SECTION 5
PROGRAM ASSISTANT TRAINING

PROGRAM ASSISTANT TRAINING

Program assistants (PAs) are individuals who have been trained by a CanSkate coach to assist in the delivery of the CanSkate program. Program assistants may be drawn from a number of different groups of people including:

- Current skaters at the club
- Former skaters
- Skaters from other sports (hockey, ringette, speed skating)

Program assistants should be:

- Good communicators and demonstrators
- Enthusiastic
- Team players and good role models
- Responsible
- Punctual
- Patient
- Prepared and organized
- Able to lead groups, encourage skaters and offer praise
- Able to keep skaters moving while having fun

All PAs must be currently registered Skate Canada members to be eligible to volunteer during a session. It is suggested that PAs be over the age of 11 and have the ability to demonstrate basic skating skills (e.g. preliminary free skating test). The club has the option to accept younger PAs with the understanding that duties assigned should match their abilities and skill levels. The specific duties assigned to all PAs must be appropriate for their ages and abilities.

A PA's role may include:

- Assisting or leading warm-ups, group activities or cool-downs
- Assisting with the set up of circuits and stations
- Leading circuits and rotations
- Demonstrating proper execution of skating skills
- Providing assistance to skaters who may have additional needs
- Taking attendance
- Timing speed skills
- Providing general assistance to the coaches on the session
- Providing encouragement and general feedback to skaters
- Assisting with tracking of skill acquisition

A PA's role does not include:

- Delivering lessons at a designated teaching station
- Instructing skills
- Assessing skills

PAs are demonstrators and helpers and should not be coaching or instructing on a CanSkate session.

All PAs should be easily identified on the ice to help the organizational flow and look of the CanSkate session, e.g. they should all wear the same type of shirt, the same colour scarf or be dressed in matching jackets – there should be something that distinguishes them from the coaches and the other skaters on the ice.

The CanSkate coach (or coaching team) is responsible for training the club's PAs prior to the first session and must provide them with updates and feedback throughout the season. Clubs may find it more economical and/or convenient to collaborate with other clubs in the area to host a regional PA training session with their combined resources.

PA TRAINING RESOURCE TOOLS

The following resource materials are available to assist clubs/coaches in the training and development of PAs:

- Program Assistant Training PowerPoint
- Program Assistant Workbook
- Program Assistant Evaluation From and Personal Reflection Sheet

SAMPLE YEARLY TRAINING PLAN FOR PROGRAM ASSISTANTS

September/October - Recruit and Train:

- Recruit program assistants by advertising to the club membership, local high schools and community.
- Offer a two-hour (approximately) training session, led by the club coach(es). Refer to the Program Assistant's Training PowerPoint Presentation and Program Assistant Workbook contained in this manual for specific content to be covered.
- The initial training session should include:

  - Off-Ice Training (approx. one hour):
    - The importance of PAs
    - The details of the club's CanSkate session including session and ice format, group dynamics and other relevant information pertaining to the session
    - Roles and responsibilities of PAs specific to the club's session
    - Qualities of a PA
  - On-Ice Training (approx. one hour):
    - Learning format and choreography for warm-up, group activity, cool-down
    - Reviewing demonstration of the CanSkate skills
    - Learning how to set up and maintain circuits
    - Exploring different uses of teaching aids and props
    - Practicing station rotation plan
    - Becoming familiar with the group identification, station identification and Fast Track tools

October/November - Feedback and Review:

- Hold a short PA meeting to provide feedback on how the sessions are going and review team's participation. Refer to the Program Assistant Evaluation Form for specific content to be covered.
- Give suggestions on how to be more efficient and effective.
- Share some positive comments on things that have gone well and provide some tips to improve other situations.
- Ask for feedback and suggestions on ways to improve.

December - Second Training Session and Review:

- Off ice (on ice only if deemed necessary) (approx. one hour)
  - Review of progress to date, address strengths and areas for improvement.
  - Share experiences and collect feedback from the group.
  - Address any areas requiring clarification (e.g. circuit maintenance, demonstrations, warm-up, group activity, etc.).
  - Reinforce the importance of PAs and how much of an impact they have on the session.

January/February - Feedback and Review:

- Hold a short PA meeting to provide feedback on how the sessions are going and review team's participation.
- Give suggestions on how to be more efficient and effective.
- Share some positive comments on things that have gone well and provide some tips to improve other situations.
- Ask for feedback and suggestions on ways to improve.

March/April - Wrap-Up and Thank You:

- Hold a wrap-up meeting to review the season.
- Collect suggestions on how to improve for next session.
- Highlight successes and thank PAs for their contributions.

PROGRAM ASSISTANT RECOGNITION

Refer to your section's remuneration policy for any payment issues that may arise.

