

Judging Basic Skills Competitions

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Who can judge?

Any skater who is at least 16 years old can judge Basic Skills competitions. Although it is recommended that you have at least one official U.S. Figure Skating judge on each panel of judges, finding enough judges can some times be difficult. U.S. Figure Skating publishes a directory that lists officials by state. You can also contact the test chair of your local club to see if he or she knows of judges or trial judges in your area. Coaches and skaters who 16 years and older can make excellent judges! Familiarity with the U.S. Figure Skating Basic Skills curriculum is the key. Skaters who teach the curriculum or assist in classes can make great Basic Skills judges *with a little guidance*. This manual will help prepare those skaters and coaches to serve as judges at your competition.

Instructions for Basic Skills Judges

Judges' Schedule

The judges' schedule (commonly called the "104") has on the left side a list of all events, the event numbers and times. Across the top you will see a list of judge's names, with numbers underneath them. You should find your name and its corresponding number. If you continue down the column under your name, you will see that number is entered in the rows corresponding to each event you are scheduled to judge. You will find two or four other judges and one referee ("R") assigned to that event as well. If you follow your rows to the left, you will see the event times and "sides" (Zamboni end, Flag end, Lobby end, etc.) that you will need to know. Sometimes multiple events will warm up together if they have small numbers of skaters. Use a highlighter to highlight the column and each row (event) you are responsible to judge. It makes it easier to see when you need to be rink side. The competition committee will provide a clipboard and pencils for you to use while you judge.

Before you begin, take a look at the sheets for the events to which you are assigned. Check the skater names in the left column on each sheet. If there are any skaters in your events who you feel you would have difficulty being impartial toward, or any who would cause anybody else to WONDER if you would be impartial toward them, please talk to the referee and trade events with another judge. This includes anyone who is related to you, anyone who you have coached or taught in the past year, or anyone who is an especially close friend.

Judges' Worksheets – Common Features

All the judges' worksheets have a number in one of the corners. This should correspond to the event numbers you see on your judging schedule.

Each event has an area near the upper right that lists the referee and judges assigned to that event. When you get your sheets, please ensure that you have a sheet for each event to which you have been assigned on the 104, and that each sheet you have has your name in that block in the upper right. Sometimes there will have been some re-assignments after the sheets were printed, and you might have a sheet without

your name on it or with someone else's name crossed out and yours penciled in. Verify any discrepancies with the referee as early as you can to make sure that all events are covered. If you are reassigned to an event not originally in your schedule, please ensure that the name of whomever you are replacing is crossed out and yours is written in—*otherwise the accountant might not notice the judge change, and the final results sheets will have incorrect information.*

Please sign each of your sheets in the space provided. Enter your U.S. Figure Skating number if you know it, but don't worry about it if you don't.

The left side of each worksheet will have a list of all skaters scheduled to compete in the event. Sometimes your referee will communicate additions or scratches, which you should enter appropriately. Cross out skaters who have scratched and add new skaters at the bottom of the sheet.

The right side of each worksheet will have a column for you to enter your marks for each skater (basic element and compulsory events will require only one mark per skater, and freeskate events will require two marks). You should enter your marks clearly in that location. You should show both the integer and the fractional part for every entry (for example, enter "2.0" instead of "2"). You may not have more than one decimal place on any mark (for example, 2.15 is not okay). **In all cases, larger numbers are "better" and result in a higher placement** for the skater (for example, 2.7 indicates a better placement than 2.4).

The actual values you use do not place the skater—only the relative placement (the "ordinal value") of your marks will determine the placement and be seen by the skater. Just make sure that the skaters who skate the strongest in your evaluation receive larger numbers than those who do not perform as well.

Preparing to Judge

Arrive at the rink well in advance of your first event so you have time to receive instruction or ask questions of the referee. Come prepared with a warm coat and boots. Even if you don't think it is usually that cold when you are teaching or skating at the rink, it will seem much colder when you are sitting in the judging box for several hours. When it is time for your events, go to the judging box with your clipboard and pencils and sit with the other judges. Please be aware that talking with other judges or comparing notes with other judges during the events can create *the perception of bias*. Pay attention while the skaters perform and write down whatever notes you need to help you evaluate their skating. At the end of each skater's performance, write your marks for that skater in the appropriate box(es). Think fairly quickly; usually there will be only about 30 seconds between skaters. If you get into time trouble, let the referee know, and he/she will slow down the pace a little to help you catch up. When the event is over, the referee will collect your papers and verify that you have a legible mark in each box, and then will give them to the runners to take to the accountant.

