



## 2026 USA GRAND NATIONAL DANCE CHAMPIONSHIP COMPETITION RULES

(Anything in red reflects “New”- updated March 1st, 2026)

Yellow highlights are for changes to outside organization rules.

### Mission Statement

*“To provide a fun, friendly, and organized competitive dance environment where separate dance communities can become inspired by the other to share, create, and merge into one dance while maintaining the integrity of each dance individually”*

### Event Director

USA Grand National Dance Championship is sponsored by Michael and LeAnn Productions LLC. Final decisions on any matter pertaining to these competitions rest solely with the Event Directors.

### GNDNC General Competition Requirements

#### Competitor Eligibility:

- Must purchase a weekend pass
- Must sign a waiver (if you are under the age of 18, your parent or guardian must sign for you)
- Register by entry deadline(s)
- Must complete entry form and pay entry fee prior to event or not considered “registered”
- Must follow individual division guidelines as outlined in this document

#### Age Requirements:

- Are outlined in the specific qualification for each division
- Competitors must meet age requirement by the event date
- All attendees under the age of 18 must be accompanied by a parent or guardian

#### Waiver Forms:

- Every competitor must sign the appropriate waiver before being allowed to compete
- Competitors under the age of eighteen must have a parent or guardian sign any required forms
- Every member of a team or cabaret act must sign a waiver

#### Partner Restrictions:

- Eligible competitors are not allowed to enter multiple routine divisions/Strictly Swing divisions with the same partner (except team, cabaret or pro-am).

## **Restarts:**

**May** request a restart under the following circumstances

- If the DJ plays the wrong song.
- If the music or sound system fails or if the ballroom lights go out during the performance.
- If a contestant has a costume malfunction or loses a vital piece of clothing or breaks a shoe.

May **NOT** request a restart under the following circumstances

- Dissatisfied with their performance, their partner, or their dance order
- Dissatisfied with their music or music tempo
- Fail to remember all or part of the routine or stop their performance
- If a contestant is injured during the performance due to safety reasons

Note: You must request a restart before you leave the floor. The Chief Judge approves the request. The Chief Judge may also call for a restart without a request from you, if our Chief Judge believes it is fair for all and in your best interest. If a restart is allowed, your previous scores will be voided. If denied, or you decline an offer to restart, your prior performance will be scored. Competitors with pre-selected music are expected to ensure their music and tempo are tested on the DJ's sound system.

## **Responsibility of Competitors**

1. Be prepared for the weekend by checking all weekend schedules, attending all mandatory meetings, turning in music on time, and arriving for competition on time. Competitors must be present in ballroom 10 minutes prior to their competition. Remember: Event schedule is subject to change.
2. Read and adhere to the rules for their competition prior to dancer's meeting.
3. Demonstrate good sportsmanlike conduct.
4. Competitors must turn-in music at DANCERS MEETING on FRIDAY.

## **Cancellations**

Any contestant(s) who wish to cancel their application prior to May 15, 2026, will receive a refund of their entry fee. Cancellations received after that date will not receive a refund.

## **Dancer's Roll Call**

The dancers' meeting will be held in the Fulton Room at 5:00 pm on Friday of the event. All competitors must be registered and should plan to attend (except Pro-Am Lead/Follow, Jack and Jill's, and Non-Professional Shag). Dance position numbers will be electronically drawn/assigned at 5:00 pm and roll call will be at 5:15 pm (even if you are not in attendance). If you are not registered, you will not dance without advanced prior approval from the Event Director. Turn in your music to the DJ present at the dancers meeting, USB drive, or it may be emailed in advance. Dance Order will be announced at the end of the meeting.

## **Referee Rules**

Contestants will be judged by a panel of 5-7 judges. All judges' decisions are final. GNDC may utilize a Referee to monitor and flag rules in question. A video review may be required by a 3-person judging panel. If 2 or more agree a penalty or violation may result. See below for NASDE Referee Rules.

## **Scoring Review**

Competitors' dance scores will be available for review immediately after the awards ceremony on Sunday evening.

# 2026 USA GRAND NATIONAL DANCE CHAMPIONSHIP (GNDC) DIVISION RULES

## **Non-Professional Carolina Classic:**

This division is designed to feature Carolina Shag dancers who are non-professionals (have never competed in or won a professional shag dance competition)

### **General:**

1. Competitor couples will be comprised of one male and one female.
2. The maximum number of entries in each division is at the event's discretion. The minimum number of entries for this division is 5.
3. An individual is not permitted to dance twice within the same division.
4. Props are not allowed.

### **Specific**

1. Contestants must be 21 years or older by the end of the event to participate.
2. Newcomer, amateur, or novice shag dancers who have never competed in OR won a professional shag dance competition.
3. Performance time is a minimum of 2 minutes and a maximum of 3 minutes.
4. Competitors select their own music.
5. No choreographed routines or lifts allowed.
6. No costumes allowed although matching or complimentary outfits are appropriate.
7. No choreographed entrances or exits.

