



**Impact**  
skateboard  
club

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**Volunteer Guide**

# About Impact

Impact Skateboard Club is a Toronto non-profit organization for kids and youth, focused on personal development and inclusion. Using the natural progression of learning to ride a skateboard, children can learn about healthy self-esteem, emotional wellbeing, social skills, and navigating the many challenges we face in life.

One of Impact's core beliefs is that everyone should have the opportunity to experience skateboarding. We make efforts to share our programming with diverse populations by partnering with other organizations and offering scholarships to our paid programs for those facing financial barriers.

At Impact, young people are encouraged to develop their character alongside their skateboarding abilities. We frequently engage in service projects where participants have an opportunity to give back to the wider community.

With a variety of annual events for children and youth, a youth leadership council, and several streams of skateboard programming, Impact is a multi-generational community of skateboarders who value inclusivity, empathy, and teamwork in order to improve their lives, and those of everyone around them.

We are always seeking new ways to connect with people and teach valuable life skills. Some participants are dedicated and focused on skateboarding, while others only skateboard casually. It is our goal to ensure that every youth who participates in Impact programming has fun, feels valued, and learns something that will help them in the future.



# Schedule

## Arrivals

We meet at 9am every morning at the playground in Stan Wadlow Park.

## Circle Time

Welcome the campers, let them know what the day will look like, explain the rules/expectations, introduce the staff and volunteers.

## Head to the Skatepark

Once we're at the park, we will have the kids neatly put their belongings in a safe area. On travel days we will always review the travelling rules before heading out.

## Group Lessons

Small group lessons every morning working on skills appropriate to that group, followed by free skate time.

## Lunch

We will all eat lunch together, usually with another circle time and discussion period.

## Games

In the afternoon we may play other games. Campers usually have the option to continue skating.

## Splash Pad

On non-travel days, we will go to the splash pad. This is a time to get out of the skatepark and take a break from skating. Those who choose not to get in the water can play hang out and cool off in the shade.

## Return to the Skatepark

More time to skate before pickups. We use this to give more 1:1 support.

## Departures

Participants will be picked up from the skatepark (or clubhouse if it's raining).

# Circle Time

The camp day starts with circle time. Campers can share their experiences in a safe environment and express their feelings freely. These discussions usually centre on learning how to navigate emotions, deal with difficult situations, and using our community and our skills to help others.

# Video Project

Every week we will film and produce a skate video highlighting the campers' progress. We aim to get a clip of every child doing whatever they can do, even if it's just tic-tacs or riding down a small ramp. The clips will be put together and the video will be shared with the parents and participants on our Instagram/YouTube channels.

# Moving Around the Park

The park has a snack bar with candy, chips, drinks, etc. We will allow the kids to go once in the afternoon (usually after a bathroom break or returning from a trip). The snack bar is a privilege, and might be taken away from individuals or the entire group, based on their behavior.

Staff or volunteers must always go with kids to the snack bar, washroom, or water fountain. It is important that there are always 2 or more campers with a staff member or volunteer. Do not leave the skatepark alone with a child.

# Rain

If it rains, we will usually find shelter and wait it out. There is a covered area at the Stan Wadlow Clubhouse. If it's raining at the end of the day, we will meet the parents here. If the forecast calls for all-day rain, we may travel to Underpass Skatepark, even if it's not a travel day.

# Interacting with Kids

## General

- Connect by getting down to their eye level, especially when talking about something serious.
- Use simple language—they might not yet understand skateboard terms. Also stay away from adult themes, gender stereotypes, discrimination, name-calling, etc.
- Give lots of praise and encouragement—let them know they’re doing a good job! Try to compliment the effort more than the result.
- Stay organized and help the kids stay organized. With so many campers it’s easy to make a mess. Staff and volunteers should encourage them to keep their belongings tidy. We are helping them to develop life skills that go beyond skateboarding, and this is one that many have not yet learned.
- Maintain healthy boundaries with campers! We’re not prison guards but we are in a position of authority. Kids should know we care about them and are looking out for their wellbeing. We do that by keeping it mature and responsible, even while being silly and having fun.

## Teaching

- Go slowly—explain one thing at a time, make sure they understand, then move on.
- Be patient. Some kids take time to process the information you’re giving them. You can support them by putting your foot on one of their wheels, so their board doesn’t roll.
- Make sure they learn the proper foot positions before attempting to go down any ramps (check with staff if you need clarification).

