

Purpose: This document serves as initial guidance for current coaches who are interested in learning more about receiving certification to judge U.S. Figure Skating tests. Our goal is to let interested parties know as much information as possible up front so that they can make informed decisions. This is a “living document” and will be updated periodically as additional information and clarifications are released.

Background: In May 2023, Governing Council approved rule changes to allow coaches to receive certification to judge U.S. Figure Skating tests. This includes all tests in our test structure by **type** (skating skills, singles, pattern dance, free dance), **track** (standard, adult, adaptive/Special Olympics, and Skate United) and **discipline** (singles, solo dance, and partnered dance), with the exception of pairs. Coaches may register to trial judge now.

Contact/Author Statement: Please note that many of the referenced resources will be updated to replace old test terminology (e.g. replacing “moves in the field” with “skating skills”). If you notice broken links or other issues in this document, contact the Officials Recruitment Subcommittee at usfsrecruitment@gmail.com.

FAQs

1. What makes someone a good (test) judge?

Figure skating is a complex sport and movement culture. It is an honor to judge skating at all levels and in all environments. All officials volunteer their time, energy, and money to not only obtain appointments, but to also keep up on their education and understanding of rule changes and requirements. It requires high standards of conduct, analytical skills, and “soft skills” to work with many types of personalities in the officiating community. As coaches, you will be an asset as a U.S. Figure Skating test judge with your strong foundation of skating knowledge and understanding of the testing system.

More information is available in the resources below:

- [Trial Judge Toolkit](#), pages 1 and 2
- [Singles/Pairs Manual for Test Judges](#), Introduction Sections A through C (pages 1 - 3)
- [Ice Dance Manual for Test Judge Training](#), Introduction Sections A through C (pages 1 - 3) **Note:** This information is the same in the Singles/Pairs Manual

2. How do I get started if I am interested?

Fill out the [Official's Interest](#) form to become a registered prospective test judge, also known as a trial judge, and complete your official's compliance requirements. Once you become a prospective official, you will have access to the official's eLearning courses.

To access the eLearning Courses, follow:

Members Only>Officials>Exams & Schools>Education Opportunities>eLearning

Available Courses:

- a. Compliance for Officials
- b. How to be a Trial Judge for Tests
- c. How to Judge Moves in the Field and Free Skate tests (Name will change to Skating Skills)
- d. Professionalism for officials

We encourage you to check back in the future as more courses become available.

3. What policies are U.S. Figure Skating compliant officials (including test judges) beholden to?

As part of our compliance, officials review and sign off on the following U.S. Figure Skating policies every season:

- a. [Social Media Policy for Officials](#)
- b. [Travel and Expense Policy](#)
- c. [Code of Ethics](#)
- d. [Ethical Conduct and Conflict of Interest Policy for Officials](#)
- e. [Officials Creed](#)

Additionally, officials are responsible persons under the SafeSport and SkateSafe programs. As a coach, you should already be familiar with these guidelines and requirements.

4. Can I still use social media to show off the achievements of my skaters?

No, if a coach wants to become a test judge, the individual MUST follow the Social Media Policy for Officials and must default to the role of official in all social media interactions (i.e., no sharing articles, pictures, and/or videos of skaters/teams, no commentary on results, etc.). We understand this change may be difficult for those who actively use social media platforms to highlight student milestones, but this policy must be followed as soon as you become a registered prospective official and begin trialing. Your coaching peers and parents may not understand or respect this part of your new role at first, but it is your responsibility to manage your social media presence as a U.S. Figure Skating official.

5. What are special considerations regarding conflicts of interest? If certified, can I judge at my own club or judge a friend's student?

This will likely be the biggest obstacle for coaches looking to pursue test judge certification. This decision to grant coaches test judging certification is a significant culture shift in our sport and requires careful, sensitive navigation. Take the time to reflect on your motivations and proactively seek information from your club's test chair, board, and other volunteers about their perceptions. You may not evaluate someone from or for whom you received monetary compensation within the last year. It is your responsibility to identify possible problematic situations, and to identify ways to be successful as both a coach and an official while mitigating conflicts of interest. Comfort levels may vary and evolve over time, but you must follow all U.S. Figure Skating policies.