## **Carolina Classic:**

This division is designed to feature Carolina Shag dancers who are professionals (any person who has danced in a professional shag contest)

### **General:**

1. Competitor couples will be comprised of one male and one female.
2. The maximum number of entries in each division is at the event's discretion. The minimum number of entries for this division is 5.
3. An individual is not permitted to dance twice within the same division.
4. Props are not allowed.

### **Specific**

1. Contestants must be 21 years or older by the end of the event to participate.
2. Any person who has danced in a professional shag contest (regardless of outcome).
3. Performance time is a minimum of 2 minutes and a maximum of 3 minutes.
4. Competitors select their own music.
5. No choreographed routines or lifts allowed.
6. No costumes allowed although matching or complimentary outfits are appropriate.
7. No choreographed entrances or exits.

## Junior Shag I:

This division is designed to feature young Carolina Shag dancers who are under the age of 14

### General:

1. Competitor couples will be comprised of one male and one female.
2. The maximum number of entries in each division is at the event's discretion. The minimum number of entries for this division is 5. If there are not enough to make this division, there will be one junior shag division.
3. An individual is not permitted to dance twice within the same division.
4. Props are not allowed.

### Specific

5. Contestants must be 14 and under by the end of the event to participate.
6. Performance time is a minimum of 2 minutes and a maximum of 3 minutes.
7. Competitors select their own music.
8. No choreographed routines or lifts allowed.
9. No costumes allowed although tasteful, age-appropriate, matching or complimentary outfits are allowed.
10. No choreographed entrances or exits.

## Junior Shag II:

This division is designed to feature young Carolina Shag dancers who are older than 15 but under the age of 21

### General:

1. Competitor couples will be comprised of one male and one female.
2. The maximum number of entries in each division is at the event's discretion. The minimum number of entries for this division is 5.
3. An individual is not permitted to dance twice within the same division.
4. Props are not allowed.

### Specific

1. Contestants must be between the ages of 15-20 by the end of the event to participate.
2. Performance time is a minimum of 2 minutes and a maximum of 3 minutes.
3. Competitors select their own music.
4. No choreographed routines or lifts allowed.
5. No costumes allowed although tasteful, age-appropriate, matching or complimentary outfits are allowed.
6. No choreographed entrances or exits.

## **Carolina Masters Shag:**

This division is designed to feature Carolina Shag dancers who are over the age of 45

### **Carolina Masters Shag General:**

1. Competitor couples will be comprised of one male and one female.
2. The maximum number of entries in each division is at the event's discretion. The minimum number of entries for this division is 5.
3. An individual is not permitted to dance twice within the same division.
4. Props are not allowed.

### **Carolina Masters Shag Specific:**

1. Contestants must be 45 years or older by the end of the event to participate.
2. Performance time is a minimum of 2 minutes and a maximum of 3 minutes.
3. Competitors select their own music.
4. No choreographed routines or lifts allowed.
5. No costumes allowed although matching or complimentary outfits are appropriate.
6. No choreographed entrances or exits.

## **GNDC Team:**

This division is designed to feature synchronized couples dancing of any genre of "swing" with a minimum of two couples

### **Team General:**

1. The maximum number of entries in each division is at the event's discretion. The minimum number of entries for this division is 3 teams.
2. An individual is only allowed to compete on one team, unless there are extenuating circumstances. Must be approved by event director if an individual is competing on more than one team.
3. Props must be approved by the Chief Judge and/or Event Director.

### **Team Specific**

1. Contestants must be 6 years or older by the end of the event to participate.
2. Performance time is a minimum of 3 minutes and a maximum of 5 minutes.
3. Competitors select their own music.
4. Choreographed routines are required. No line dances allowed.
5. Lifts, aerials, acrobatic moves, drops, slides, break-aways, switching of partners, and reverse lead/follow are all allowed.
6. Costumes are required.
7. Choreographed entrances or exits are allowed. The clock begins when the performance starts as determined by the Chief Judge.
8. Guidelines for expected swing content: 50% in Team. It is at the judges' discretion to determine the swing content requirement has been met.

## **GNDC Shag Jack and Jill (Mixed – Double) Divisions**

The Jack & Jill competitions are designed to highlight social dance skills in shag dancing and the ability to dance well with a variety of partners.

### **Shag Jack and Jill Format**

Competitors enter as individuals, are randomly assigned partners, and dance to music selected in advance by the Competition DJ. Depending on the number of entries, preliminary, semi-final, and final rounds may be held and will be danced in a heated format. Each division must have at least 5 leaders and 5 followers. There is no maximum number of competitors.

### **Shag Jack and Jill General**

1. Each competitor may enter only one skill level Jack & Jill competition.
2. Couples must maintain physical contact except for spins, turns, short break-a-ways, and recoveries.
3. Dancers must maintain their own physical contact with the floor during partner weight support moves (at least one foot on ground).
4. No lifts.
5. Props are not allowed.

### **Shag Division Qualifications**

Our qualifications for entries promote fairness and competitor enjoyment by grouping dancers of similar ability in the same division. It is the Organizer's goal to encourage all competitors to assign themselves to the appropriate classification using the honor system.

