



Strapping on a pair of in-line skates at top speeds is all the craze for kids, but safety is a must to prevent injuries from occurring. Kids can reach speeds of 20 kilometres an hour or more while adults travel 30 kilometres an hour. Without protective equipment injuries will continue to rise, dramatically increasing health care costs. Eventually the pavement wins if you don't wear the gear.



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Most children complain that protective equipment is hot and uncomfortable and there will be peer pressure to forgo wearing all the protective equipment. "It 's not cool to wear the gear," is a common phrase that we constantly hear from kids from all ages.

Injuries are on the rise and no one is taking the role as the leader in promoting a safety message for children and parents are not realizing the dangers that in-line skating cause. Recently, a six year old boy wearing in-line skates fell, shattering his elbow. He wasn't wearing elbow pads because the older skaters didn't wear their pads. This and many more stories happen all the time, but how do we communicate this message to such a diverse group of skaters?

## History

The first in-line skates were invented in the early 1700's when Dutchman attempted to simulate ice skating in the summer with the bottom of his shoes. In 1863, an American developed the first "conventional" roller skates with wheels arranged side-by-side.

In 1980, two hockey-playing Minnesota brothers discovered in-line skates while rummaging through a

sporting goods store and decided that a design would make this skate an ideal off-season hockey training tool. They refined the skate and began assembling the first Rollerblade skates in the basement of their parents' home.

Today, in-line skates are gaining popularity across demographic, regional, and even international lines. Fitness experts recognize the low-impact, high-aerobic benefits of the sport. Serious athletes who include in-line skating in their training program, admit that they enjoy the sheer fun of skating as much as the benefits of the workout.

## Equipment

In-line skates are manufactured in a variety of sizes and shapes. Using them for Roller hockey, speed skating, basketball, or just a family skate, they allow the individual an excellent athletic workout. Just like other sports, protective equipment is a must and knowing the basics can reduce injuries.

Facts recently gathered from the Medical Post, July 1994 state that:

- 60% of all in-line injuries are with youths under the age of 15
- 90% wear no helmets
- 82% wear no protective equipment
- 58% of all injuries are to the wrist and lower arm
- 70% of the injured lost their balance
- 48% of all injuries were fractures



*Rocky Roller* ©

The educational market is constantly requesting information on in-line safety. A majority of children own a pair of in-line skates but don't know how to stop. More importantly, they refuse to wear the protective equipment because they are unaware of the consequences.

### The Rocky and Rosie Roller Safety Program

Two in-line skating safety mascots were developed to assist in the teaching of some valuable safety information (Diagram A). Rocky and Rosie Roller developed "5 Rules of the Road" and tested the program in 23 elementary schools in London, Ontario.

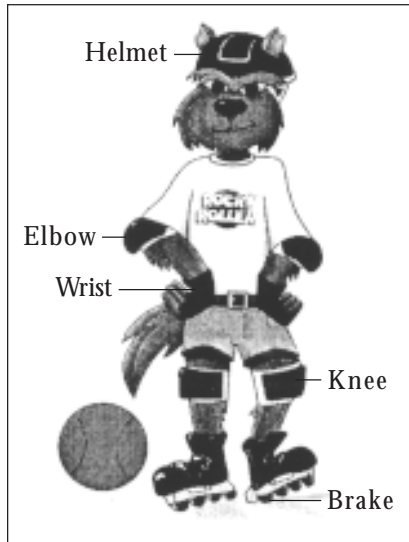


Diagram A

#### RULE #1 Wear your protective equipment.

The most important piece of equipment is not your wrist guards but your knee pads. The first reaction of skaters is to fall on your wrists, however this is why a majority of injuries are to the arms and wrist. If students are taught the proper technique of falling, (on the knee pads) they can reduce a large amount of injuries.

#### RULE #2

##### Take a lesson and learn how to stop.

*Step 1 (Diagram B):* Put your body in the ready position. This is a common position to many sports. The ready position for basketball is similar to in-line skating. We tell our students to think they are sitting in a chair.

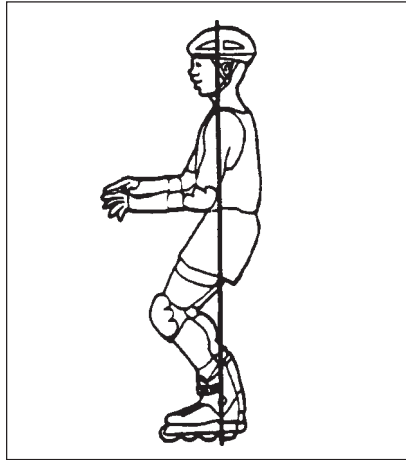


Diagram B

*Step 2 (Diagram C):* Roll your brake foot out in front of the other skate. This is the area that a majority of skaters find difficult. Keeping all the wheels on the ground when rolling the skate forward will maintain balance.