There are two aspects to "conflicts of interest." The first is *real or actual* conflicts. Judging a skater who takes off-ice training lessons from you or is a student of your spouse or life partner are examples of real conflicts of interest. The second is *perceived* conflicts. For example, a skater you judged and passed with honors at a test session requests lessons from you a few weeks later. How would your peers (coaches, parents, club volunteers) perceive this situation? How would you manage questions and prevent this from becoming an actual conflict of interest?

Test chairs are not required to assign coaches with test certification to test panels. To avoid any perceived conflicts of interest, they might avoid assigning local coaches to their club's test sessions. This means that you might have to travel outside of your area to trial and maintain activity (see #11 on CEUs for more information), or work with clubs in other regions or sections to access their virtual test sessions.

Like all officials, you will be required to “keep council”. We encourage you to share your new knowledge with your coaching peers to enhance our sport, but all discussions regarding tests and the evaluation of a skater(s) must remain between you and the appropriate officials. This includes while you are trialing. We understand this aspect may be more difficult to manage than officials outside the coaching community, but it is your ethical duty to keep your thoughts and the comments of other officials confidential.

6. Can I judge as a single-panel official?

No, coaches may only serve as a minority on three-judge panel. It is your responsibility to make sure you are the only coach sitting on the test panel. We encourage you to take a close look at the schedule ahead of time and notify the test chair of any conflicts or scheduling errors prior to test day.

7. Do I have to judge both singles and ice dance? What about the adult, Skate United, and adaptive tracks?

Like other prospective test judges, you have the option to pursue either singles, dance, or both. Singles includes skating skills tests (formerly called “moves in the field”) and singles tests (formerly called “free skate”). Dance includes skating skills tests, pattern dance tests (both solo and partnered) and free dance tests (both solo and partnered).

Adults have their own set of skating skills, singles and free dance tests. Pattern dance also has Adult 21+ and 50+ options.

It is expected of you to understand the standards for adult (both 21+ and 50+), Skate United, and adaptive tracks in the discipline(s) you are certified to judge.

8. What about pairs tests? Can I test judge pairs?

No, pairs tests are judged by officials with a regional competition appointment or higher, or by test judges who were grandfathered/received certification to judge pairs tests prior to changes in the certification rules. Coaches with test appointments would **NOT** be eligible to judge pairs tests.

9. What does it take to become a coach certified to judge tests? How long should I trial?

You would follow the same process and be held to the same guideline standards as a non-coach prospective trial judge candidate (see resources below). Trial judging is all about getting activity – building up a body of work that demonstrates your knowledge and understanding of skating, rules, and policies. Your activity documents your starting point and shows your improvement over time. It culminates in an application for promotion that is sent to your regional vice chair (RVC) for approval to take a promotional exam. In addition to your demonstration of technical knowledge, you will need to build a network of supportive peers to use as references when applying for appointments. Work with your mentor to ensure you are on track and meeting expectations along the way.

The time it takes to obtain your first test appointment is contingent on many factors: your availability, the amount of in-person skating near you, finances to travel, and overall readiness for an appointment. Broadly speaking, taking two years to gain activity is not uncommon. Everyone will move at their own pace, and some prospectives may advance faster than others. Keep in mind, trial activity is only good for a maximum of two years. As a coach, you might be on an accelerated track which could reduce the time it takes you to build up your body of work.

Additional resources include:

- [Guidelines for Singles Test Judges](#)
- [Guidelines for Dance Test Judges](#)

10. How do I get activity?

Trial judging means getting activity that counts towards applying for promotion. Because we live in a hybrid world, you will likely build up a mix of in-person and virtual activity. This includes:

- Trial judging at in-person test sessions.** These are also crucial for networking and learning about the “mechanics” of judging (how test sessions are conducted, the role of the judge-in-charge, timing singles and free dance tests, how to handle reskates, keeping your own counsel, etc.). In-person trial judging should make up the majority of your experience.
- Trial judging at [virtual test sessions](#).** The option for virtual trial judging started in May 2023. There are many rules and considerations, which are explained in this [document](#). Virtual trialing should be reserved for getting those hard-to-find tests (such as singles or partnered free dance tests), or to achieve a focused goal (such as increasing your agreement percentage for a certain level skating skills test). Clubs are not required to allow virtual trial judging even if they host virtual test sessions.
- Attending virtual or in-person schools and seminars.** (Note: The information covered here is very basic and is meant to provide general information. The announcements for schools and seminars have more information on requirements for attending and topics that would be covered. Officials are notified of these schools via email.) These typically take place over a long weekend and cover topics such as policies and test standards. These are great information-sharing and networking events. There are two types:
 - Education-Only.** You attend and participate to learn new skills or brush up your knowledge. You watch video clips or live demonstrations and discuss with faculty and other participants. Promotional seminars usually have an education-only option.
 - Promotion.** You attend with the intention of obtaining a judging appointment. There is an education component and an exam component. Prerequisites include having trial judged at least one in-person test session, so these are ideal if you need to “wrap up” your activity. If you pass a promotional seminar, you would not need to apply for promotion through your RVC.

11. What are continuing education units (CEUs)?

Continuing Education Units (CEUs) measure the amount and type of activity that judges perform. Test judges need to maintain 200 CEUs per four-year rolling cycle. You would receive CEUs for trial judging and judging tests, attending schools for education or promotion, and judging at Compete USA competitions. More details are located [here](#).

If certified to judge tests, you will need to maintain enough judging activity to meet your CEU requirements, in addition to maintaining your coaching certifications.

12. What resources are available to understand the mechanics of judging, such as how to mark tests and handle reskates?

Even with extensive knowledge of skating, there is a learning curve when it comes to conducting and analyzing tests. Arguably the best way to learn the judging process is to attend test sessions and talk with your peers. Trial judges learn by observing and discussing with experienced judges how they troubleshoot issues.

You can get a jump start by reviewing these resources:

- [Educational Video - Judging MITF/SS Tests](#)
- [Educational Video - Judging Pattern Dance Tests](#)
- [Educational Video - Judging Free Skate, Pair, and Free Dance Tests](#)
- [Singles/Pairs Manual for Test Judge Training](#)
- [Dance Judging Manual for Test Judge Training](#)

13. Where can I find additional test day resources?

[Test forms](#) (Make sure you are using the most up to date **TRIAL** judge forms)

[The rulebook](#) – Skating Skills Test Requirements are in section 5000, Singles Test Requirements are in Section 6200, Pattern Dance Test Requirements are in Section 8200, and Free Dance Test Requirements are in section 8300.

As stated earlier, there will be additional eLearning material available under Members Only soon.

14. Can I judge competitions as a test judge?

Yes, but you may **ONLY** judge at Compete USA competitions (in which coaches are already allowed to participate as judges). Compete USA competitions use the 6.0 judging system.

You can access the Compete USA Handbook [here](#). Information on how to judge at these competitions is [here](#).

15. If I am currently a test judge and do not have any competition appointments, does that mean I can coach?

Yes, but you would not be able to pursue competition judging appointments as a coach. However, you could work towards technical specialist and data operator appointments, roles which make up part of the technical panel at competitions. Contact the technical panel vice chair if you would like more information on technical panel appointments.

16. Okay, I've read all the above and I would like to pursue certification. How do I get the process started?

- a. Get registered. Fill out an application to register as a prospective trial judge [here](#). From there, you will be assigned a mentor to help you through your journey. They are there to help you and keep track of your papers, but it will be your responsibility to keep in contact with them and find trial judging opportunities.

- b.** Get activity/CEUs and network. Reach out to local test chairs and introduce yourself as a prospective official.
- c.** Apply for promotion. After completing your activity requirements, and in consultation with your mentor, you submit your application for appointment as a test judge to your regional vice chair (RVC) on the Judges Management Subcommittee. The RVC looks for a variety of experiences and takes into consideration whether an applicant has attended educational opportunities to hone their skills. Peer evaluations are another crucial component for promotion. You provide five names of references, and RVCs will usually send evaluation forms to other judges you have worked with.

17. I still have questions. Who do I contact about...

- a.** A conflict of interest – U.S. Figure Skating’s Chair of the Ethics Committee
- b.** Ending my coaching career and completely transitioning to judging/officiating – Your mentor(s)
- c.** General guidance – usfsrecruitment@gmail.com or any of the discipline vice chairs
- d.** How do I find committee contact information? [Committee Directory](#) under Members Only