## **Behavior Issues**

- If a camper isn't listening or they're acting up, try not to call them out in front of everyone. Talk to them one-on-one or let a staff member know.
- Always try to understand what the child is trying to get out of the behavior. Sometimes it's just attention-seeking, sometimes they are feeling upset or unsafe. Ask what they're feeling and try repeating back what they say in different words and adding, "is that right?". This makes them feel heard.
- Only staff can give consequences. Let us know if a situation is getting out of hand.

## **Injuries**

- Falls and injuries can be scary for a child—it's your job to stay calm. Rushing over to them and freaking out only scares them more. You can usually tell how serious an injury after a few seconds of observation.
- No need to ask "are you okay"—it's better to see for yourself, then later you can ask them where they're hurt, if necessary.
- Other children might want to see what happened. Calmly let them know to give the injured child some space and move away from the area.
- If it's a minor injury, make sure the child is safe (i.e. not sitting at the bottom of a ramp), and tell them you know it hurts, and you're sorry that it happened.
- Don't dismiss the child's pain ("it's not that bad", "suck it up", "you're fine"). Instead you can let them know it will not hurt so much in a little while and they can get through this. If they were trying something new and difficult for them, you can praise their courage and let them know they will get it soon. Wait until they're feeling better before offering to help them try again.
- For more serious injuries, alert a staff member and remember to stay calm.

# Interacting with Parents

- When speaking with parents of campers, act professionally: make eye contact, be polite, mind your language (avoid slang, etc).
- You are representing the staff team, and we want parents to know that their kids are safe and learning the right things from us.

# Personal Conduct

- Ensure that your social media is clean. This is for volunteering/working with us but also just a good idea.
- Avoid sharing your social media with campers. If there is an exception (like you know them outside of camp), talk to the camp director first.
- Even outside of camp hours, we expect you to be a good role model. Watch your language and behavior when you're at the skatepark. Like your social media, this isn't just for camp but generally being a positive example of a skateboarder.

# Active Listening

Active listening is a skill that must be learned and practiced. It requires that the listener fully concentrate, understand, respond, and then remember what has been said. The result is that the speaker feels that their point of view is valid. When you practice active listening, you make the other person feel heard and valued.

## Non-verbal

- Make eye contact while the other person speaks. Lean toward the other person, and nod your head occasionally. Avoid folding your arms, fidgeting, looking away, checking your phone, etc.— these things signal that you are not listening.

- In addition to listening to what is said, watch the speaker's nonverbal behavior to pick up on hidden meaning. Facial expressions, tone of voice, and other behaviors can sometimes tell you more than words.
- While listening, turn off your "internal dialogue. You cannot attentively listen to someone else and your own internal voice at the same time.

### **Verbal**

- Instead of offering advice or opinions, simply paraphrase what has been said. You might start this off by saying, "So what you are saying is...".

#### EXAMPLE:

Speaker: (upset) I can't do this! I suck at skateboarding!

Listener: It sounds like you're feeling frustrated that you're not getting this trick.

Show interest by asking questions to clarify what is said. Ask open-ended questions to encourage the speaker. Avoid closed yes-or-no questions—these tend to shut down conversation.

#### EXAMPLE:

Closed: Do you like being at skate camp?

Open: What do you like best about skate camp?

- Avoid abruptly changing the subject, and remember to be patient. We are capable of listening much faster than others can speak. As you listen, be open, neutral, and withhold judgment and stereotypes.

## **Things to Remember**

- Our goal is to make sure every kid has a positive experience, even if skateboarding isn't their thing. We do this by making them feel accepted, valued, and cared for. Use *active listening* and never embarrass or shame them. A caring older person is integral for kids' self-esteem.



- You are there to help, support, and have fun! We have serious responsibilities, but we are still enjoying what we love to do. Healthy boundaries mean that you're not "friends" with the campers, but you should definitely be *friendly*!
- Being overly-friendly can blur boundaries and result in a group that doesn't listen to you or follow what you ask them to do. Watch out for that!
- You are part of a team and you are important. Regardless of whether you are staff or a volunteer, your input is valuable. If you think something should change, feel free to speak with the camp director privately—we want to hear your thoughts and ideas.
- Honesty is the MOST important part of being a part of the Impact team. Even if you think we will react badly or be upset, please just tell the truth about what is going on and we can work it out. It's actually good for kids to see that adults and older people can admit their mistakes and take responsibility. Let's be sure to model the right behavior, even when it's inconvenient or embarrassing.

# Thank You!

Thank you for your willingness to help out! Impact is all about creating ways for people to connect and be part of a positive community, within skateboarding and outside of it. We're all still learning and none of us are perfect, but we are growing and getting better together. Remember that you are worthy of kindness, respect, and that your needs matter. We're here for you!

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