There are many ways to thank and recognize the contributions of your PAs:

- Pizza parties
- Movie nights
- PA of the Month/Week (either displayed on bulletin board or in local newspaper)
- A special number/program for the PAs in the club's ice show
- Small gifts of appreciation
- Kind words from the coach and club

Program Assistant Training
Name of club here
Date of training here
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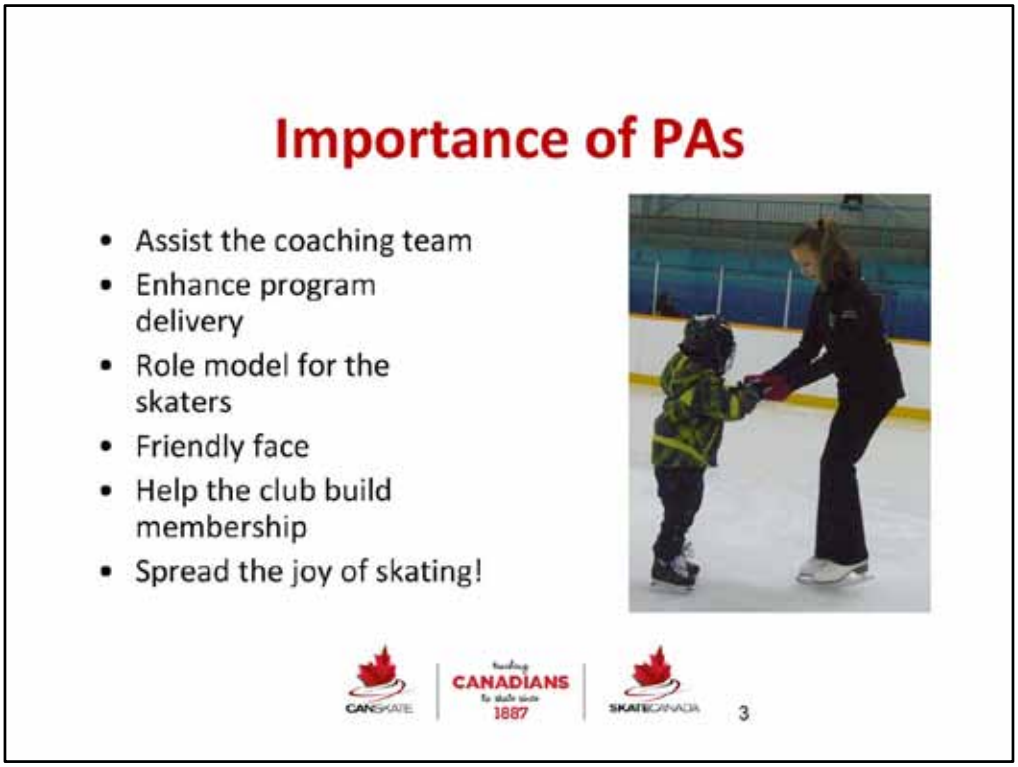
Today we are going to cover the following…

- Importance of your role as a PA to our session.
- Your roles and responsibilities as a PA (see The CanSkate Team and PA Training sections in the CanSkate Technical Manual).
- The type of qualities you will need to bring to our sessions (See PA Training section of the CanSkate Technical manual).
- Explain our format this year, how the session will run and review the CanSkate skills you will be working with.
- We will finish our training on ice today, learning the warm-up, group activity and cool-down, as well as setting up some circuits, getting comfortable with the teaching aids and props and learning how to properly demonstrate the CanSkate skills.



- Number one role as a PA is to assist the coach with the delivery of the program.
- Assist with warm-up, group activity, cool-down, demonstrate skills, lead station rotations, record information and much more.
- Also help with program set-up and execution (get out the teaching aids, props, name tags, awards and incentives, etc.).
- Remember that you are a role model to these skaters. PAs act as examples to skaters in the way they move on the ice and skate.
- This inspires them to work hard so that they can skate just like you.
- Important to make sure you dress appropriately and speak appropriately to skaters.
- For many new skaters, the ice can be a very scary place. Your smile and helping hand will turn a cold, scary ice rink into a warm, welcoming environment.
- We would not be able to run the program without you! You are a very important part of our success!

Roles and Responsibilities

- Demonstrate skills
  - Important! Correct demonstration is a must!
- Help lead warm-up, group activity and cool-down
- Help skaters on and off the ice
- Help set up ice, clean up ice
- Watch for safety (close doors, holes, skate laces, etc.)
- Help with name tags
- Lead your group from station to station
- Supervise your group
- Assist coach during lesson

4

- Your job as a PA will cover many areas.
- This (and the following slide) is a list of some of the things that we will need your help with.

Roles and Responsibilities

- Maintain circuits
  - re-draw, re-arrange teaching aids, etc
- Reinforce coach's lesson and teaching points
- Assist any skater who needs help
- Record time for skaters doing speed drills
- Set up the Fast Track
- Praise, praise, praise!
  - high fives, good job, terrific, you did it!! And more!
- Smile!
- Bring your enthusiasm to the ice

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Continue explaining the PA's role in the CanSkate session.

Who Does What?

