

2026 SINGLES, PAIRS AND ICE DANCE QUALIFYING SEASON ATHLETE BYE & ADVANCEMENT CRITERIA

All information is subject to change and based on current information and feasibility of live international competitions.

Purpose

The purpose of this document is to outline the approved criteria for which a registered competitor may receive a bye to the 2026 NQS Finals (Sectional Singles Final, U.S. Pairs Final and U.S. Ice Dance Final) in addition to the 2026 U.S. Figure Skating Championships.

The following bye criteria and junior advancement rules were reviewed and approved by U.S. Figure Skating's International Committee, Competitions Committee, Athletes Advisory Committee (AAC) and U.S. Figure Skating's Board of Directors as required under U.S. Figure Skating rule 2511.

All athletes receiving a bye **are required to register for the 2025-26 National Qualifying Series prior to the close of the series application on Oct. 2.** Failure to do so will result in the competitors(s) not being entered nor allowed to compete at the 2026 NQS Finals and/or 2026 U.S. Figure Skating Championships for the current season. Additionally, all are highly encouraged to participate in the National Qualifying Series via the [approved 2025-26 NQS competitions](#). If athletes receiving byes choose to compete, they will not lose their bye to the NQS Finals and/or 2026 U.S. Figure Skating Championships, regardless of score, nor displace an athlete who would have qualified if the said athlete had not competed.

ADVANCEMENT TO THE NQS FINALS

For junior and senior events: Any member of the U.S. Figure Skating Team, defined in rule ICR 3.05, who has been assigned to and competes at a minimum of one international assignment included in the list of approved competitions in this document.

Additional competitors may qualify for the sectional singles final as outlined in Rule 2472:

- Having won the U.S. Figure Skating Championships at the junior level, in the previous season, if competing at the junior level this season.
- Having won the sectional singles final at the senior level in the previous season.
- Advancing based on placement from the National Qualifying Series per rule 2470.

Per Rule 2477, competitors who qualify for the senior events at the sectional singles finals through rule 2471 (A-C) or as alternates in rule 2471 (D) must also have met a minimum combined total element score (CTES at an NQS or ISU competition in the current season. This minimum score is defined in [Technical Notification 317](#).

ADVANCEMENT TO THE U.S. FIGURE SKATING CHAMPIONSHIPS

SENIOR SINGLES

Maximum of 18 available spots at the U.S. Figure Skating Championships

- Athletes who placed in the top five in the same event at the 2025 U.S. Figure Skating Championships per rule 2501 (B) (1)
- Athletes selected to the 2025 U.S. Figure Skating World Team (not including alternates) in the same event per rule 2501 (B) (2)

- Athletes who have won a medal in the singles event at any Olympic Winter Games (not including the team event) per rule 2501 (B) (3)
- Athletes who qualify for the same event at the ISU Grand Prix of Figure Skating Final or the ISU Junior Grand Prix of Figure Skating Final (not including alternates) per rule 2501 (B)(4)
- Athletes who are assigned to and compete at three (3) international competitions from the approved list included in subsequent sections of this document.
- The U.S. Figure Skating High Performance Department and the International Committee will initiate a bye request for athletes who are assigned to and compete at an international assignment within close proximity to the NQS Finals.
- **The top two total combined scores from each section in the NQS Finals for singles.**
 - **Plus, next-best scores nationwide until maximum is met**

SENIOR PAIRS

Maximum of 12 available spots at the U.S. Figure Skating Championships

- Teams that placed in the top five in the same event at the 2025 U.S. Figure Skating Championships per rule 2502 (B) (1)
- Teams selected to the 2025 U.S. Figure Skating World Team (not including alternates) in the same event per rule 2502 (B) (2)
- Teams that have won a medal in the pairs event at any Olympic Winter Games (not including team event) per rule 2502 (B) (3)
- Teams that qualify for the same event at the ISU Grand Prix of Figure Skating Final or the ISU Junior Grand Prix of Figure Skating Final (not including alternates) per rule 2502 (B) (4)
- Teams that are assigned to and compete at three (3) international competitions from the approved list included in subsequent sections of this document.
- The U.S. Figure Skating High Performance Department and the International Committee will initiate a bye request for athletes who are assigned to and compete at an international assignment within close proximity to the NQS Finals.
- **The next best placements at the NQS Final for pairs until maximum is met**

SENIOR ICE DANCE

Maximum of 15 available spots at the U.S. Figure Skating Championships

- Teams that placed in the top five in the same event at the 2025 U.S. Figure Skating Championships per rule 2503 (B) (1)
- Teams selected to the 2025 U.S. Figure Skating World Team (not including alternates) in the same event per rule 2503 (B) (2)
- Teams that have won a medal in the ice dance event at any Olympic Winter Games (not including team event) per rule 2503 (B) (3)
- Teams that qualify for the same event at the ISU Grand Prix of Figure Skating Final or the ISU Junior Grand Prix of Figure Skating Final (not including alternates) per rule 2503 (B) (4)
- Teams that are assigned to and compete at three (3) international competitions from the list included in subsequent sections of this document.
- The U.S. Figure Skating High Performance Department and the International Committee will initiate a bye request for athletes who are assigned to and compete at an international assignment within close proximity to the NQS Finals.

