches registered with U.S. Figure Skating and can also be downloaded here:

http://www.usfigureskating.org/New_Judging.asp?id=361.

General rules and definitions of terms for synchronized can be found in rules 7000 – 7140. General standards for free skate and general well-balanced program criteria can be found in rules 7030 – 7062. Rules specific to the **preliminary** level are found in rule 7270. Rules specific to the **pre-juvenile** level are found in rule 7260. Rules specific to the **open juvenile** level are found in rule 7250.

Preliminary

Program length: 2 minutes

Skaters' ages: Under 12, majority under 10

Number of Skaters: 8 – 16 skaters

Average practice time: 1 hour and 15 min per week

Average cost per skater: \$1,300 per season*

Expected skater skill levels: There are no skill requirements or restrictions on this level. However, it is recommended that skaters are at the Basic Skills free skate levels through the preliminary moves in the field test.

Preliminary is the next step up from beginner 1 or 2 (depending on age). A 2-minute program in either of those levels will adequately meet the requirements for preliminary.

Coaches should continue to focus on the basic skills and important concepts from beginner, but layer each element with slightly more difficulty (changing hold, changing rotational direction in a circle, etc).

Coaches should continue to introduce the concept of a step sequence in the circle and block elements. Skaters should focus on executing mohawks and 3-turns with a clear entry and exit edge. Programs should incorporate moves and turns from the Basic 3 – 8 levels.

In addition to guiding, shadowing and unison concepts from Synchro 1-4, coaches should encourage strong basic skating skills such as correct knee-bend, posture, flow, power and extension.

Pre-Juvenile

Program length: 2 minutes

Skaters' ages: Majority under 12

Number of skaters: 8 – 16 skaters

Average practice time: 1 hour and 50 min per week

Average cost per skater: \$1,300 per season*

Expected skater skill levels: There are no skill requirements or restrictions on this level. However, it is recommended that skaters are at the Basic Skills free skate levels – the pre-juvenile moves in the field test.

Pre-juvenile also builds on the beginner levels. Most likely, a beginner 2 team will progress to pre-juvenile. A 2-minute beginner 2 program will adequately meet the requirements for pre-juvenile.

Coaches should continue to focus on the basic skills and important concepts from beginner, but layer each element with slightly more difficulty (changing hold, changing rotational direction in a circle, multiple configuration changes in a block, etc).

Coaches should continue to introduce the concept of a step sequence in the circle and block elements. Skaters should focus on executing mohawks and 3-turns with a clear entry and exit edge. Programs should incorporate moves and turns from the Basic 3 – 8 levels.

In addition to guiding, shadowing and unison concepts from Synchro 1-4, coaches should encourage strong basic skating skills such as correct knee-bend, posture, flow, power and extension.

Open Juvenile

Program length: 2 ½ minutes

Skaters' ages: Majority under 19

Number of skaters: 8 – 16 skaters

Average practice time: 1 hour and 50 min per week

Average cost per skater: \$1,300 per season*

Expected skater skill levels: Skaters at the open juvenile level must have passed the pre-preliminary moves in the field test to go to sectionals. However, skaters should be working on skills through the juvenile test.

Open juvenile builds on the beginner 3. Whereas the skills are similar to preliminary and pre-juvenile, the skaters are older, stronger and must have passed at least pre-preliminary moves in the field level. A beginner 3 program that is 2 ½ minutes meets most of the requirements for open juvenile (open juvenile teams must include a moves in isolation element in their programs).

Coaches should continue to develop the basic concepts from beginner, but introduce features such as changes of hold, traveling and changing rotational direction in the wheel and circle and increasing the difficulty of the intersection (for example, performing a backward intersection, a more challenging point of intersection, or a collapsing intersection).

Coaches should focus on the step sequence feature and executing multiple 3-turns and mohawks on correct entry and exit edges. Coaches should also begin to introduce skaters to more difficult turns such as choctaws, brackets and single twizzles while continuing to encourage strong basic skating skills.

*Includes ice time, coaching, dresses, clothing, competition entry fees, etc. (all expenses except individual travel expenses). Based on a national survey done by U.S. Figure Skating fall 2008.

