

2025-2026 Judging Reminders – Dance

Updated August 18, 2025

These reminders should not replace your general review of our current rules, ISU Communications, and Technical Notifications. In preparation for your events, please review and refer to:

- ISU Communication 2704 (Ice Dance Requirements for Technical Rules season 2025/26)
- ISU Communication 2698 (Music Requirements in Ice Dance)
- ISU Handbook for Referees and Judges
- Program Component Charts for Pattern Dance and Rhythm Dance/Free Dance
- 2025-26 Ice Dance Pattern Dance Requirements
- 2025-26 Ice Dance Rhythm Dance Requirements
- 2025-26 Ice Dance Free Dance Requirements for Pre-Juvenile through Senior

Changes from last year are highlighted.

RHYTHM DANCE	Specifications/Restrictions	Violations
Duration	2:50 +/- 10 sec	Program Time Referee 1.0 deduction for every 5 sec lacking or in excess
Music	-May be vocal and must be suitable for Ice Dance as a sport discipline -The music must be selected in accordance with the designated rhythm(s) and/or theme(s), must have a constant tempo, and be in accordance with the specified tempo, when applicable -Only dance music with a rhythmic beat may be used. The music may be without a rhythmic beat for up to ten (10) seconds at the beginning of the program.	Music Requirements Referee & Judges 2.0 deduction per program
Rhythms/Tempo	Theme for both Junior and Senior: “The Music, Dance Styles and Feeling of the 1990s”. The RD for this season takes inspiration from the high energy and entertaining dance styles from this decade. Any music is possible as long as it was released, either originally or as a cover version in the 1990s, and fulfills the rhythm/theme mentioned above as well as the required characteristics mentioned below. Remixed/remastered music and music created via AI in the “Style of the 1990s” is also permitted. Required characteristics: High energy and crowd pleasing, demonstrating the essence of the 1990s. Examples (but not limited to): Pop/Street Latin, House/Techno, Hip-Hop, Grunge Rock. What this season's RD is not: Classical, Contemporary, Traditional Folk and Competition Ballroom styles of dance. Note: music must not include aggressive and/or offensive lyrics Junior: One (1) Sequence of the Rhumba immediately followed by one (1) Sequence of the Quickstep: any music/dance style from the 1990s with a consistent tempo of at minimum 120 bpm, in 2/2, 2/4, or 4/4 time. The first step of the dance must be skated on beat one of the musical phrase.	Music Requirements Referee & Judges 2.0 deduction per program for incorrect rhythm or no rhythmic beat Referee 1.0 deduction for violation of tempo specification

	<p>Senior: The Pattern Dance Type Step Sequence may be skated to any dance style chosen from the 1990s with a minimum tempo of 120 bpm, in 2/2, 2/4, or 4/4 time for any exact number of musical phrases. The Choreographic Rhythm Sequence and Step Sequence may be skated to any dance style from the 1990s.</p>	
Pattern	<p>- For the current season, the pattern must proceed in a generally constant direction and must cross the Long Axis of the ice surface once at each end of the rink within no more than 30 meters of the barrier. -In addition, the couple may also cross the Long Axis at the entry to the Style B Step Sequence (Sr & Jr), at the entry of the ChRS (Sr), and at the entry to Pattern Dance Elements (Jr) -Loops in any direction are permitted provided they do not cross the long axis (exception applicable per individual element).</p>	<p>Choreography Restrictions Referee & Judges 1.0 deduction per program</p> <p><i>*make a note while judging which violation(s) is/are made</i></p>
Stops	<p>-After clock starts, couple must not remain in one place for more than 10 secs at beginning and/or end of program. -During program: 2 full stops up to 5 secs or 1 full stop up to 10 secs permitted. -A dance spin or choreographic spinning movement that does not travel will NOT be considered as a stop.</p>	
Separations	<p>-Must not separate except to change hold or perform Required Elements requiring separation. -Max two arms lengths allowed during such separations. Change of hold and turns as transitional elements must not exceed 1 measure of music. -Separations at beginning and/or end of program may be up to 10 secs in duration without restrictions on distance.</p>	
Touching Hand(s) on Ice	<p>Touching the ice with hand(s) is not permitted, except during the Step Sequence Style B where touching the ice with any part of the body is allowed but not longer than 5 secs</p>	
Costume/Prop	<p>-Skaters may wear trousers of any length -Accessories and props are not permitted</p>	
		<p>Costume/Prop Referee & Judges 1.0 deduction per program</p>