Name of PA	Assignment
Rebecca	Red Group
Bob, Carrie	Blue Group
Suzie	Orange Group
Sally	Purple Group
Jennie, Dylan	Fun Zone
Christine	Set up Fast Track
Rebecca, Suzie	Help skaters get on/off the ice
Sally	Set up stations and circuits
Bob	Play music
Jennie, Carrie	Hand out colouring sheets at the end of the session
Everyone	Clean up

6

- Go through the specific duties each PA will have on your session
- Make sure everyone is clear on their duties and responsibilities
- Ask if there are any questions
- Coaches - remove red text, insert PAs' real names and assign groups and duties where appropriate

Dealing with Difficult Skaters

- **Shy**
  - Ask questions
  - More hands-on assistance (gently)
  - Develop a connection
  - Lots of praise
- **Crying**
  - Find something of interest (e.g. teaching aid, prop)
  - Hands-on assistance
  - Lots of praise

7

- Review different strategies to help PAs deal with challenging situations

Dealing with Difficult Skaters

- **Pushy, aggressive**
  - Clear expectations of what is acceptable and what is not
  - Safety first
  - Praise for good behaviour/work
  - Present them with challenging tasks
- **Afraid**
  - Lots of encouragement and praise
  - Ask questions
  - Find something of interest
  - Hands-on assistance

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Continue reviewing dealing with difficult skaters with PAs

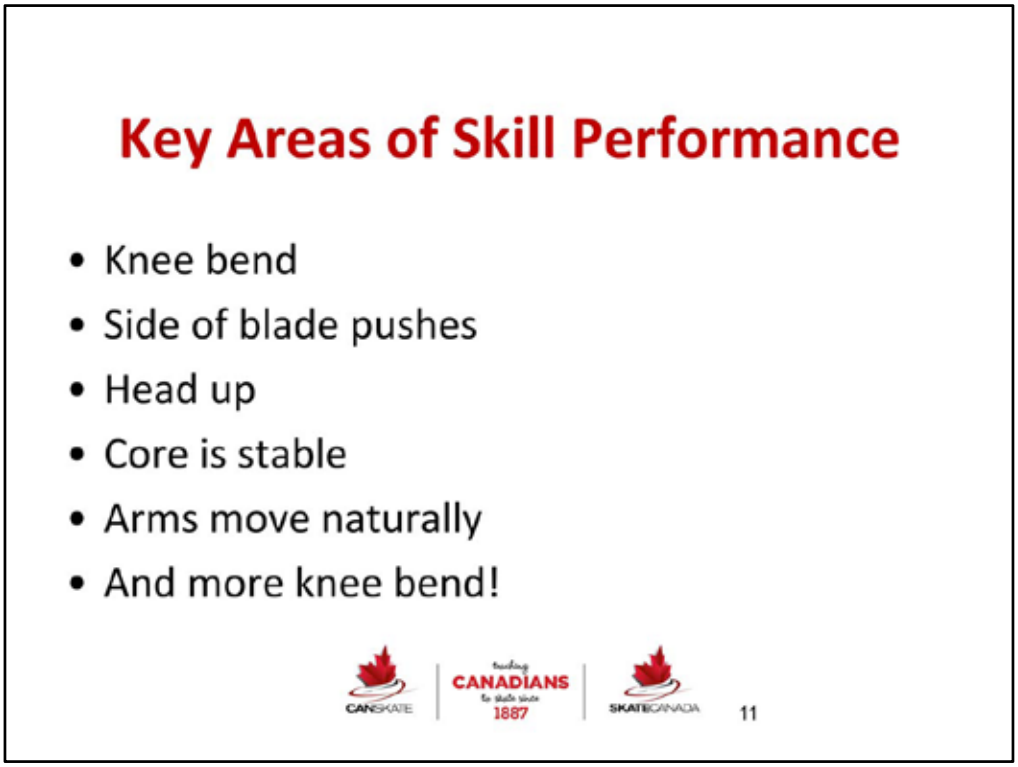
Dealing with Difficult Skaters

- Do not attempt to carry a skater
- Eye-to-eye level contact
- Always remain calm, pleasant
- Keep tone of voice at normal level
- Friendly, smiling face
- Other ideas?

9

Review general tips and tricks for dealing with difficult skaters.
Add as you feel necessary and include your experience.

- We will be spending some time on the ice today going through the skills so that you understand what each of the skills are and how they are to be demonstrated.
- Remember that even when the PAs are participating in the warm-up, group activity or cool-down, the skills must be demonstrated correctly (e.g. pushing with the side of the blade, lots of knee bend, etc.)



- Remember that even when PAs are participating in the warm-up, group activity or cool-down, the skills must be demonstrated correctly (e.g. pushing with the side of the blade, lots of knee bend, head up, ensure a stable core, arms move naturally or as per the requirements of the skill, etc.)

Things to Remember…

- Conduct on the ice
  - no personal skating practice
- Lower yourself to look eye-to-eye with young skaters
- Know the names of your skaters
- Always check in with your coach
- Use an enthusiastic and polite tone of voice
- Keep an eye on your surroundings
- Always encourage, praise and SMILE!

