

Figure skating





Figure skating is an Olympic sport in which individuals, pairs, or groups perform spins, jumps, footwork and other intricate and challenging moves on ice skates. Figure skaters compete at various levels from beginner up to the Olympic level (senior), and at local, national, and international competitions. The International Skating Union (ISU) regulates international figure skating judging and competitions. Figure skating is an official event in the Winter Olympic Games. In languages other than English and Russian, figure skating is usually referred to by a name that translates as "artistic skating".

The history of figure skating

While people have been ice skating for centuries, figure skating in its current form originated in the mid-19th century. *A Treatise on Skating* (1772) by Englishman Robert Jones, is the first known account of figure skating. Competitions were then held in the "English style" of skating, which was stiff and formal and bears little resemblance to modern figure skating. American skater Jackson Haines, considered the "father of modern figure skating", introduced a new style of skating in the mid-1860s. This style, which incorporated free and expressive techniques, became known as the "international style." Although popular in Europe, Haines' style of skating was not widely adopted in the United States until long after his death.

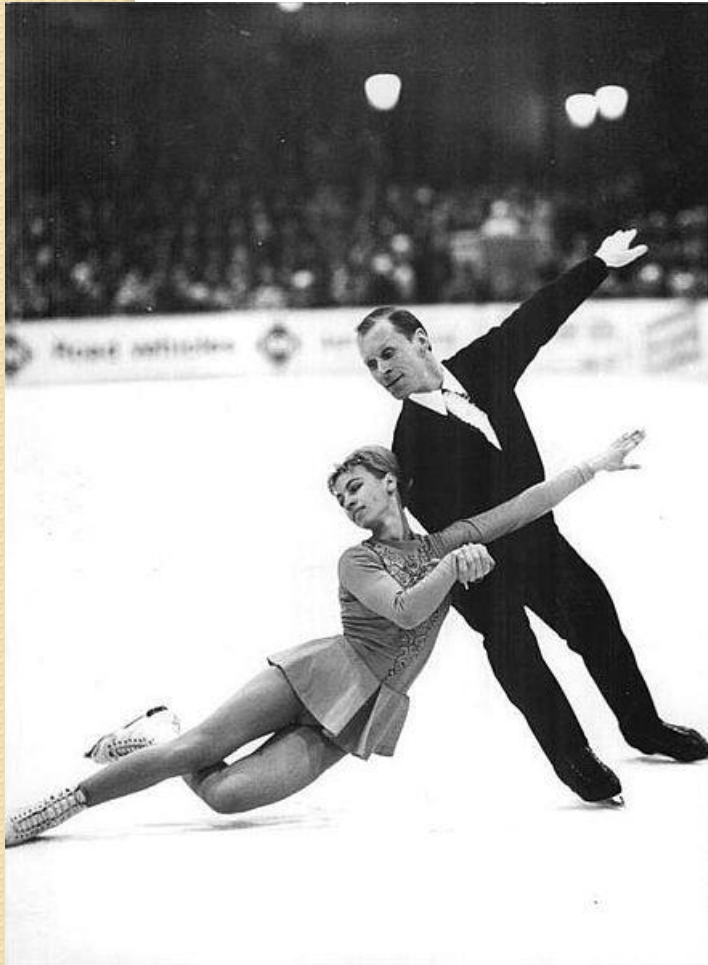


Early 1900s



The International Skating Union was founded in 1892. The first European Championship was held in 1891, and the first World Championship was held in 1896 and won by Gilbert Fuchs. Only men competed in these events. In 1902, a woman, Madge Syers, entered the World competition for the first time, finishing second. The ISU quickly banned women from competing against men, but established a separate competition for "ladies" in 1906. Pair skating was introduced at the 1908 World Championships, where the title was won by Anna Hübler & Heinric Burger. The first Olympic figure skating competitions also took place in 1908.

Rise of the Soviet Union



On February 15, 1961, the entire U.S. figure skating team and their coaches were killed in the crash of Sabena Flight 548 in Brussels, Belgium en route to the World Championships in Prague. This tragedy sent the U.S. skating program into a period of rebuilding. At the same time, the Soviet Union rose to become a dominant power in the sport, especially in the disciplines of pair skating and ice dancing. At every Winter Olympics from 1964 until 2006, a Soviet or Russian pair won gold in pair skating, often considered one of the longest winning streaks in modern sports history. The 1967 World Championships was the last event held in an outdoor rink.