RULES AND RESTRICTIONS FOR PRELIMINARY, PRE-JUVENILE AND OPEN JUVENILE

All of the synchronized skating "illegal elements" found in Rule 7160 of the U.S. Figure Skating rulebook apply to Beginner 1, 2 and 3 (*These are the basic rules, such as no jumps, no highlighting, no lying on the ice, etc.*)

Preliminary and pre-juvenile teams may only perform forward intersections.

Although there are very few restrictions placed on teams in these levels compared to teams competing in beginner levels, coaches should keep in mind the purpose of these levels when choreographing programs. Preliminary, pre-juvenile and open juvenile are designed to prepare skaters to compete in qualifying levels (like juvenile) and levels judged under the ISU Judging System (like intermediate and novice). Coaches should keep in mind the skills skaters will be required to perform in higher levels and increase the difficulty of their teams programs by introducing basic forms of these elements (pivoting, traveling, multiple configuration changes, etc). A basic introduction to IJS can be found in the coaches section of the synchronized skating page at the U.S. Figure Skating website:

<http://www.usfigureskating.org/content/ISUSYSComplete-UserGuide.pdf>



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. **What kind of glitter, sparkles, beads, etc. can my skaters have on their costumes?**

Rule 7022 of the U.S. Figure Skating rulebook states that "sequins, rhinestones or jeweled trim may be used in moderation on the clothing of senior, junior and collegiate synchronized skating teams only... The use of adornments in all other divisions is prohibited". Any deductions based on this rule will be taken by the referee at any competition your team competes at, therefore it is not possible to "check ahead of time" if a particular costume breaks this rule. If you are unsure about the use of anything that could potentially be classified as an adornment, the safest choice would be not to include it, as a different referee will be making the call at each competition you attend.

It is important for coaches to remember the goals they are trying to reach. The main focus of beginner teams should be to encourage participation while introducing skaters to the basics. Beginner teams should be FUN and COST EFFECTIVE as to remain as inclusive as possible. Coaches should keep this in mind while selecting their team's costumes for the season.

2. **Where do we submit our roster of skaters to U.S. Figure Skating?**

You don't! Teams competing at beginner levels only need to register as a synchronized skating team with U.S. Figure Skating. After this, teams will submit their roster to each individual competition that they participate in. Each competition application will ask you to attach or fill in a roster with your skaters names.

3. **Can skaters cross-skate to other beginner or standard levels?**

Skaters competing at the beginner levels are not allowed to cross skate to other levels. However, since beginner teams only submit their rosters to individual competitions, coaches may change which skaters are listed on that roster. A skater (or an entire team) may switch levels from one competition to another, as long as all skaters are age and test eligible for the new level and no skaters are competing in more than one level at one competition.

4. **What is the deadline for skater ages and test level?**

The deadline for a skater's age is July 1st preceding the competitive season. For example, a skater who turns 9 on June 30, 2011 would count as 9 for the 2011-2012 season, while a skater who turns 9 on July 2, 2011 would count as 8 for the 2011-2012 season.

The deadline for test restrictions is the same as the deadline for the application for each individual competition your team enters. It is possible that a skater will qualify for a beginner level at one competition but not the next if they pass a moves-in-the-field test before the second competition's deadline. Coaches should keep this in mind when planning what level their team will compete at each competition (remember, you can move skaters or teams up as the season progresses) and not hold skaters back who are ready to test in order to be able to compete a lower level.

5. **What if we don't have a majority of skaters' ages that fit into one category?**

In the case of an even number of skaters falling into two different age brackets (for example, 5 skaters under 9 and 5 skaters 9-11), the coach should contact the competitions they wish to compete in and ask for permission to compete in the level they believe best suits their team. In most cases, teams will be allowed to "skate up" to the higher level if they wish to.

BASIC SKILLS/BEGINNER PROGRAMS IN ACTION

"If You Build It, They Will Come!"