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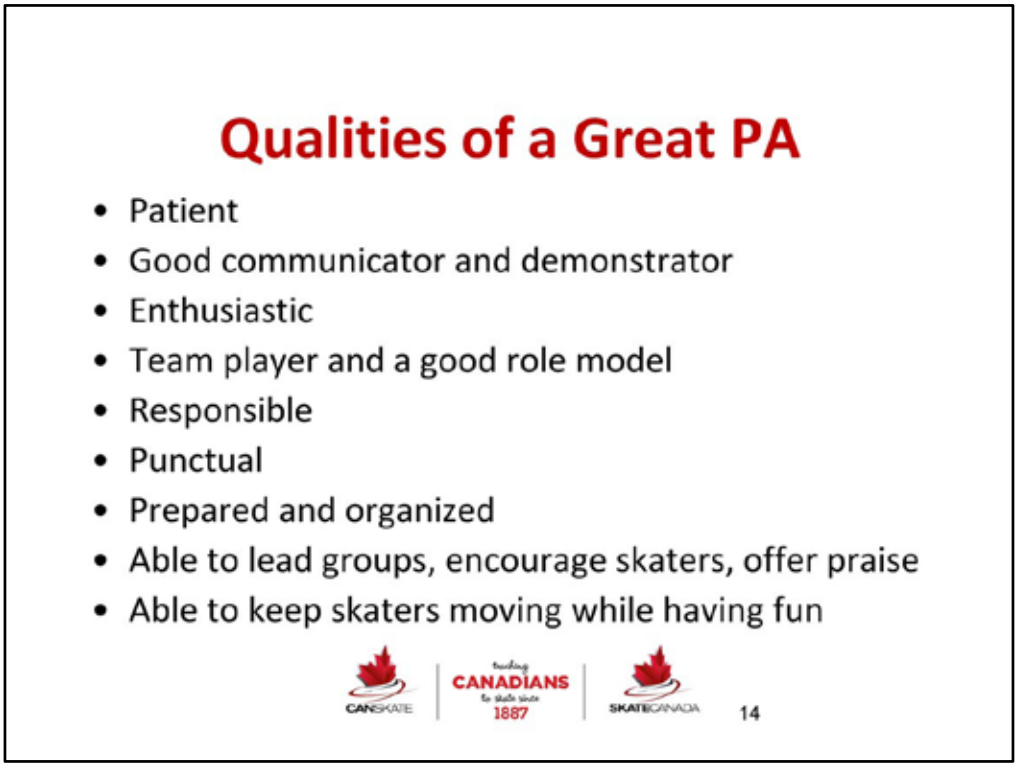
- Being a PA is an important role and is a busy job - remember that your behaviour on the ice is important
- No personal skating practice, no continuous chat with fellow PAs
- Concentrate and focus on the task at hand

- Review ways to give praise.
- Brainstorm with the group - there may be some good suggestions you would never have thought of.



- Review the qualities you are looking for in a great PA. Add as you feel necessary.

Our Program

- Warm-up
  - List songs here, explain choreography
    - e.g. Let's Get Loud = full perimeter skating, clapping, knees up forwards and backwards and "fast as you can"
    - e.g. Let's Twist Again = Centre circle, rotational twists on spot, ½ turn, one foot, other foot, backwards, forwards ½ turn jumps on the spot, hands up, hands down, etc.
- Lesson time
  - List # of groups here, how they will rotate, what stations will be on the ice – timing
    - e.g. 4 groups on the ice (Purple, Red, Orange & Blue). Blue Group is Pre-CanSkate and will need help getting to the centre of the Fun Zone (during warm-up). Purple, Red, Orange groups will start at a station (one group per station).
    - 3 stations on the ice, 1 Fun Zone, 1 teaching station, 1 review station
    - Groups will rotate every 10 mins (clockwise)
    - Blue group stays in the same area for now

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- Explain how your program will work on the ice and where/how PAs will be used.
- COACHES – insert <u>your own</u> song selections and actions and then delete the red text.