Present

day

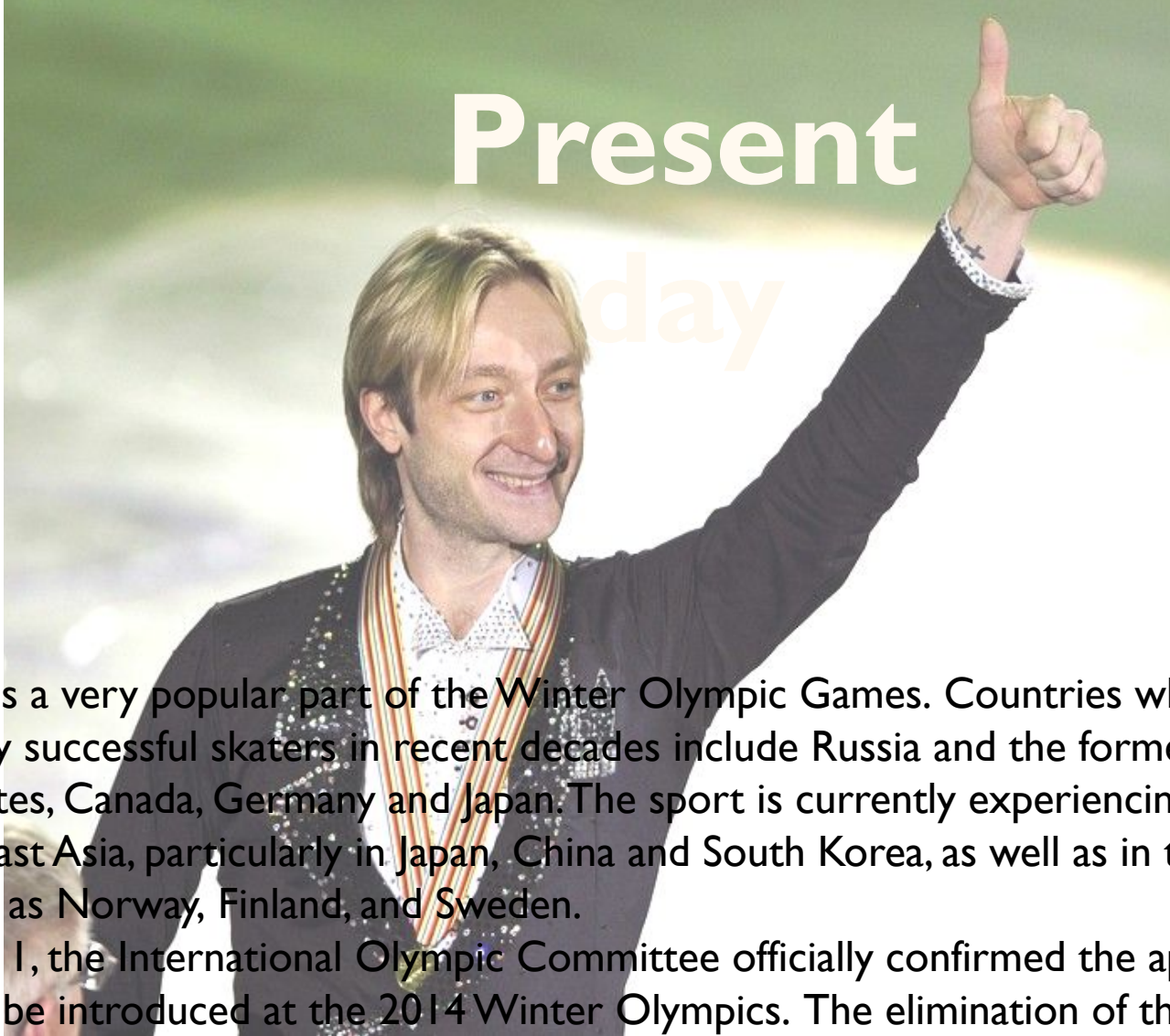


Figure skating is a very popular part of the Winter Olympic Games. Countries who have produced many successful skaters in recent decades include Russia and the former Soviet Union, the United States, Canada, Germany and Japan. The sport is currently experiencing a surge in popularity in East Asia, particularly in Japan, China and South Korea, as well as in the Nordic countries such as Norway, Finland, and Sweden.

On April 6, 2011, the International Olympic Committee officially confirmed the approval of a team event, to be introduced at the 2014 Winter Olympics. The elimination of the compulsory dance provided space for the team event. Each team will be composed of a men's and ladies single skater, a pair, and an ice dancing team. Ten teams may compete, with five eliminated after the short program. In December 2011, the International Skating Union released details of the qualifying system and the competition.

Music



For competitive programs, figure skaters were generally restricted to instrumental music. Vocal music was only allowed if it contained no lyrics or words. The restriction did not apply to exhibition programs. Beginning in the 1997–1998 season, the International Skating Union decided to allow lyrics or words in ice dancing. The ban continued in singles and pair skating, however, judges did not always penalize violations. At the 2011 World Championships, Florent Amodio's long program music included words but an insufficient number of judges voted to penalize it. In June 2012, the International Skating Union voted to allow skaters from all disciplines to choose music with words in their competitive programs beginning in the 2014–2015 season.

Ice dancers are required to skate to music that has a definite beat or rhythm. Singles and pair skaters more often skate to the melody and phrasing of their music.

For long programs, figure skaters generally search for music with different moods and tempos.

Figure skates



Figure skates differ from hockey skates most visibly in having a set of large, jagged teeth called *toe picks* (also called "toe rakes") on the front of the blade.