### **Shag Division Non-Professional**

1. Newcomer, amateur, or novice shag dancers who have never competed in OR won a professional shag dance competition.
2. Junior, Senior, or Master competitors who have won or placed in the top three in any national shag dance competition are encouraged to dance in the experienced division

### **Shag Division Experienced**

1. Competitors who are considered "experienced" dancers who do not meet eligibility requirements for the non-professional Jack & Jill. Competitors may be shag instructors, hall of fame designees, or experienced social dancers.
2. Junior, Senior, or Master competitors who have won or placed in the top three in any national shag competition are encouraged to dance in the experienced division.
3. Competitors are encouraged to assign themselves to the appropriate classification using the honor system.

## **GNDC Swing Jack and Jill Divisions**

The Jack & Jill competitions are designed to highlight social dance skills in spontaneous swing dancing and the ability to dance well with a variety of partners.

### **GNDC Swing Jack and Jill Divisions:**

Newcomer

Novice

Intermediate  
Advanced  
All Stars  
Sophisticated (Age 35+)  
Masters (Age 50+)  
Everybody Dance Now (GNDC's All American Division)

### **Swing Jack and Jill Division Qualifications**

Our qualifications for entries promote fairness and competitor enjoyment by grouping dancers of similar ability in the same division. Our rules are based on the World Swing Dance Council (WSDC) recommendations and points registry competitor data. It is the Organizer's goal to encourage all competitors to assign themselves to the appropriate classification using the World Swing Dance Council Points Registry. <https://www.worldsdc.com/rules/>

### **Swing Jack and Jill Format**

Competitors enter as individuals, are randomly assigned partners, and dance to music selected in advance by the Competition DJ. Depending on the number of entries, preliminary, semi-final, and final rounds may be held and will be danced in a heated format. Each division must have at least 5 leaders and 5 followers. There is no maximum number of competitors.

### **Swing Jack and Jill Specifics:**

**Competitors must be at least 14 years of age, and if you are under age 18 you must have the consent of your parent or guardian)**

Couples must maintain physical contact except for spins, turns, short break-a-ways, and recoveries  
Dancers must maintain their own physical contact with the floor during partner weight support moves, (one foot on the ground) Props are not allowed.

## World Swing Dance Council Rules Effective 2026:

### Competitors: Skill Levels and Points Registry

For Competitor specific rules about skill levels and points registry, please see

<https://www.worldsdc.com/wp-content/uploads/2026/03/Revised-WSDC-Registry-Event-Rules-Updated-Jan172026-V2026.1B.pdf>

### Petitions

Competitors may submit a formal petition (<https://www.worldsdc.com/wsdc-forms/>) to the Event's Chief Judge to dance at a different skill level than they qualify for in a Jack and Jill division.

1. All Events will offer a petition process.
2. Petitions can be submitted one skill level up or one skill level down only.
3. The Chief Judge, or qualified individual(s) designated by the Chief Judge, will consider the requested reclassification petition after reviewing the competitor's Points Registry record.
4. Petitions are Event-specific and not transferable. Competitors may need to submit a new petition at their next Event.
5. All petitions must be submitted by the Event Director with the WSDC Event Reporting form.

### Contest Tiers, Points Awarded, and Competition Rounds

#### Point Tier Awards

Tiers are defined by the number of unique competitors in each role (Leader or Follower). Dancing in finals does not guarantee that a competitor will be awarded points. Points awarded to leaders and followers may not be identical. The higher the number of competitors within a division, the higher the Tier, and the greater the points potential.

A division may have different tiers for Leaders and Followers. For example, a Novice contest may have 18 Leaders and 35 Followers. Leaders would receive Tier 2 points; Followers would receive Tier 3 points. The points awarded to a competitor according to their placement in finals is listed in Chart 4.

WSDC Jack and Jill competitions must have a minimum of five (5) unique Leaders and five (5) unique Followers in finals be awarded and the results to be included in the Points Registry.

#### Chart 4: Points Awarded per Tier

Tier	# of Unique Competitors (per role)	1 <sup>st</sup> Place	2 <sup>nd</sup> Place	3 <sup>rd</sup> Place	4 <sup>th</sup> Place	5 <sup>th</sup> Place	Additional Placements in Final
Tier 1	5-10	3	2	1	0	0	0
Tier 2	11-19	6	4	3	2	1	0
Tier 3	20-39	10	8	6	4	2	1 (up to 10 <sup>th</sup> place)
Tier 4	40-79	15	12	10	8	6	1 (up to 12 <sup>th</sup> place)
Tier 5	80-129	20	16	14	12	10	2 (up to 15 <sup>th</sup> place)

Tier 6	130+	25	22	18	15	12	2 (up to 15 <sup>th</sup> place)
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## Competition Rounds

If the leaders and followers fall into different tiers, the number of rounds must be determined by the **higher tier**. The number of rounds for tiers is **mandatory** (see Chart 5: Competition Rounds based on Tier Size).