Changes to Rhythm Dance Elements:

Junior:

- Pattern Dance Element:
 - 1 Sequence of the Rhumba (steps #1-16) started on judges left side immediately followed by 1 Sequence of the Quickstep (steps #1-18) with modified timing for the Rhumba noted in the chart below.
 - Patterns are optional.
 - Variation of Holds throughout, except Hand in Hand, are permitted.
 - Tracking between partners is optional except during Key Points
 - Rhumba KPs: steps #11-13 (W, M), step #14 (W, M)
 - Quickstep KPs: steps #5, 6 (W, M), steps #11, 12 (W), steps #17, 18 (M)

- **Choreographic Rhythm Sequence**
 - Hold(s): in contact including Hand in Hand with fully extended arms with the exception of permitted Separation
 - Pattern: Both partners perform steps/movements around the short axis and must proceed from barrier to barrier. The requirement for barrier to barrier is fulfilled when at least one of the partners is not more than 2 meters from each barrier.
 - Separation: 1 separation is permitted for no more than 2 arm lengths and no more than 5 second
 - Stop: Only 1 at the beginning, **during** or end of the element for no more than 5 seconds (this will count as 1 of the permitted stops). A stop performed at the beginning or end of the ChRS will be considered as part of the element. Performing steps/movements around each partner during a Stop is not considered as a retrogression.
 - Not Permitted:
 - Retrogression(s)
 - Loop(s)

Reminders for Rhythm Dance Elements:

- **Sequential Twizzles**
 - Partners must not be in contact between the first and second twizzles.
 - Up to 1 step in between twizzles

- **Step Sequence Style B**
 - Pattern: Only midline or diagonal
 - Touching the ice with any part of the body is allowed for no more than 5 seconds
 - Stops: up to 1 permitted for no more than 5 seconds (counts as one of the permitted stops)
 - **Not Permitted:**
 - Loop(s)
 - Retrogression(s)

FREE DANCE	Specifications/Restrictions	Violations
Duration	Juvenile: 2:15 +/- 10 sec Intermediate: 2:30 +/- 10 sec Novice: 3:00 +/- 10 sec Junior: 3:30 +/- 10 sec Senior: 4:00 +/- 10 sec	Program Time Referee 1.0 deduction for every 5 sec lacking or in excess
Music	-Must be cut/edited, orchestrated or arranged in a way that it creates an interesting, colorful, entertaining dance program with different dance moods or a building effect -Music must have at least one change of tempo/rhythm and expression. This change may be gradual or immediate. -May be vocal and must be suitable for Ice Dance as a sport discipline -Must have a rhythmic beat and melody, or rhythmic beat alone, but not melody alone, and may be vocal -May be without rhythmic beat up to 10 secs at beginning or at the end of program AND for up to 10 seconds during the program	Music Requirements Referee & Judges 2.0 deduction per program

Stops	-After clock starts, must not remain in one place for more than 10 seconds -During program, unlimited full stops of 5 seconds max. are allowed	Choreography Restrictions 1.0 deduction per program <i>*make a note while judging which violation(s) is/are made</i>
Separations	-Number of separations for transitional footwork or moves not restricted -Distance allowed is maximum 2 arms length during separations (including Choreographic Character Step Sequence) -Duration of each separation (excluding Required Elements) is 5 seconds max -Separations at beginning and/or end of program are permitted up to 10 seconds, no restrictions on distance of separation	
Touching Hand(s) on Ice	Touching the ice with the hand(s) is not permitted (except Choreographic Sliding Movement and Choreographic Character Step Sequence)	
Costume/Prop	-Skaters may wear trousers of any length -Accessories and props are not permitted	Costume/Prop Referee & Judges 1.0 deduction per program

Reminders for Free Dance Elements:

- **Synchronized Twizzles**
 - Partners may be in contact between the first and second twizzles.