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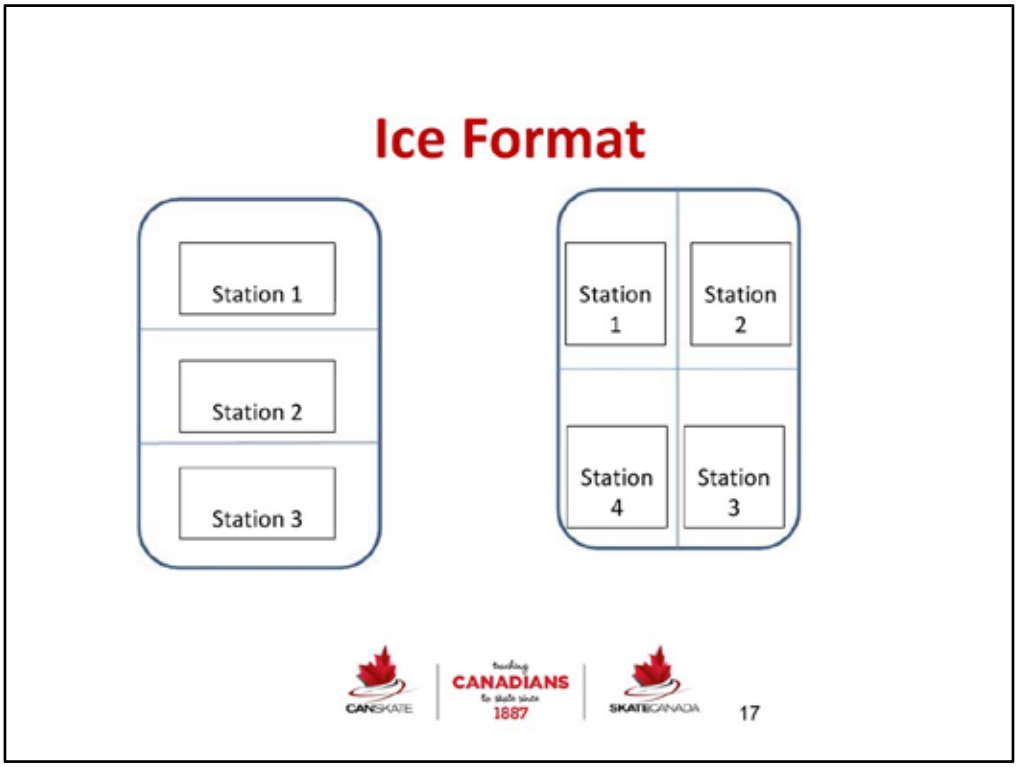
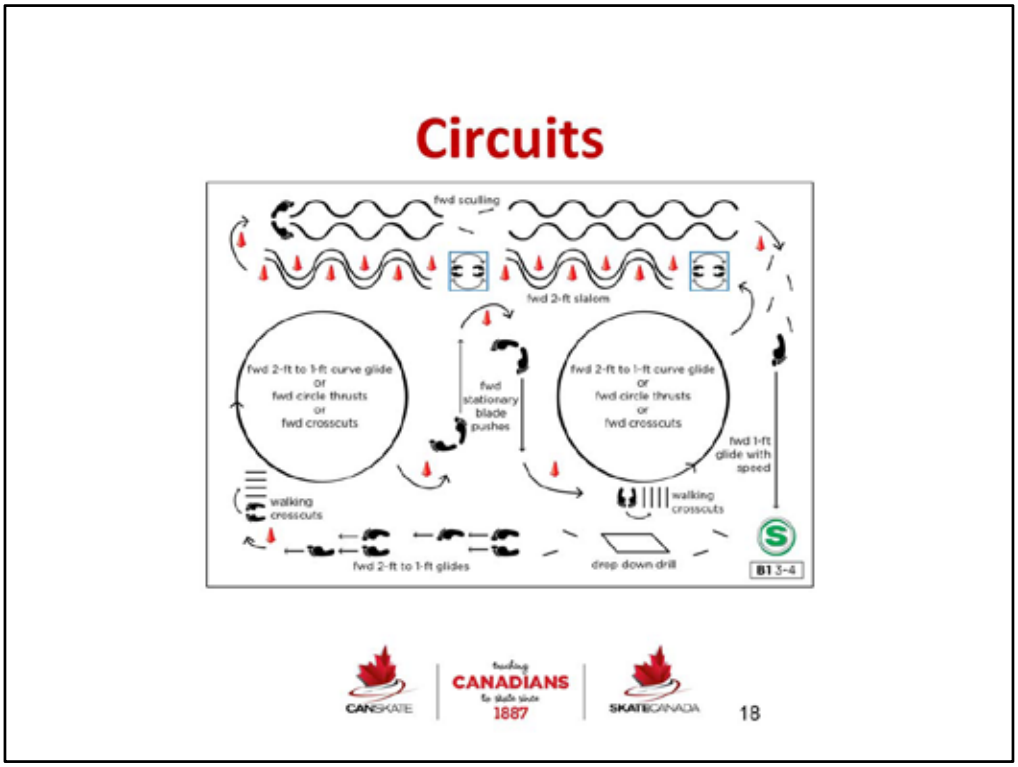


- Explain how the PAs will assist in setting up the ice into the chosen format.
- Where and how to hang the station ID signs and the group ID signs.
- What teaching aids and props need to go where.
- Also indicate where skaters will get on and off the ice and remind them that we will help the skaters do that.
- Other things to review, where the handouts will be located, where the music will be played, etc.
- COACHES – Choose which ice format your CanSkate session will take (3 station or 4 station) and delete the other option.