**Chart 5: Competition Rounds based on Tier Size**

Tier	Number of Competitors	Number of Rounds	Prelims	Quarters	Semis	Finals
1	5-10	1	Allowed if numbers are			Yes
2	11-19	1-2	Optional			Yes
3	20-39	2	Yes		Optional	Yes
4	40-79	3	Yes	Optional	Yes	Yes
5	80-129	3-4	Yes	Encouraged	Yes	Yes
6	130+	3-4	Yes	Encouraged	Yes	Yes

## **GNDC Strictly Swing Divisions:**

Swing dancing that encourages lead and follow partner dancing at its best. Although swing includes amalgamations and patterns that are familiar to many dancers, the essence of lead and follow must be maintained in and out of these patterns. Strictly Swing division is not meant for long and extended pre-choreographed phrases. Choreography "on the fly" is the objective. Drops, leans, circular movements and other partner weight support moves are allowed if both partners keep at least one foot on the floor.

### **Strictly Swing General:**

1. The maximum number of entries in each division is at the event's discretion. There is no minimum number of entries.
2. A single entry is one couple (two dancers). A couple may be other than a male leader and female follower. Guidelines for expected swing content are 90% in Strictly Swing. It is at the judge's discretion to determine that the swing content requirement has been met.
3. An individual is not permitted to dance in both Open and Champions Strictly Swing.
4. Competitors are not permitted to dance with the same partner in Strictly Swing and a Routine Division.

### **Strictly Swing Specific:**

1. Contestants must be at least fourteen (14) years or older by the end of the event to participate, and if you are under 18, you must have the consent of your parent or guardian.
2. Length of performance is at the promoter's discretion.
3. Costumes are not allowed. However, matching or complementary outfits suitable for social dancing are acceptable.
4. This division will be danced in heats for preliminaries, semi-finals, and for finals.
5. Couples must maintain physical contact except for spins, turns, short break-a-ways, and recoveries.
6. Pre-choreographed routines, and entrances or exits are not allowed.
7. Dancers must maintain their own physical contact with the floor during partner weight support moves (at least one foot on ground).

### **Strictly Swing Division Qualifications:**

It is the Organizer's goal to encourage all competitors to assign themselves to a fair and appropriate classification using the honor system.

### **Open Strictly Swing:**

1. Open to all competitors except Champions.
2. Competitors who have placed 1st-5th in a Champions or Invitational J&J held at qualifying major event **may not** dance in this division.

### **Champions Strictly Swing:**

1. Competitors may, but are not required to, dance in this division if they have any earned Professional (PRO), Champions (CHMP), Invitational (INV) or Teachers (TCH) points.
2. Competitors who have placed 1st-5th in a Champions or Invitational J&J held at qualifying major event must dance in this division.

# **GNDC Pro-Am Divisions**

The Pro-Am divisions are designed to give the amateur the opportunity to be showcased with their professional instructor for critique and feedback.

## **Pro-Am SWING Lead/Follow General:**

1. Amateurs may enter in one Division Level: Novice or Intermediate
2. Each professional shall have no more than 5 Amateurs in each Division Level (Novice and Intermediate)
3. A student/teacher relationship must exist between the competitors defined as at least one hour of private instruction in the previous 6 months.

## **Specific**

1. Length of performance is at the promoter's discretion. Music will be chosen by the DJ.
2. Costumes are not allowed. However, matching or complementary outfits suitable for social dancing are acceptable. This division will be danced in heats.
3. Couples must maintain physical contact except for spins, turns, short break-a-ways, and recoveries. 5.Pre-choreographed routines are not allowed.
4. Dancers must maintain their own physical contact with the floor during partner weight support moves (at least one foot on the ground).

## **Pro-Am SHAG Lead/Follow General:**

1. Amateurs may enter in one Division Level: Amateurs or Novice.
2. Each professional shall have no more than 5 Ams in each Division Level (Amateur and Novice).
3. Junior, Non-Professional, Senior, or Master competitors who have WON any national shag dance competition are encouraged to dance as the PRO.
4. A student/teacher relationship must exist between the competitors defined as at least one hour of private instruction in the previous 6 months.
5. Competitors are encouraged to assign themselves to the appropriate classification using the honor system.

## **Specific**

1. Length of performance is at the promoter's discretion. Music will be chosen by the DJ.
2. Costumes are not allowed. However, matching or complementary outfits suitable for social dancing are acceptable
3. This division will be danced in heats.
4. Couples must maintain physical contact except for spins, turns, short break-a-ways, and recoveries.
5. Pre-choreographed routines are not allowed, but mirror steps may be performed.
6. Dancers must maintain their own physical contact with the floor during partner weight support moves (at least one foot on the ground).

# **GNDC Pro-AM Routine Spotlight**

## **Pro-AM Routine Spotlight General:**

This Division is designed to spotlight an amateur swing dancer in a choreographed routine with one partner being a Professional Swing Dancer the other an Amateur Swing Dancer. Amateurs should be experienced and skilled in the basics of Swing Dancing. The Pro is expected to spotlight the am in a routine appropriate to their skill ability.