By B.L. Wylie, Texas Gulf Coast FSC
Chair, Basic Skills Sub-committee

As the Chair for the Basic Skills sub-committee, my antenna is always sensitive to the possibility of creative ways to strengthen the Basic Skills program. With 12 curriculums presently offered, there is something for everyone, no matter the geographical location.

To this end, Sugar Land Ice & Sports in Sugarland, Texas is celebrating its newly formed Basic Skills Synchronized Skating program. In only 6 months the program has blossomed from the simple dream of Coach Lisa Lueking-Dahl to a fully enrolled inaugural Basic Skills Synchro class.

Picture this!

Eight skaters (level Basic 5+) stepping into a formation which requires holding on to one another's shoulders, staying upright, **and** going in the same direction (well, sort of)! A few weeks pass and the opportunity for an exhibition is presented. Ya'll know, we Texans think synchro is big and has a lot to offer, but synchronized skating is not a language spoken here. This newly formed band of happy 7-13 years says, "Yes! We are interested!" The realization that synchronized skating means accuracy and skating as a unit takes on a whole new meaning now! PEOPLE WILL BE WATCHING! Perform they did, and admirably well!

A full day synchronized skating seminar follows soon after. Coach Lueking-Dahl and her friends from throughout the skating world help the skaters of all ages and skills who attend to make sense of what team skating is all about. A parent education class is offered to help inform families what the future will be with synchronized skating in their lives. Off-ice training is included to open up a new reality of what "being in shape" really means and the possibility of what new music will be used as the backdrop for their next performance is introduced.

A Spring Show presented by the Texas Gulf Coast Figure Skating Club promises a huge audience and multiple performances. Whoopee ("Texas talk"), now we can show how much we have improved! An official show number features a dynamic team, highlighting 12 girls who wow not only parents and grandparents but the entire audience. Everyone is catching "the synchro fever." THIS LOOKS LIKE GREAT FUN, AND THEY ARE SKATING AS A TEAM!

Word is beginning to spread and Lueking-Dahl is sensing the promise of a full synchro program growing out of the Basic Skills beginning. Plans for the second seminar are put into motion. The 3-month-old class now has willing parents who want to help expand their base and grow.

The second seminar meets with rave reviews and a date for additional team tryouts is set. The numbers of interested skaters is continually increasing, and the life of Team UNITY draws its first breath! All Houston area rinks, skaters and coaches are invited to join in the formation of Team Unity. Thirty-five willing skaters respond!

There is a real sense of excitement in the rink during the tryouts. Skaters have come together from five rinks within a radius of 45 miles. They are ready and willing to become one unit and create a city-wide team. Designs for warm-up wear have been chosen. Measurements for competition, practice, and performance outfits have been taken, and A NEW SYNCHRONIZED SKATING PROGRAM has been started!

Sugar Land Ice & Sports Basic Skills Figure Skating School salutes Lisa Lueking-Dahl and her staff, Rebecca Search, Jenny Lee, Jennifer Wong and Jackie Nguyen! Creating a full fledged synchronized program in such a short span of time is an amazing accomplishment.



Synchroettes – Essex Skating Club, South Orange, NJ

By Geri Lynch-Tomich, Head Coach

“Success is the inner satisfaction and peace of mind that come from knowing we did the best we were capable of doing for the team”

The Synchroettes synchronized skating teams began their first season in September, 2001 with a preliminary and intermediate team. Over the course of eight years, we have grown to an organization of 150 skaters on nine teams: an exhibition beginner team, beginner 1, beginner 2, 2 preliminary teams, pre-juvenile, juvenile, novice and junior.

The Synchroettes promote fun, good sportsmanship and teamwork in a positive environment. Our mission is to do all that we can to help each skater and team reach their fullest potential. We believe that being a Synchroette is not just about the skating; it is an opportunity to be part of a team that strives to teach and learn life lessons.

We pride ourselves in being an inclusive organization. We do our best to maintain this aspect of giving every skater opportunities to achieve their goals. We hold team placement clinics each year, instead of formal tryouts. The coaching staff puts the greatest of care into determining where skaters belong within our organization, and we provide opportunities to advance such as skaters-in-training and spot sharing. We work alongside our arena's Basic Skills program and offer an "Introduction to Synchronized Skating" group class that many of our beginner team skaters have been a part of. In the past, we have advertised with flyers, and had "open houses" where skaters could come and try synchronized skating.

