

So you want to compete in Speedskating!

Well! Join the gang and lets go fast!

Steps on how a speed skating ability meet normally goes.

Getting to the meet and finding out your group

1. Get at the rink 30-45 minutes ahead of time to find your way around, find the Gloucester Concordes allocated change room and get ready to go on ice.
2. Once you found your change room, find what your group and race heat number is. Groups are named using the letters of the alphabet (like airplane pilots would do). So, the first group (normally the younger group) will be Alpha, and then the next group is called Bravo, Charlie, Delta, Echo, Foxtrot, etc... That will be the name of your group your whole day (or weekend if the meet is a two-day meet).
3. The heat numbers will be displayed on the electronic hockey scoreboard. Keep in mind that if you are in heat number 15, it will not take long that your group will be called up on the ice. Since a 333meter race could take a maximum of say one minute and much less for faster skaters, then skaters in heat number 15 would have to be ready in less than 15 minutes.
4. An attendant will call your group and the name of skaters in that heat when the time comes. If you are not on the start line with all your equipment (don't forget your neck guard), then the chief referee will not allow you to skate.

Warm-ups

5. At the beginning of a competition day there will be warm-ups for all groups. For example, at the 1st Eastern Regional meet at the Bell Sensplex Complex, the warm ups start at 8:00am. The Master of ceremony will call the different groups to go on ice for a 5 to 10 minute warm-up. Generally, he or she will call 2-4 groups for warming up at the same time. Be ready for warm-up at least 10 minutes ahead of time.
6. Normally, they would go from younger to older skaters for warm-ups; sometimes they would go the other way around.
7. In the warm ups, find out through your coach what to do. In general, you should do 5 or 6 laps, then try a few starts and skate around to feel the ice. Some ice pads have harder ice than others, so it's good to find out before you're on the start line.

Racing

8. As I mentioned earlier, check the scoreboard to see what heat is currently racing. Get ready at least 10 to 15 heats before yours. Don't miss the call to go on ice!
9. At the Bell Sensplex, a volunteer will call your name. They will have chairs set-up along the wall inside the rink. This same volunteer will ask you to sit there until the next step comes.
10. NOTE that parents are not allowed in this area (unless their child is injured).

11. When ready, the volunteer will tell you to go ahead and walk around the ice pad corridor to get to another set of chairs close to the players' bench. You will wait there for a bit.
12. Then, you will be asked to go sit on the players' bench. This means that your turn to race is coming soon! It sure is going to be fun! Don't be nervous; see each race as a fun learning event!
13. I will assume that you all learned how to start. The referee will help you out if you seem lost. Remember the commands: Go to the line – READYYY! BANG! (gun firing) ☺
14. As soon as your race is finished, you will have to get off the ice, put your skate guards on and walk back to see your friends and parents and cheer your peers!
15. NOTE! VERY IMPORTANT NOTE! If you fall during a race and if you are not too hurt, get back up, do your best to finish your race because all skaters that finish a race will get points. If you do not finish your race, you get zero points.

The points system

16. At each race, the first skater will get more points than the last skater. For example, the first skater would get 1000 points, the second one to finish, 800 points, and so on, decreasing the points until the last skater of a heat.
17. During the meet – 2 days at Bell Sensplex – the skater with the most points will win the gold medal.
18. Don't worry if you are not doing well in a race or if you fall, you have the whole weekend to get those points back... and you never know, the fastest skater can fall too, so you may be able to win anyways. That is why it is very important to always finish your races the best you can.
19. Racing in speed skating is all about competing to do your best. Get a little booklet and write down your times for different distances with the date that you raced. You'll see, your times (your personal best time (PBs)) will only get better throughout the year!

Groups and points

20. So I talked about groups. In the Alpha group for example, there may be 18 skaters. Normally, they don't allow more than 6 skaters on the starting line. This means that there would be 3 different heats for the Alpha group.
21. When all Alpha groups have completed their races, the race results will be posted on the wall in the main corridor leading to the change rooms. You'll see many people looking at the wall,... for their times.
22. Generally, there will be a semi-final and a final for each group. In this example, the Alpha group skaters (the 18 of them) will be placed in the 'A', 'B' or 'C' final dependent on their semi-final race. Check it carefully, because even if you skated in the third Alpha semi-final, you may end up in the 'A' final, which means that you'll be amongst the 6 fastest times for the Final.

Oh yes, before I forget,... bring a hair dryer. IF you fall during a race, you will get all wet and will need to dry your clothes or skin suit.