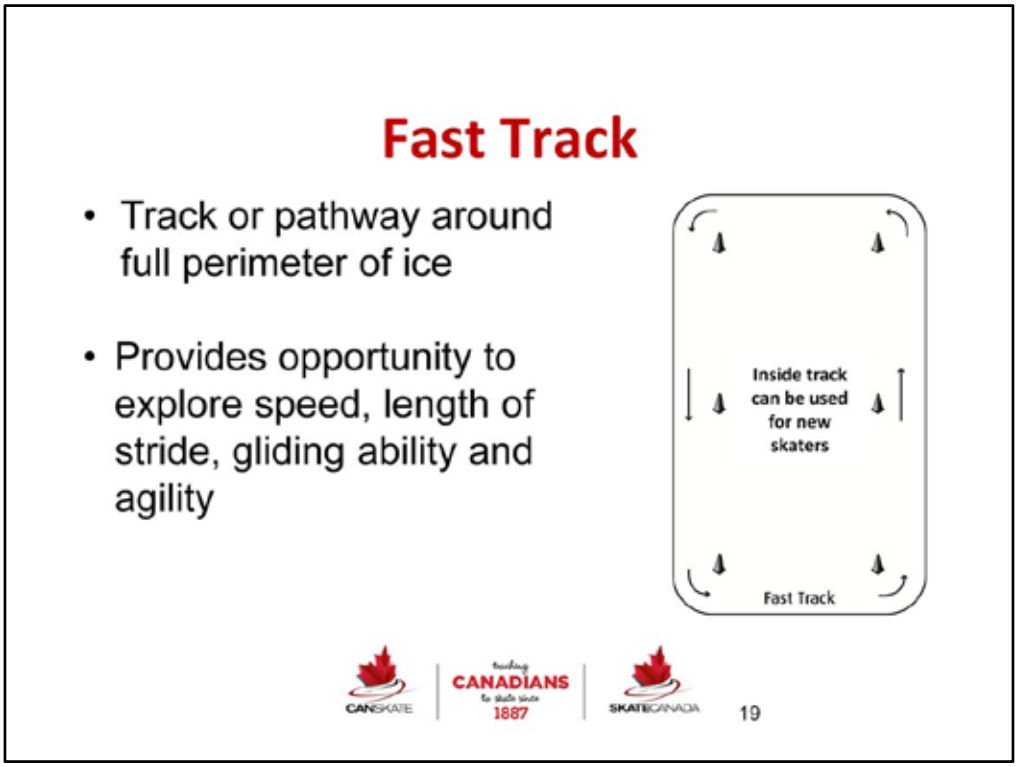


- Circuits are a great tool that we use to:

- Keep skaters moving
- Allow skaters to practice skills and steps to skills
- Have fun with teaching aids and props
- Allow PAs and coaches to give individual feedback without stopping the group's progress

- All circuits must:

- Have START well indicated
- Have a directional arrow to let skaters know which way to go
- Be well-marked with pylons, markers, signs, etc. so that skaters know what to do where



- Fast Track is a term used to describe a path around the perimeter of the ice.
- Setting up a Fast Track for warm-up, group activity and cool-down will encourage skaters to use the full ice surface.
- This in turn will help them develop power, speed and length of stride.
- Skaters/PAs/coaches may use the Fast Track at any time during the session, even during lesson time.
- PAs can watch skills in the Fast Track or help monitor traffic to make sure skaters are skating with their eyes up and staying in the path.

On the Ice Today…

- Learn warm-up, group activity & cool-down
- Review CanSkate skills
- How to set up a circuit
- How to draw or use signs to indicate skills
- Different ways to use teaching aids and props
- Practice station rotation plan

20

Questions?

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COACH GUIDELINES FOR ON-ICE SESSION

Duration: 1 hour

Lead Warm-Up Songs (10 minutes)

- Teach the PAs actions and choreography
- Emphasize use of upper body, knees and ankles
- Purpose is to increase heart rate and warm up muscles

Review the CanSkate Skills (20 minutes)

It is not necessary to review every skill from the CanSkate curriculum. Many skills repeat or are progressions of other skills; therefore, only the basics need to be covered:

Push/glide sequence (fwd and bwd)

- Emphasize the bend before the push
- Explain the progressions (e.g. beginners will glide on two feet between pushes) Explore weight transfer from pushing foot to gliding foot (this will help PAs identify the action needed for 'side of the blade' pushes)
- Review expected progression of development and performance from Stage 1 to Stage 6

Sculling (fwd and bwd)

- Emphasize the knee bend on the first half of the scull and rise up and pull in (toe to toe) on the second half of the scull

Glide turns (180° and 360°)

- Emphasize the knee bend and lean required in the turn

Slaloms

- Large pattern for FO, FI, BO, BI edge development
- Small pattern for fwd and bwd 1-ft change of edge slalom

Walking crosscuts

- Explain proper foot placement (feet must remain parallel throughout the exercise, no toe pushes)
- Show different ways to assist the skaters with the weight transfer technique

Circle thrusts and crosscuts (fwd and bwd)

- Emphasize knee bend, side of the blade pushes and foot placement on cross (feet parallel)

Turns: (2-ft, 1-ft)

- Emphasize the "down, up, down" action (key words)

Step turns: (360° and 180°)

- Emphasize balance through turn
- 180° step turn (mohawk): emphasize foot placement for backward step
- Review options for PA to assist the skater

Stopping

- Review stopping with right foot, left foot and both feet (fwd and bwd)
- 2-ft side stop – emphasize parallel feet, work both ways
- 1-ft side stop – remind PAs to encourage skaters to pick up inside foot

Speed drills

- Run the PAs through drills #1, 2 & 3 – record the time to show the PAs how to do this for the CanSkaters

Hockey skills

- Demonstrate the following, emphasizing the key teaching points
  - Running lateral crossovers
  - Fwd crossover acceleration
  - Forward 2-ft reverse pivot turn

Incorporate teaching aids, signs and marker drawings as each skill is reviewed to maximize learning opportunity. This will help establish a baseline of understanding for circuit set-up.