1. Competitors must consist of one “amateur” and one “Professional”.
2. The maximum and minimum number of entries is at the Event’s discretion.
3. Guidelines for expected swing content are 70%. It is at the judges’ discretion to determine that the swing content requirement has been met.
4. Each professional shall have no more than 3 amateur routines.
5. An “amateur” is defined as someone who does NOT teach dance, nor earn income as a dance teacher, and has not competed as an All- Star or Champion.
6. Pros with multiple Amateurs must accept their drawn dance order with each Am. If they have 3 entries and the dance order indicates back to back they must be prepared to dance the order drawn and not cause contest delays.

## **Pro-Am Routine Spotlight Specific:**

1. Performance time is a minimum of 2 minutes and maximum of 3 minutes. The clock begins when the performance starts as determined by the chief judge.
2. Competitors select their own music.
3. Costumes are allowed and encouraged.
4. Time and judging starts at first movement of performance with or without music.
5. Separate entrances are permitted but must come together within thirty-two (32) beats of the music intro.
6. Max of 3 Lifts are allowed but not required.
7. No props.
8. Break-a-ways and side-by-side patterns are permitted.
9. Maximum five (5) partner weight support moves with at least one foot on the ground.

## **GNDC Cabaret**

This division is considered “open” to any style of dance other than swing. However, a slight amount of swing is permitted.

### **Cabaret General:**

1. The maximum number of entries in each division is at the event’s discretion. The minimum number of entries for this division is 3.
2. An individual is not permitted to dance twice within the same division.
3. Props are allowed but must be approved by the event directors prior to the event.

### **Cabaret Specific:**

1. Contestants must be 6 years or older by the end of the event to participate.
2. Performance time is a minimum of 2 minutes and a maximum of 4.5 minutes.
3. The performance must display a Cabaret element, which is not present in the other dance divisions.
4. Any style of dance other than swing is permitted however a slight amount of swing is permitted defined as a maximum of 32 beats of swing patterns.
5. Competitors select their own music.
6. Choreographed routines and costumes are required.
7. Any entry may consist of a solo performer or multiple performers (ex: team)
8. Lifts, aerials, acrobatic moves, drops, slides, break-aways, switching of partners, and reverse lead/follow are all allowed.
9. Theatre Arts routines are appropriate for the Cabaret Division.
10. Choreographed entrances or exits are allowed. The clock begins when the performance starts as determined by the Chief Judge.



## NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SWING DANCE EVENTS (NASDE) NASDE Division Rules

Rule changes effective January 1, 2026 are highlighted in yellow.

### NASDE Swing Dance Competition Divisions

NASDE sponsors the swing dance competition divisions of Showcase and Classic to help promote, preserve, and improve swing dancing. The objective is to provide a competitive performance venue for the various unique styles of swing that have developed across the nation to include the Carolina Shag, Dallas Push, East Coast Swing, Hand Dancing, Hollywood Swing, Houston Whip, Imperial Swing, Jive, Jitterbug, Lindy Hop, Rock-n-Roll, and West Coast Swing, to name a few.

### NASDE Statement of Swing

NASDE Statement of Swing to be used to identify the presence of swing in the NASDE competition divisions. Swing is an American Rhythm Dance based on a foundation of 6-beat and 8-beat patterns that incorporate a wide variety of rhythms built on 2-beat single, delayed, double, triple, and blank rhythm units. The 6-beat patterns include, but are not limited to, passes, underarm turns, push-breaks, open-to closed, and closed-to-open position patterns. The 8-beat patterns include, but are not limited to, whips, swing-outs, Lindy circles, and Shag pivots. Although they are not part of the foundation of the dance as stated above, 2-beat and 4-beat extension rhythm breaks may be incorporated to extend a pattern, to phrase the music, and/or to accent breaks.

### NASDE Sportsmanship Expectations

Sportsmanship is a fundamental aspect of our competition. Competing for the NASDE prize fund is a privilege, not a right. The event director may flag a competitor's behavior as un-sportsman-like. Said behavior will be reviewed by the NASDE board at the next scheduled NASDE Board meeting. Redress for violations can include but are not limited to deduction of points, dropping in level in the overall standing, or removal of a competitor from the NASDE list.

### NASDE Re-Starts Rule

Re-starts will be allowed in NASDE Classic or Showcase divisions, if something occurs during the performance that would **impact the safety** of the competitors.