Diagram C

*Step 3 (Diagram D):* Toe to the sky. For younger children we teach them to attach a piece of string to the toe of the skate and pull it to the sky. When you engage the break, pressure should be down through the heel, like pushing the peddle of a car break. The weight of the body should be on the breaking leg to assist in applying pressure to the break pad.

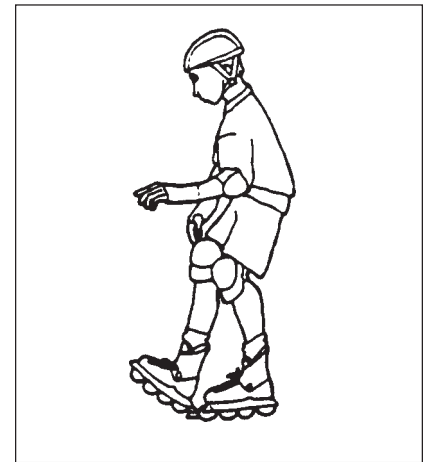


Diagram D

Ensure that your eyesight is straight ahead and that your arms are in front of your body.

A variety of break systems are available. The technique of breaking is the main issue. Some systems make breaking easier.

#### RULE #3 Obey all traffic signals.

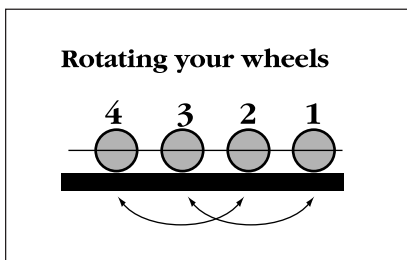
Basic rules for in-line skaters but rarely obeyed. The most important rule we address in this session is to inform people in front of you that you are approaching. Yelling, "Passing on the Left" teaches the students to be careful of approaching pedestrians. Who knows when the dog leash will cross your path?

## **RULE #4**

### **Avoid Road Hazard! The Asphalt Bites.**

Students love the puddles and rarely realize that sand can cause sudden falls. Hot pavement has caused burns and the black pavement tar is dangerous if all your wheels contact the surface.

During this lesson we teach the students the importance of rotating your wheels (Diagram E). The front wheel is exchanged with the third wheel. The second and fourth wheel are also flipped and exchanged. The first and the fourth wheel are usually used the most.



*Diagram E*

Cleaning your bearings is covered in this session. We usually recommend a tooth brush (old) to clean the dirt and particles from the bearing casing. We are always asked is ABEC 1 or ABEC 3 better?

Usually we recommend ABEC 3 as a better performing bearings because of the precision of the inner bearing, however, the manufacturers of the bearing can alter the performance.

## **RULE #5:**

### **Have Fun and Skate Safe.**

The only lesson that we ensure new skaters understand is that if you begin to lose your balance and you think you are going to fall GRAB YOUR KNEES!! This has saved numerous skaters from falling while travelling down a hill. Don't panic, grab your knees and ride out the hill.

The second point we tell our students is the grass is your best friend. Hit the grass if you're skating out of control.

Lastly we teach our students how to fall on their protective equipment and not get hurt. The aggressive hockey players are great targets to have demonstrate this exercise because "they never fall."

## **The Live Mascot Workshop**

The safety mascots help the elementary children understand the values of wearing protective equipment. The London Board of Education was approached to test the live mascot workshop and to view the response from the children.

The reaction was overwhelming. Assemblies of over 250 children would view the mascots skating the gymnasium floor while they acted out the "5 lessons." Intently they would follow every move of the mascots and scream at Rocky for not wearing his protective equipment. At the end of the story the children would help Rocky and Rosie with the 5 lessons learned.



*Rocky and Rosie Roller* ©

The outcome of the live workshop reinforced the need of information in the educational system and the need to develop a provincial program. Injuries are increasing and children are the primary victims. Consistent data and information is available and the program is tested, however funding issues remain a concern.

Currently, the Rocky Roller Company is developing a poster to reinforce the "5 Safety Rules" and a comic book featuring the two mascots will visualize the rules of the road. These first few steps will begin a program that educators can present to their students on the basics of in-line skating.

It is the intention of the Rocky Roller Company to provide an educational in-line safety video for the 1996-1997 school year. Should you want to share any stories or require additional information of the Rocky and Rosie Roller Safety program you may contact Andrew Page, President and IISA Certified In-line Instructor, The Rocky Roller Company, 22 Watford Avenue, Toronto, Ontario M5G 3C5 (416-656-4728)

*Skate Safe and have a great summer.*

*Remember the Asphalt Bites!*