Circuit Set-Up (20 minutes)

Divide the PAs into groups. Provide each group with a circuit template and ask them to set it up using a variety of teaching aids.

Review each circuit to ensure that:

- Maximum ice coverage is utilized
- Skill identification and placement is accurate
- Appropriate teaching aids are used
- Direction of travel is indicated

During this time, explore how the circuit can be adjusted to accommodate skaters at different stages. Also, ask the team to brainstorm ideas on how to use the teaching aids and props differently.

Group Activity and Cool-Down (10 minutes)

- Teach the PAs activities, actions and choreography
- Wrap-up - ensure that PAs know where to retrieve essential items for the CanSkate session:
  - Station identification signs
  - Group identification tools
  - Teaching aids/props
  - Hand-outs
  - Record keeping tools
  - Music

Reinforce the importance of keeping the essential items neat and organized for safety reasons and for easier retrieval for the next session.

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PROGRAM ASSISTANT TRAINING

Workbook

_____

Program Assistant Name

_____

Club Name

_____

Date

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My roles and responsibilities as a program assistant:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

In an emergency situation, the following individual(s) will be my first point(s) of contact:

_____

or

_____

I know who these individuals are and where to find them. ❍ **Y** ❍ **N**

What are the four main components of a CanSkate session?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

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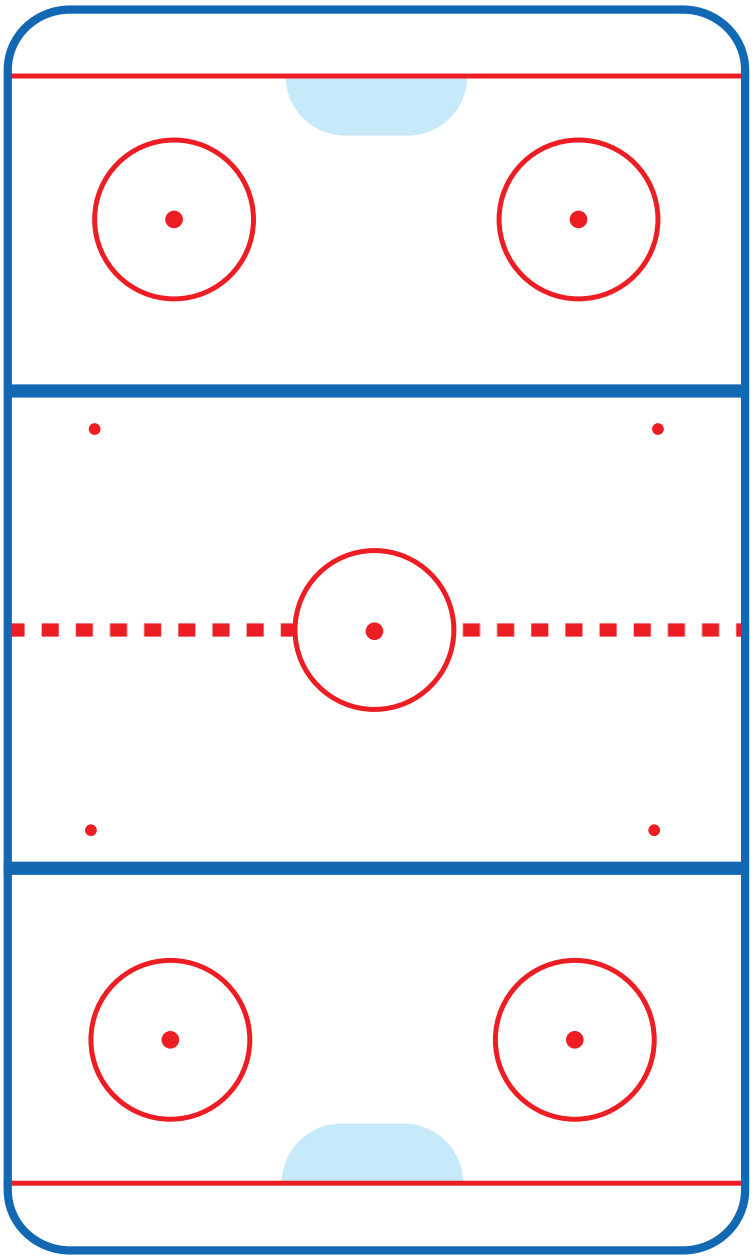
1

Our session is using a _____ format. Draw and label the appropriate stations for this session format *(be sure to include the Fast Track).*



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2

List the teaching aids that your club has available and suggest how they can be used to enhance the circuits or activities. Use your imagination and be creative!