This includes:

1. **Technical problems** — factors outside the dancers control (e.g., lights in ballroom go out, flooring is faulty or damages, music suddenly stops)

**OR.**

2. **Costume malfunctions**, such as shoe breaks, untied costumes, or loose items, can endanger dancers or expose inappropriate body parts. If a problem occurs during a performance, the Chief Judge may stop it until rectified at the competition. Competitors can also voluntarily stop and request a Re-Start before leaving the dance floor. They must speak to the Chief Judge when the problem occurs. If Re-Start is allowed, Chief Judge will decide when competitors perform again based on the situation

**Judging:** Performance prior to the Re-Start will not be counted toward competitor's overall ranking.

### NASDE Points Allocation

**5 (five) or more entries:** 1st/10, 2nd/9, 3rd/8, 4th/7, 5th/6      **4 (four) entries:** 1st/8, 2nd/7, 3rd/6, 4th/5  
**3 (three) entries:** 1st/5, 2nd/4, 3rd/3      **2 (two) entries:** 1st/3, 2nd/2      **1 (one) entry:** 1st/2

## **NASDE General Divisions Rule**

1. If any Event rule conflicts with published NASDE rules, the NASDE rules take precedence.
2. Contestants must be 18 years or older by the end of the event to participate.
3. A competitive couple must consist of a leader and a follower. They must remain in their respective roles throughout the entire routine, except for a one-time role switch that doesn't exceed eight beats.
4. Costumes are allowed and highly encouraged.
5. Competitors select their own music.
6. Performance time is a minimum of 2 minutes and maximum of 3 minutes. The clock begins and judging starts at the first dance movement of the performance, with or without music.
7. No props are allowed. A prop is defined as any article or object intentionally discarded, removed, taken away, or brought into a dance by a competitor. This includes, but not limited to, a hat that is thrown to the floor, a cane that is tossed away, or picking up an object from the floor. The referee will be designated as ensuring this rule is enforced. If the referee determines a violation occurred, the NASDE Referee system will be used for verification and applying penalties. If flagged, a review panel will make the final decision on any violation or drop in placement.
8. An individual is not permitted to dance twice within the same division.
9. The minimum prize money offered for the division should be \$1,000 (1st-500, 2nd-250, 3rd-150, 4th-50, 5th-50). Amounts can be converted into local currency and any event may offer more prize fund amount if desired.

## **Classic Division Specific**

1. **Swing content: 70% swing content is required.** It is at the Judges' discretion to determine that the swing content requirement has been met.
2. Separate entrances are permitted but the couple must physically join together within 32 beats of music.
3. Couples must maintain physical contact except for spins, turns, short break-aways, and recoveries. If combined, separation cannot be more than 8 beats of music. For example, if a competitor does a free spin or a turn, is not connected to their partner, and goes straight into a side by side break-away, the entire separation cannot be more than 8 beats of music.
4. Both partners must keep at least one foot on the floor during weight-support moves. If the foot comes off the floor, it will be flagged for review to determine if it was a violation (part of the choreography) or an error.
5. A maximum of seven (7) partner weight-support moves are permitted.

## **Showcase Division Specific**

1. Swing content: 60% swing content is required. It is at the Judges' discretion to determine that the swing content requirement has been met.
2. Separate entrances are permitted.
3. Break-aways and side-by-side patterns are permitted.
4. A minimum of three (3) lifts total are required, with at least one of those lifts must be where the followers hips is at or above the leads shoulders while the lead is standing (not sitting, squatting, or flexed forward) and the lift must have the appearance of being sustained for 1-3 seconds.
5. There is no lift maximum.



## NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SWING DANCE EVENTS (NASDE)

### Judging Criteria for Classic & Showcase Divisions (updated 01/01/2026)

- There must be a minimum of five (5) Judges for both Classic and Showcase divisions.
- No more than two (2) of the five (5) Judges should be NASDE Event Directors.
- Events are discouraged from assigning Couples (significant others) to serve on the same Judging panel for Classic and Showcase, with the exception that one of the partners is a Chief Judge and one is a Referee.
- A Referee will be included on the Judging panel for Classic and Showcase competitions. The **NASDE Referee System** will be utilized.
- All scores count. No scores can be thrown out. The Chief Judge's scores are not utilized when calculating the results for any finals contest unless an emergency situation occurs with a judge on the panel. Ties are resolved by the judging panel using relative placement.
- No current NASDE competitors (who compete in Classic or Showcase) may serve as Judges for these Divisions. (*i.e., If a competitor has an active Showcase or Classic partnership and is actively pursuing the year end prize, they are a current NASDE competitor.*)
- Judges' scores should be based solely on the quality of the performance and on swing content. Judges' scores should NOT include violations unrelated to swing content. All other rules will be monitored by the referee, and if flagged will be considered by a review panel for a final decision on any violation and drop in placement. (Please see the NASDE Referee System link above for more info on the review process.)
- Mock judges should not be seated alongside official judges to prevent any confusion regarding the individuals responsible for the actual judging process.

### Swing Violation Criteria

**Swing Content is the responsibility of each judge, NOT the REFEREE.** Any violations or warning regarding Swing Content is reflected in the individual judge's score or so noted on their individual score sheets. A "SVW" (Swing Violation Warning) indicates no drop in score and "SV" (Swing Violation) indicates the judge dropped their placement 1, 3 or 10 places for Swing Content within their individual score. Judges are to use the following criteria when giving a "SV" (Swing Violation):

#### Classic Division:

Below 70%: judge's issue "SVW" indicates no drop in score or "SV1" indicates one (1) drop in placement.

Below 60%: judge's issue "SV2" indicates three (3) drop in places within their individual score.