Basic Skills Elements Events/Compulsory Events

These events will have one of three possible formats:

- 1) The referee may line up all the skaters and will instruct them to perform all their elements individually, in rotation.
- 2) The skater may be announced and skate over to the referee, and then the referee will instruct the skater to perform each of the elements on the sheet before the next skater comes out.
- 3) The skater may be announced, and will take a starting position on the ice and perform all the elements in the order listed on the sheet as a "mini-program" with no connecting footwork when instructed "You may begin" by the announcer.

The format being used may vary by competitor and/or event. Make sure you ask the referee what format is being used for the competition so you are aware of the process and what will be happening during the events.

Basic element events and compulsory events will usually have only one mark per skater.

Basic Skills Program/Freeskate Events

Skaters will perform the required elements in a program format to music of the skater's choice. The skater can add additional linking elements and may use elements from a previous level. Your evaluation of their performance should integrate your assessment of the relative difficulty of their elements as well as their quality.

Note that worksheets may have columns labeled "jumps," "spins" and "footwork." These are to help you separate your notes, but you are free to do your notes in any way that helps you best.

Freeskating events will require two marks per skater: one for technical, one for presentation. The first column should reflect your assessment of the TECHNICAL quality of the performance; the second column should reflect your assessment of the PRESENTATION aspects of the performance. Note that if there are two marks, columns they may be labeled "Mark 1" and "Mark 2"—if that is the case, then "Mark 1" is for technical and "Mark 2" is for presentation. The accounting program will add up your two numbers to arrive at a final composite score for each skater. (See "Scoring")

Judging Tips

Before you go out to judge, think about the level of skating you might expect for the event you are about to watch. If this group were a class, which skaters would look like they are ready for the next level? Which skaters would look like they just recently passed into this class? Try to imagine what the best and least proficient skater would look like for this level of skating. Consider their skating skills. Are the skaters moving well across the ice, with nice flow and good edges? How are their jumps? Did they take off from correct edges, achieve full rotation and land securely? Are their spins well centered and fast or do they travel? Are they using the full ice for their program? Do they connect with the audience? Do they relate to their music and show a sense of timing and choreography?

Taking Notes

There is space provided after each skater's name to write any notes or comments that would help you. **Use any method you like that helps you remember what you saw.** Each required element is listed at the top of every column. You will see that the worksheet has a column for each element the skater is expected to do. You can use the notes area in any way you want to help you evaluate the skaters. Some examples are:

- 1) Write notes like "+" or "-", or "A", "B", "C", etc., for each required element.
- 2) Write short text notes about what was good/bad about the element.
- 3) Use a simple "1-10" evaluation of how well the element was executed.

Judges all use shorthand and abbreviations so they can write quickly and keep their eyes on the skater. You can use any technique you want, but here are some common examples:

W = waltz jump
S = Salchow
T = toe loop
Lo = loop jump

F = flip jump
Lz = Lutz jump
A = Axel

U = upright spin
S = sit spin
C = camel spin
L = layback spin

Falls – Judges may circle or underline the jump, spin or footwork on which the fall occurred, or write an arrow pointing down.

You can also add “+” or “-” after a jump, spin or footwork to help you remember whether it was well done.

Scoring

The events will be judged using the 6.0 judging system. **For most competitions, you should keep your marks within a one-point range, such as marks between 1.0 and 1.9 or 2.0 and 2.9.** Accountants prefer you do not use numbers less than 1.0. For the basic elements and compulsory events, you will give one mark per skater. For the freeskate events, you will give two marks – a technical mark in the first column and a presentation mark in the second column. The total of these two marks is what places the skater. Add your marks together to make sure you don’t inadvertently tie two skaters. When the total of the two marks is the same for two skaters, the skater with the higher presentation mark will place higher.

There will be no more than six skaters in any event. As you watch each skater perform, think about the skills involved at this level and decide if this skater is:

A = Proficient or advanced, strong skating skills and ready to move on to the next level

B = Average skating skills, middle of the class

C = Weak skating skills, clearly needs more practice before moving on to the next level.