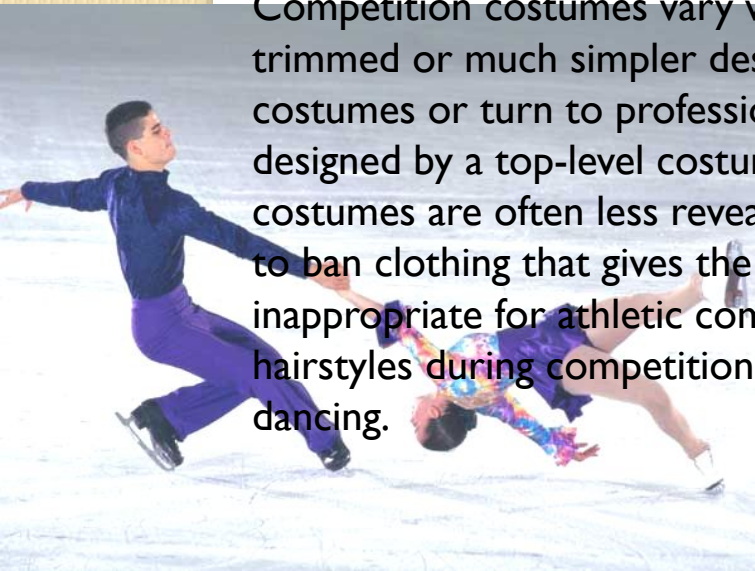
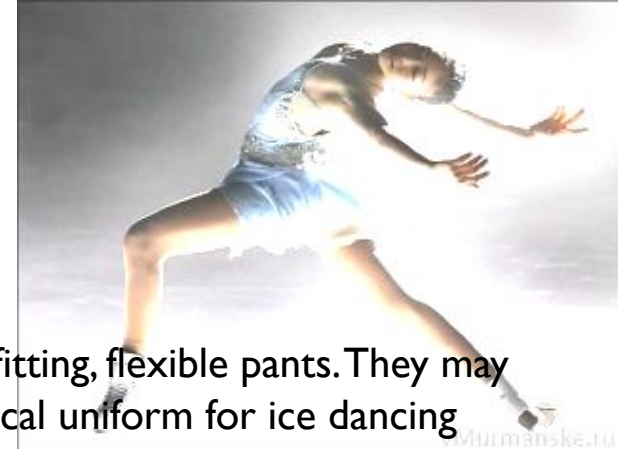
The toe picks are used primarily in jumping and should not be used for stroking or spins. Blades are mounted to the sole and heel of the boot with screws. Typically, high-level figure skaters are professionally fitted for their boots and blades at a reputable skate shop in their area.

Ice dancers' blades are about an inch shorter in the rear than those used by skaters in other disciplines, to accommodate the intricate footwork and close partnering in dance. Dancers' blades also do not have the large toe pick used for jumping. Hard plastic *skate guards* are used when the skater must walk in his or her skates when not on the ice. The guard protects the blade from dirt or material on the ground that may dull the blade. Soft blade covers called *soakers* are used to absorb condensation and protect the blades from rust when the skates are not being worn.

Clothing

For practice skating, figure skaters often wear leggings, tight fitting, flexible pants. They may also wear a skirt with skin-colored tights or a dress. The typical uniform for ice dancing takes more of a ballet approach including a black leotard with a skirt and beige tights. In competition, girls and women may wear a dress, typically with matching attached briefs. Most of these dresses especially at the Olympic level are intricate handmade pieces that are beaded with great detail. The attire must correspond to their program music and embody the essence of the melody. Women may wear trousers in competition since 2004 although dresses remain more popular. Women generally wear opaque flesh-coloured leggings or tights under dresses and skirts, which may extend to cover their skates. Men must wear trousers. They are not allowed to wear tights.

Competition costumes vary widely. Skaters may choose theatrical and heavily beaded or trimmed or much simpler designs. Skaters and family members may design their own costumes or turn to professional designers. Costumes may cost thousands of dollars if designed by a top-level costumemaker. Although the use of flesh-colored fabric means the costumes are often less revealing than they may appear, there have been repeated attempts to ban clothing that gives the impression of "excessive nudity" or that is otherwise inappropriate for athletic competition. Some skaters also wear theatrical make-up and hairstyles during competitions. Matching costumes are not required in pair skating and ice dancing.



What figure skating means for me?

Figure skating is the most artistic, the most wonderful, the most beautiful and elegant sport. This is not just a sport, it is some kind of art. I can watch the performance for hours. My greatest wish is to go to Sochi and see the Olympic Games.



When I watch performances of our athletes they take my breath away, because I am afraid to miss something important. While watching performances sometimes I cry. Many thanks to our skaters for their great efforts. It is a pity that figure skating receives little attention in other countries.

And yet very few people know what it takes skaters to prepare their performance how much inhuman patience is needed to make all their movements perfect. If we talk about perfection in sport, without a doubt, it is figure skating!





Thanks for watching