Below 50%: judge's issue "SV3" indicates ten (10) drop in places within their individual score.

Final score sheets that get posted should show the above values.

Example:

Competitor A 3rd placement SV-1

#### Showcase Division

Below 60%: judge's issue a "SVW" indicates no drop in score or "SV1" indicates one (1) drop in placement

Below 50%: judge's issue a "SV3" indicates ten (10) drop in places within their individual score



## ROUTINE GUIDELINES

### GUIDANCE FOR THE WEST COAST SWING (WCS) ROUTINE DANCER

Understand and base your routine choreography on the “identifiable characteristics” of West Coast Swing. Ensure a balance of WCS patterns, weight support moves, performance moves, partner interplay, and chemistry. Choose music and tempo that best represent the “Identity” of West Coast Swing. The “quality” of your swing and your technique, timing, choreography, and performance is judged accordingly. Develop and refine all facets of your dance routine to create an exceptional West Coast Swing performance.

### WEST COAST SWING PRIMARY IDENTIFIABLE CHARACTERISTICS

- Danced in a Slot – Shared and Controlled
- Follower Walks Forward on counts 1-2 of the pattern vs. Rock Steps
- Anchors – 2 beat Anchors to end a pattern

### WEST COAST SWING MUSICAL IDENTITY

- Danced to 4/4 Time Music
- Pulses the Upbeat (2,4,6,8)
- Accents Interpretative Musical Nuances within the context of the patterns
- Is best expressed when using music tempos ranging from 90 and 120 BPM. Too fast or too slow can alter the identifiable characteristics of WCS

*NOTE: The Quality of your West Coast Swing is dependent on many factors which may or may not be included as part of its Identity, such as Rolling Count or Exceptional Performance. The purpose of this document is to understand and identify West Coast Swing at its core. If its core is “unrecognizable” scores may reflect poorly. Educate not violate is the goal!*



# NASDE Referee System

## Referee Forms:

- Referee Rules Checklist (one for Classic; one for Showcase)
- Panel Review Sheet

## Overview

1. The event must be equipped with a system with playback capability to review the dance division in question. The event should coordinate with the videographer and referee to determine the playback setup.
2. The event must hire a dedicated referee. The referee will review routines for rules violations, such as duration, weight supported moves, and lifts.
3. The event must have a recording of each performance for review.
4. A review panel is formed, consisting of the chief judge and two (2) other judges.
5. The referee will have a checklist for each couple during their performance.
6. If a referee flags a performance for review, the referee will acquire the video and review the video.
7. If the referee determines a violation possibly occurred, the review panel will be assembled to review and determine final judgement.
8. The referee presents the video and possible violation to the review panel and will answer any questions from the review panel.
9. The review panel reviews the video as many times as necessary to determine if violation occurred. Verbal interaction between panel members is encouraged. Be concise, get to the point, give opinion, and move on.
10. At the conclusion, each panel member indicates "Pass" or "Fail" for each couple in question. There is no need for panel members to agree. Majority opinion (2 out of 3) carries.
11. The results are recorded on a Panel Review Sheet and the couple is given an overall "Pass" or "Fail".
12. If couple "Fails", the panel determines if the violation was an "error" or "penalty". An "error" signifies that the violation was not a deliberate action against the rules. The review panel has the authority to determine if a couple will receive no drop in placement, one drop in placement, or two drops in placement or each error identified. A "penalty" signifies that the violation was a deliberate action against the rules. Penalties include not being called-back for the next round or dropped to last place in a finals round.
13. Any and all Panel Reviews taking place should be noted on the scoring sheets with a "VR" (Violation-Review) when posting scores, even reviews that passed. Any drop in placement is noted with a "VP" (Violation-Penalty), on the posted scoring sheets, using VP1 or VP2 to further define the number of placements dropped.
14. The details of the Referee Panel are NOT to be posted. All Panel Review Sheets and Referee Rules Checklist are turned into the chief judge and the NASDE Board for future review and archiving.



## Rising Star Tour Rules (RST) 2026

The objective of the Rising Star Tour (RST) is to provide a platform for amateur dancers to grow and improve their swing dancing skills in the context of choreographed routines.

Rule changes effective February 4, 2026 are highlighted in yellow.

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### Dancer Eligibility

To participate in the 2025 Rising Star Tour, each dancer must:

1. Be at least 15 years old by the end of any qualifying event they compete in.
  2. Never have won the RST top point award in previous seasons.
  3. Never have placed top three (3) in Rising Star Classic or Showcase at “The Open” twice, when there have been at least ten (10) couples.
  4. Not have Champion points within the last ten (10) years.
  5. Retain eligibility separately for each role, leader/follower.
  6. Event directors can compete in the tour, but not at events they organize.
- 

### RST Sportsmanship Expectations

Sportsmanship is a fundamental aspect of our competition. Competing for the RST prize fund is a privilege, not a right. The event director can flag unsportsmanlike behavior, which the RST Board will review at the next meeting. Consequences for violations may include, but are not limited to:

- Deduction of points.
  - Dropping in level in the overall standings.
  - Removal from the RST list.
- 

### RST Referee System

1. If the referee determines a violation possibly occurred, a review panel (made of the chief judge and two other judges) will be assembled to review and determine the final judgement.
  2. The review panel will review the violation as necessary to determine if a violation occurred.
  3. At the conclusion, each panel member indicates “Pass” or “Fail” for each couple in question. There is no need for a unanimous decision, majority opinion rules.
  4. The couple receives an overall “Pass” or “Fail” based on the recorded results on a Panel Review Sheet.
  5. If a couple “Fails”, the panel determines if the violation was an “error” or “penalty”. An “error” signifies that the violation was not a deliberate action against the rules. The review panel has the authority to determine if a couple will receive no drop in placement, one drop in placement, or two drops in placement for each error identified. A “penalty” signifies that the violation was a deliberate action against the rules.
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## **RST Re-start Rule**

Re-starts are allowed in the Rising Star division if something occurs during the performance that impacts the safety of the competitors. This includes:

1. **Technical problems:** Factors outside the dancers' control (e.g., ballroom lights go out, faulty flooring, music stops suddenly).
2. **Costume malfunctions:** Shoes break or become unfastened, costumes, and loose items could endanger dancers or expose inappropriate areas.

### **Procedure:**

- The Chief Judge may stop the performance until rectified at the competition.
- Competitors can also voluntarily stop and request a restart before leaving the competition floor.
- The competitors must speak to the Chief Judge when the problem occurs.
- If Re-Start is allowed, Chief Judge will decide when competitors perform again based on the situation.

**Judging:** Judges will only judge the repeat performance. Prior performances do not influence rankings.

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### **Points Allocation:**

- **5 or more entries:** 1st/10, 2nd/9, 3rd/8, 4th/7, 5th/6.
  - **4 entries:** 1st/8, 2nd/7, 3rd/6, 4th/5.
  - **3 entries:** 1st/5, 2nd/4, 3rd/3.
  - **2 entries:** 1st/3, 2nd/2.
  - **1 entry:** 1st/2.
- 

## **General Rules**

1. If any event rule conflicts with RST rules, the RST rules take precedence.
  2. A competitive couple must consist of a leader and a follower. They must remain in their respective roles throughout the entire routine, except for a one-time role switch that doesn't exceed eight beats.
  3. Costumes are allowed and highly encouraged.
  4. Competitors select their music.
  5. Performance time is a minimum of 2 minutes and a maximum of 3 minutes. The clock begins and judging starts at the first dance movement of the performance, with or without music.
  6. No props are allowed. A prop is defined as any article or object intentionally discarded, removed, taken away, or brought into a dance by a competitor. This includes, but not limited to, a hat that is thrown to the floor, a cane that is tossed away, or picking up an object from the floor.
  7. For events with over 18 couples, a prelim is recommended, with 10-12 advancing to the final.
  8. Couples must use the same music submission for both prelim and final rounds.
  9. Individuals cannot compete twice within the same division.
-

## Division Rules

1. **Swing Content:** 70% swing content is required. It is at the Judge's discretion to determine that the swing content requirement has been met.
2. Separate entrances are permitted; couples must join within 32 beats of music.
3. Physical contact must be maintained except during spins, turns, short breakaways, and recoveries, with separations not exceeding 8 beats.
4. A maximum of seven (7) partner weight-support moves are permitted, with up to three (3) of the seven (7) available as optional lifts.
5. Both partners must keep at least one foot on the floor during weight-support moves; otherwise, it is considered a lift.

### **Exception: Rising Star Classic at The Open World Swing Dance Champions:**

\* Lifts are not allowed. Dancers must keep at least one (1) foot on the ground during weight support movements.

### **Rising Star Showcase at The Open World Swing Dance Champions:**

\* A minimum of three (3) lifts total are required, one of which must have the followers hips above the leaders physical waistline.

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## Routine Guidelines

Visit the [RST website](#) for guidance on creating a routine.

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## RST Event Prize Standards

1. **Minimum prize package:** Event pass and cash. Additional prizes may include products and services.
2. **Prize fund range:** \$100-\$1000 per registered couple.
3. Award a minimum of **top three (3)** placements for 3-7 couples.
4. Award a minimum of **top five (5)** placements for 8+ couples.

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## End of Tour Prizes

The RST concludes at **The Open** in November. Points will be calculated from the first tour event up to and including The Open. Winners will be announced during The Open's awards ceremony.

### **1st Place:**

- Partnership will receive several coaching sessions from esteemed West Coast Swing coaches, these sessions aim to strengthen their partnership dynamics, and support their progress in higher routine divisions.
- RST Champion jackets.
- Event passport with passes to all RST events in their winning season for the following year.

### **2nd and 3rd Places:**

- Partnership will receive several coaching sessions from esteemed West Coast Swing coaches, these sessions aim to strengthen their partnership dynamics, and support their progress in higher routine divisions.
- Event passport with passes to all RST events in their winning season for the following year.



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