The success of our organization has been achieved by teamwork. Coaches, management, parents, and skaters have all been a part of our continued growth. We have one head coach, and team specific assistant coaches. The head coach is primarily in charge of the beginner, juvenile, novice, and junior teams while we have team-specific coaches for pre-juvenile and both preliminary teams. The coaches and general team manager communicate with parents via e-mails using "google groups". These are similar to distribution lists, and make it easy to send out emails to all 150 skaters. Team specific information is communicated through "team moms" who are chosen at the beginning of the season, who then send out to their specific team the necessary information.

Our philosophy is to coach and manage all teams with equal respect. Our beginner level continues to thrive. The young skaters have fun, work hard, and look up to our older, more experienced skaters as role models. The younger skaters are able to then become aware of the opportunities available to them as they see the older skaters heading off to sectionals and nationals. This gets them excited to move up to the qualifying level, and keeps them involved in the program. We provide Synchroettes exhibitions throughout the year where all the teams get to exhibit on one evening, and the younger teams are able to watch the older teams skate. Seeing the possibilities allows them to set goals and say, "I want to be on the junior team one day".

Tips for coaches wanting to develop a strong beginner synchronized skating program:

- Provide a positive, fun, and structured atmosphere.
- Set a good example.
- Stay current with U.S. Figure Skating/PSA/ISU updates and rules.
- Never stop learning!
- Have your teams exhibit at learn-to-skate and public sessions.
- Stay focused and always have a plan.
- Surround yourself with others who share the same goals as you.
- Keep costs affordable. (ideas such as sharing ice and using floor practice as often as possible)
- Do research! Watch videos, use the resources USFS offers, reach out to others.
- Learn from others! Our sport has an abundance of top quality coaches, judges and officials who are eager and more than willing to share their knowledge.

One last important thing to keep in mind: coaching is unlocking a person's potential to maximize their own performance. It is helping them to learn rather than teaching them.



RESOURCE GUIDE

What	Description	How to get it
U.S. Figure Skating Rulebook	Find all rules governing synchronized team skating	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Call U.S. Figure Skating Headquarters (HQ): 719.635.5200 ➤ Through you local club ➤ Download for free from http://www.usfigureskating.org
U.S. Figure Skating Directory	Find all contacts including HQ, committees, and officials. Locate judges in your area.	See Above – comes with your U.S. Figure Skating rulebook.
U.S. Figure Skating Online –Synchronized Skating	Find the latest news & updates about synchronized skating	http://www.usfigureskating.org/Programs.asp?id=44
U.S. Figure Skating Online – Basic Skills	Find the latest news & updates about Basic Skills	http://www.usfigureskating.org/Programs.asp?id=47
Synchronized Skating Team Registration Form	Form needed to register a synchronized skating team	http://www.usfigureskating.org/content/synchroregform.pdf
Synchronized Skating Contacts	Find U.S. Figure Skating contacts related to synchronized skating	http://www.usfigureskating.org/Programs.asp?id=54
Starting & Managing a Successful Synchronized Skating Team	A booklet that will guide teams through the steps of managing and developing all aspects of a synchronized skating program	http://www.usfigureskating.org/content/Starting%20&%20Managing%20a%20Team.pdf
User's Guide to the ISU Judging System for Synchronized Skating	A guide to the basic terms and requirements related to the ISU Judging System	http://www.usfigureskating.org/content/ISUSYSComplete-UserGuide.pdf
Basic Skills/Beginner Synchronized Skating: An overview for judges and coaches	A guide to the basic requirements and expectations of the beginner level for coaches and judges	http://www.usfigureskating.org/content/beginnersynchro-guidelines.pdf
Understanding Synchronized Skating & Its Value for Parents	A presentation that gives parents a basic overview of synchronized skating and their role within the team	http://www.usfigureskating.org/Content/Understanding%20SyS%20&%20Its%20Value%20for%20Parents.pdf

