

Clothing Guidelines

Obviously when you compete or test you'll want to wear something that's a bit special, and comfort won't be your first priority. But what about all those hours you spend practicing?? Here comfort and safety will be more important to you. It is important that whatever you wear be loose enough to not restrict your motion. It should not be so loose or baggy that it presents a safety hazard however. You should never wear anything that is so loose that it drags on the ice, or close to your blades.

If you're prone to getting cold, consider a layered approach. A couple of thin sweaters or sweatshirts will be better than one really heavy thick one -- and you can shed layers as you heat up. Girls generally wear thin sparkly tights when competing. But for practice some skaters choose to wear those slightly baggy "jogging suit" or "sweat suit" pants over their tights. Like sweaters, these can be removed as you heat up. Another option is to get the heavier practice tights. In our area, skaters call these "sweater tights", and from a distance, these look just like the regular competition tights.

You might choose to wear a nylon windsuit like runners often wear. These are lightweight, and usually have a felt lining for warmth. These suits are generally nice and loose so they don't restrict you. The nylon tends to shed water, and always keeps it away from your skin, unlike tights or normal pants. And the nylon material is very slippery -- when you fall, it slides very nicely on the ice and tends to minimize the "hurt".

Gloves are appropriate if your hands get cold. Most skaters wear those stretchy "one-size-fits-all" gloves. You should get lots of pairs because they always seem to disappear even faster than socks. Heavy outdoor coats generally hinder your ability to move, and should probably be avoided unless it's really cold and you have no other options.

Competition and Test Clothing

It's important to realize as you go to tests or competitions that you're going there as a skater, not as a fashion model. The judges will be a lot more interested in what you do than in how you look. You should be neat and tidy, and you should ensure that your clothing is appropriate to your age and skating level.

The USFSA does set some minimal standards for clothing that must be followed, or deductions will be assessed during a competition. These can be found in section SSR 19.00 of the Rulebook, and are summarized below.

- All clothing must be modest, dignified, not theatrical in design, and appropriate for athletic competition.
- Men must wear full-length trousers - no tights are permitted.
- Men's clothing must have a neckline which does not expose the chest.
- Men's clothing must not be sleeveless.
- Ladies must have skirts and "pants" covering the hips and posterior.
- Unitards are not allowed.
- Bare midriffs are not permitted.
- Excessive decoration such as beads, sequins should be avoided, and all decorations used must be firmly fastened, so that they do not fall off on the ice.

If you buy your clothing from a catalog supplier that caters to the skating market, you can be reasonably confident that these standards are followed. If you make your own, or get a local dressmaker to make your outfits, you should ensure that the above rules are understood.

If you do make your clothing, consider some of the following hints:

- Girl's sleeves usually have a loop at the end which can be "hooked" over a finger to keep the sleeves from sliding up the arms as she moves.
- Similarly, boy's pants usually have a strap on the bottom that goes under the boot to keep them tidy. This strap is generally attached with "Velcro" or by a button.
- Make sure that the material is stretchy enough to permit movement without binding, pulling, or tearing out of the seams.
- Ladies clothing often uses "flesh-colored" fabric to maintain appropriate modesty while creating the illusion of "less cover".
- Hot Glue guns work well for attaching sequins and small decorations, although actual needle-and-thread application is more secure for larger decorations.
- Design your clothing so that it hides any underwear that is worn, and provides adequate support and cover for those occasions when it is not...