- **Step Sequence Style B**
 - Must be a different shape than the pattern of the ChSt
 - **Not Permitted:**
 - Stops
 - Loops
 - Retrogression
 - Hand in hand hold with fully extended arms cannot be established
 - Separations of more than 2 arms length and/or exceeding 5 seconds

Reminders for Novice Pattern Dance:

- Two (2) sequences of the Starlight Waltz
 - Section 1 steps #1-17
 - Section 2 steps #18-32
- Two (2) sequences of the Quickstep + Choreographic Element (chosen from the following and performed either before or after the (2) Quickstep Sequences – may not be performed between the Sequences):
 - Choreographic Lift
 - Choreographic Character Step Sequence (*must be performed around short axis)
 - Choreographic Sliding Movement
 - Choreographic Spinning Movement
 - Choreographic Twizzling Movement
 - Evaluate the choreographic element in the same manner as done in a Free Dance

GOE Reminders

- GOE should be an **overall** assessment of all phases of each element (e.g., lift entry/position(s)/exit).
- Always assess the **SET CRITERIA** first, then positive features, and finally negative features.
- **Be sure to review the Grade of Execution Charts before your events; these can be found in ISU Communication 2704.**
- An element (including **PDE** and choreo elements) must be in the musical structure/rhythm pattern and reflect character in order to receive a GOE of **+1 to +5**
- **Pattern dance elements will be evaluated by utilizing both GOE charts**
- If a fall occurs *within an element*, it will be indicated by an **F** next to that element on your judges' screen (off to the side). Multiple falls within an element will be indicated by **Fx**. Be sure to take any falls within elements into account when assessing your GOE.
- If couples separate for more than the needed amount of time prior to and after elements in the RD and FD, this must be reflected in your GOE for that element.
- If there is 1 fall or serious error in a pattern dance, the maximum GOE that may be awarded is -3.
- A couple may still achieve **0 to +3** GOE for an element with slight loss of control/one (1) touchdown (no break within the element).
- In order to award an element with a **+4 or +5** GOE, no negative features/errors can be assessed.
- If a choreographic element receives a "!" symbol, reduce GOE by 2 grades (no higher than +3). If you have already considered errors within the element that has reduced your GOE, take care not to penalize twice if the "!" symbol appears.
- Choreographic violations performed during an element should be evaluated as negative features for the GOE.

Component Reminders

- For **Pattern Dance** the components are Timing, Presentation, and Skating Skills
- For **Free Dance** and **Rhythm Dance** the components are Composition, Presentation, and Skating Skills
- Components are evaluated on an **absolute scale from 0.25 - 10, in increments of 0.25**; there are **no "ranges" for different levels.**
- Each component should be evaluated independently.
- All of the criteria for each component should be considered when determining how to arrive at the appropriate mark. A team may have strengths and weaknesses within one component. The final mark for each component should be a balance of each criteria.
- NOTE: An error by both partners, happening at the same time or not (e.g. Fall by 2) must be considered as 2 errors. Note: this basic principle applies equally when the error occurs within an element and/or outside an element.
- Serious errors are falls and/or mistakes which result in a break in the delivery of the program. This break can be minimal or more pronounced and noticeable. These errors must be reflected in the mark awarded for each program component. The consequence depends on the severity and impact they have on the fluidity and continuity of the program.
- **For all Components:**
 - When there is only one serious error and this error minimally impacts the program, a maximum score of 9.50 is possible when the program as a whole is still deemed to be "Excellent."
 - When there are 2 or more serious errors and these errors only minimally impact the program, a maximum score of 8.75 is possible.
 - When there is an error that does not fulfill the requirements of a serious error, a maximum score of 9.75 is possible.

Additional Reminders

- **No cell phones or other electronic devices are allowed on the judges' stand.**