- **The next best placements at the NQS Final for ice dance until maximum is met**

JUNIOR SINGLES

Maximum of 18 available spots (plus byes if applicable) at the U.S. Figure Skating Championships

- Athletes who qualify for the same event at the ISU Junior Grand Prix of Figure Skating Final (not including alternates) per rule 2501 (A) (3)
- Athletes that are assigned to and compete at three (3) international competitions from the list included in subsequent sections of this document.
- The U.S. Figure Skating High Performance Department and the International Committee will initiate a bye request for athletes who are assigned to and compete at an international assignment within close proximity to the NQS Finals.
- **The top four total combined junior scores from each section at the NQS Finals for singles**
- **The top two total combined novice scores from each section at the NQS Finals for singles**

JUNIOR PAIRS

Maximum of 8 available spots (plus byes if applicable) at the U.S. Figure Skating Championships

- Teams that qualify for the same event at the ISU Junior Grand Prix of Figure Skating Final (not including alternates) per rule 2502 (A) (2)
- Teams that are assigned to and compete at three (3) international competitions from the list included in subsequent sections of this document.
- The U.S. Figure Skating High Performance Department and the International Committee will initiate a bye request for athletes who are assigned to and compete at an international assignment within close proximity to the NQS Finals.
- **The top eight total combined junior scores from the nation in the NQS Final for pairs**

JUNIOR ICE DANCE

Maximum of 10 available spots (plus byes if applicable) at the U.S. Figure Skating Championships

- Teams that qualify for the same event at the ISU Junior Grand Prix of Figure Skating Final (not including alternates) per rule 2503 (A) (2)
- Teams that are assigned to and compete at three (3) international competitions from the list included in subsequent sections of this document.
- The U.S. Figure Skating High Performance Department and the International Committee will initiate a bye request for athletes who are assigned to and compete at an international assignment within close proximity to the NQS Finals.
- **The top ten total combined junior scores from the nation in the NQS Final for ice dance**

NOVICE PAIRS

Maximum of 4 available spots at the U.S. Figure Skating Championships

- The top four total combined novice scores from the nation in the NQS Final for pairs

NOVICE ICE DANCE

Maximum of 5 available spots at the U.S. Figure Skating Championships

- The top five total combined novice scores from the nation in the NQS Final for ice dance

Criteria Notes

If the maximum spots allotted for byes are not met through the outlined criteria, additional competitors from the NQS Finals will be invited to fill the maximum available spots at the U.S. Figure Skating Championships for each level/discipline. Competitors from the NQS Finals will be selected based on next-best total combined score(s) in the nation. This will apply equally to all disciplines in the junior and senior events.

If the number of athletes with three international assignments from the approved international competition list exceeds the number of available byes to the U.S. Figure Skating Championships, the athletes with three international assignments will be ranked and awarded byes in the following order until there are no byes available. The remaining athletes will compete in the U.S. Figure Skating NQS Finals to qualify for the U.S. Figure Skating Championships.

- Highest-to-lowest best total score in the approved list of international competitions for Grand Prix competitors
- Highest-to-lowest best total score in the approved list of international competitions for Junior Grand Prix competitors
- Highest-to-lowest best total score in the approved list of international competitions for other international competitors

Required Minimum Score

Per rule 2505, competitors who qualify for the senior events at the U.S. Figure Skating Championships must also have met a minimum combined total element score (CTES) at an NQS series competition, the NQS Finals, or any ISU competition. This minimum score is defined in [Technical Notification 319](#).

Other Circumstances

No medical byes will be granted for the U.S. Figure Skating Championships per rule 2513.

Athlete(s) may submit a petition for a bye to U.S. Figure Skating via the Events Department at events@usfigureskating.org for other circumstances outlined in this document. Only the athlete(s) in question may submit the petition; petitions may not be submitted on behalf of an athlete by another person. The headquarters liaison will share the appeal with the chairs of the Athletes Advisory, Competitions Committee and International Committee. The liaison will coordinate a review of and vote on the matter within 48 business hours of receiving the appeal and communicate the results to the athlete(s).

A bye list will be available prior to the NQS Finals to finalize qualifying advancement numbers.

APPROVED COMPETITIONS IDENTIFIED BY THE INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE APPLICABLE FOR 2025/26 BYES:

ISU Junior Grand Prix of Figure Skating

ISU Junior Grand Prix Latvia (Riga)
ISU Junior Grand Prix Turkey (Ankara)
ISU Junior Grand Prix Italy (Varese)
ISU Junior Grand Prix Thailand (Bangkok)
ISU Junior Grand Prix Azerbaijan (Baku)
ISU Junior Grand Prix Poland (Gdansk)
ISU Junior Grand Prix UAE (Abu Dhabi)

ISU Grand Prix of Figure Skating

Skate America
Skate Canada International
Grand Prix de France
NHK Trophy
Grand Prix Finland
Cup of China

Please refer to [ISU Website](#) for updated Grand Prix details

ISU Grand Prix of Figure Skating Final and ISU Junior Grand Prix of Figure Skating Final

Challenger Series/International Competitions:

Cranberry Cup (Singles Only)
Robin Cousins Cup
John Nicks Pairs Challenge (Pairs Only)
Kinoshita Group Cup
Lombardia Trophy
Olympic Qualifying Event
Nebelhorn Trophy
Ondrej Nepela Memorial
Denis Ten Memorial Challenge
Trialeti Trophy
Tayside Trophy
Warsaw Cup
Tallinn Trophy

Only athletes who are assigned and funded by U.S. Figure Skating to attend these competitions will be eligible for a bye.

*Please note, participation at the following international competitions **are not** approved competitions for bye criteria: Lake Placid Ice Dance Championships, Cranberry Cup (Junior), the Golden Spin of Zagreb, or any event that is considered a self-funded National Team opportunity.*

Contact Information

U.S. Figure Skating – events@usfigureskating.org