Now assign the skater a mark(s) based on how you evaluated their skating skills:

A = 2.7, 2.8, 2.9

B = 2.3, 2.4, 2.5, 2.6

C = 2.0, 2.1, 2.2

As each skater in the group performs, think first about at which level or category you see their skating: A, B or C. Then compare them to the other skaters in the group that you have placed in that same category. Decide which one is better and give that skater the higher mark. This method will help you make comparisons between skaters more quickly.

Here’s an example of an event:

Skater #1	B	2.4	2.3	Total 4.7
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Skater #2	B	2.5	2.5	Total 5.0
Skater #3	C	2.1	2.2	Total 4.3
Skater #4	A	2.7	2.8	Total 5.5
Skater #5	A	2.8	2.7	Total 5.5
Skater #6	C	2.0	2.0	Total 4.0

In this freeskating event, Skater #4 would receive a first-place ordinal from this judge because he or she has the higher presentation mark.

Single-entry Events

Occasionally, you may be assigned to judge an event with one skater in the group. Please watch the skater with the same attention and courtesy that you would while judging a larger group. Take notes and give a score to the skater. The skater will be awarded first-place and will not be judged “against the book.”

Deductions

If a skater includes elements in his or her program from a higher level, a 0.2 deduction is taken from the first mark. When assigning marks to that skater, think first about how you would rate his or her overall skating—category A, B or C—choose your mark and then take the deduction as in the example below:

Skater #1	B	2.4 (-.2)	2.2	2.3	Total 4.5
Skater #2	B	2.5		2.5	Total 5.0
Skater #3	C	2.1		2.2	Total 4.3
Skater #4	A	2.7		2.8	Total 5.5
Skater #5	A	2.8 (-.2)	2.6	2.7	Total 5.3
Skater #6	C	2.0		2.0	Total 4.0

In this example, Skater #5 has dropped to second place, but skater #1 remained in fourth place. Keep the quality of the skater’s overall performance in mind when taking deductions. There should be a penalty, but keep it in perspective.

Providing Feedback

You should refrain from making comments or giving feedback to coaches or skaters unless directly asked. If you are approached, please be sure to make several positive comments for every suggestion for improvement. Please smile and offer encouragement. Remember that this could be the skater’s first competition!

ANY TIME YOU HAVE QUESTIONS, PLEASE ASK THE REFEREE OR JUDGE IN CHARGE—THEY ARE THERE TO ASSIST YOU.

Instructions for Basic Skills Referees

The Referee's Role

The referee's role is to direct the execution of the events in the format chosen by the hosting organization, within the guidelines described in the U.S. Figure Skating Basic Skills Competition Manual.

Basic element events may be in either of the following formats:

- 1) The referee may line up all the skaters and instruct them to perform all their elements individually, in rotation.
- 2) The skater may be announced, skate over to the referee and then have the referee instruct the skater to perform each of the elements on the sheet before the next skater comes out.

Compulsory moves events: The skater will be announced and take a starting position on the ice and perform all the elements listed on the sheet as a simple program with connecting footwork when instructed "You may begin" by the announcer.

Basic program events and freeskate events are done in program format and choreographed to music of the skater's choice. The order of the elements is optional. Vocal music is allowed.

The Referee's Responsibilities

Before the Competition

- 1) Review the announcement and give input to the hosting organization regarding formats and any clarifications you think need to be made.
- 2) Receive the list of skaters in events from the hosting organization, create groupings if necessary, create an event schedule, and create a judges schedule (commonly called a 104).
- 3) Hold a pre-competition meeting with judges to ensure that all are familiar with the process of scoring and discuss how you will be handling the elements events with regard to format. This can be done the morning of the competition before events begin.

During the Competition

- 1) Time events appropriately and notify judges when they are to stop judging (via whistle or verbal direction).
- 2) Watch each skater to ensure that he or she has completed all elements listed.
- 3) If a skater performs an element that requires a deduction, you note this and direct the judges to take the appropriate deduction.
- 4) Collect the judges' sheets and verify that their marks are legible for the accounting room.
- 5) Give the judges' sheets to the runner to take to the accounting room.
- 6) Sign results sheet for each event you referee.