TEACHING AID	USE

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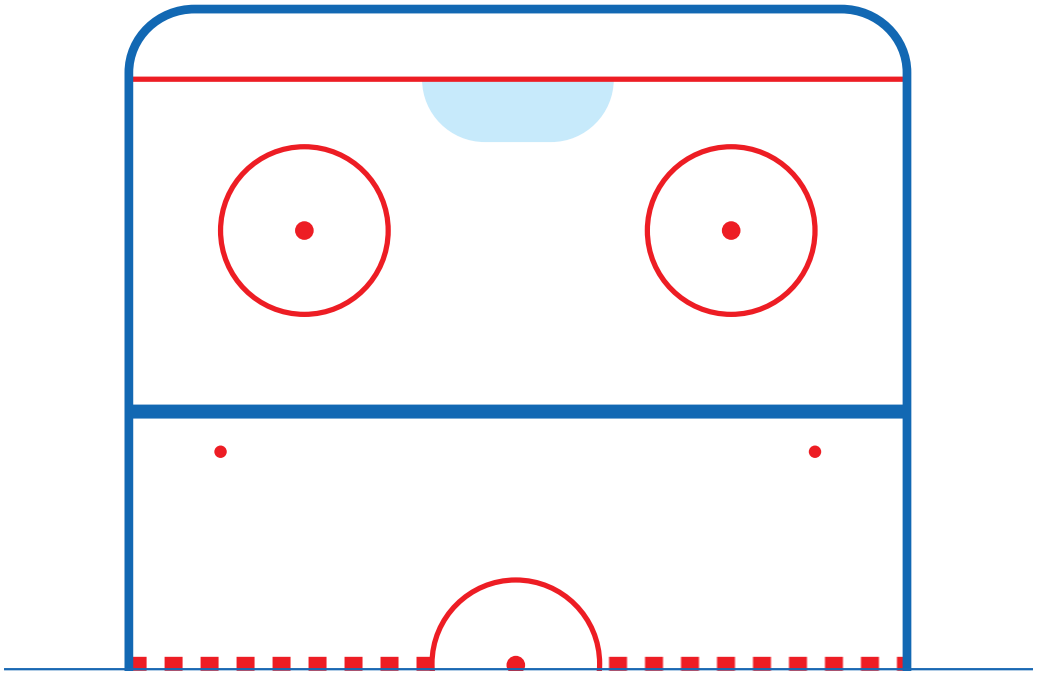
3

Draw your own Fun Zone circuit and show how it could be connected to the Fast Track:



List the teaching aids needed to set up the Fun Zone circuit that you have created:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____

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4

List the CanSkate skills that you have reviewed today and the teaching points to remember.

SKILL	TEACHING POINTS

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5

What are the qualities of a good PA?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

My best qualities are:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

The specific duties that have been assigned to me are:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

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PROGRAM ASSISTANT EVALUATION FORM

PA NAME: _____

Coaches working with PA's are to complete the following form in order to provide constructive feedback to the PA about his/her performance.

N/A = Not Applicable, F = Fair, G = Good, E = Excellent

CRITERIA	N/A	F	G	E
Communication Skills				
Uses demonstrations effectively				
Exhibits patience with others around him/her				
Group Management Skills				
Keeps group moving (goal 90%)				
Keeps group on task				
Maintains control of group				
Leads activities with enthusiasm and sense of fun				
Duties/Tasks				
Performs assigned duties				
Ensures safety in all activities				
Willing to take on additional roles and duties				
Personal Attributes				
Is punctual				
Follows instructions				
Takes initiative to solve problems				
Is an effective role model				

PA STRENGTHS:

_____

_____

_____

SUGGESTIONS FOR GROWTH:

_____

_____

_____

COACH NAME: _____ **COACH SIGNATURE:** _____

PA INITIALS: _____ **DATE:** _____

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PROGRAM ASSISTANT PERSONAL REFLECTION SHEET

PA NAME: _____

PAs are to complete the following form to provide personal reflection regarding their performance and comment on areas where they would like further development or training.

MY STRENGTHS AS A PA ARE:

_____

_____

_____

AREAS THAT I FIND DIFFICULT ARE:

_____

_____

_____

I WOULD LIKE TO LEARN MORE ABOUT:

_____

_____

_____

MY FAVOURITE THING ABOUT BEING A PA IS:

_____

_____

_____

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

_____

_____

_____

PA SIGNATURE: _____ **DATE** _____

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PROGRAM ASSISTANT TRAINING

CANSKATE

This certificate is proudly presented for honourable achievement to

_____

Congratulations on completing the CanSkate program assistant training program.

DATE:_____ **CLUB:**_____ **COACH:**_____

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Skate Canada President
Benoît Lavoie