



Trial Judge Kit

Thank you for your interest in becoming a judge. Judging is one of the most rewarding volunteer activities in figure skating; it is a wonderful way to impart skating knowledge and help young skaters achieve their skating goals. It's also an incredible learning experience and a great way to meet new people. This manual provides an overview of what it means to be a judge and also provides the steps you will need to take to get started.

Overview

Judges are responsible for evaluating and scoring each performance in a test session or competition. In test sessions, judges evaluate each test relative to a standard and determine if the skaters meet the standard and, thus, pass the test, or need to improve more before the next level and, thus, have to retry the test.

In competitions using the 6.0 system, judges evaluate the technical difficulty and quality of each performance and compare it to the others within the same event, ultimately coming up with marks for each skater that result in the placements.

In competitions using the international judging system (IJS), judges evaluate and score the quality of each element through the grade of execution (GOE) score and also evaluate and score the skaters' achievements in each of the specified program components.

U.S. Figure Skating has different types of judges. First, judges are divided by discipline. There are five disciplines:

1. Dance
2. Singles/Pairs
3. Synchronized Skating
4. Showcase
5. Theatre On Ice

The first two disciplines – dance and singles/pairs – are further divided into two types of judges:

1. Test judges
2. Competition judges

The other three disciplines – synchronized, showcase and Theatre On Ice – only have competition judges.

In order to earn a judging appointment, one must first become a trial judge and go through the trial judging process. Trial judges go to test sessions and/or competitions and judge the tests/events, but their scores don't affect the results. Instead, their judging sheets are reviewed and compared to the scores of the official panel to evaluate their level of knowledge and readiness to judge.

There are four different tracks for trial judges – standard, accelerated, advanced and select. Which track a person qualifies for depends on his or her testing and competition background in skating. There are no minimum skating requirements necessary to become a judge.

What Makes Someone a Good Figure Skating Judge?



U.S. Figure Skating holds approximately 400 nonqualifying competitions and thousands of test sessions each season. The association needs a lot of officials to support such a large number of events and is always looking for more judges. Although the need for additional judges is high, **it is imperative that the association set and maintain stringent and uniform standards of judging throughout the country.**

There are certain fundamentals that individuals should possess if they want to become qualified judges and have positive judging experiences. These characteristics include:

1. A sincere desire to be of service to the sport. Dedication is essential because all judges must spend hours studying and furthering their judging education—not only when working toward appointments, but for as long as they continue to judge. They must be willing to spend a lot of time judging both tests and competitions, as well as keeping up-to-date with the rules, whether through self-study, attendance at schools or completion of online education. Judges must also have the desire to serve in a manner that upholds and improves judging standards.
2. Ability to make an independent decision. Many characteristics create this all-important attribute, including objectivity, self-confidence, tact and decisiveness. At the forefront is a person's ability to judge objectively and not be influenced by other persons or personalities, either on or off the ice. A person must be able to appraise a skater's abilities based on what is completed during a test or competition and mark them accurately and clearly without fear or favor.
3. Proper temperament and ability to handle stress. Judges often find themselves being judged by others, which can be stressful at times. A good judge must be able to control their temper and emotions, even after being challenged or ridiculed for a mark or placement. Tact is also critical in becoming a good judge; it dictates how a judge may handle disgruntled parents, upset children or confrontational coaches.
4. Knowledge of the sport. Technical knowledge of figure skating is essential, as is knowledge of the rules. Judges are not required to have any minimum skating background; however, those who have reached certain levels in tests or competitions may be able to progress through their appointments more quickly.

Individuals who are new to the sport must be willing to put in the hours necessary to acquire technical knowledge, from studying texts and attending judges schools to skating themselves (preferably with quality instruction). And all judges, no matter how seasoned, are expected to keep up-to-date on the rules of the sport, which can change annually.

Qualified candidates who persevere and remain committed to the sport will experience many rewards throughout their judging careers. Not only are they doing the sport a distinct service, most judges create long-lasting relationships with other judges and individuals who share their passion for figure skating.



What Does Trial Judging Involve?

Trial judging to earn a test appointment involves attending test sessions and judging them as if an actual judge on the panel. Your scores don't count, but are compared to the scores of the actual panel. Your comments are also reviewed to determine your knowledge of the rules, ability to provide meaningful feedback to skaters, coaches and parents, and ability to justify your scores.

Depending on the part of the country where you live, it might be very easy for you to find test sessions without having to travel far or incur many expenses, or it may require quite a bit of travel and expense. Trial judges are not reimbursed for their expenses, so this is something to consider when deciding whether to begin trial judging.

Each test appointment requires a certain number of tests to be trial judged. Guidelines for each appointment can be found on the "Judges" page of U.S. Figure Skating Online "Members Only" (<https://www.usfsaonline.org/>). Click "Officials", then click "Officials Info", then click "Judges", then scroll down to the section entitled "Appointment and Advancement". It's important to review this information to understand what is expected.

In addition to trial judging test sessions, trial judges will also need to complete educational opportunities to earn appointments. U.S. Figure Skating is working to offer more education online; however, it may be necessary to attend an in-person school, which requires some travel and expense. Check with your club or interclub association to see if there is any financial support available for trial judge expenses. Anytime a school is scheduled, it is posted on the "Judges" page of U.S. Figure Skating Online (www.usfigureskating.org). The instructions for finding that page are in the previous paragraph.

If one is working toward a competition appointment, the commitment is similar, except instead of trial judging test sessions, one has to trial judge nonqualifying and qualifying competitions. This is more likely to involve travel and higher expense, as only certain nonqualifying competitions are approved for trial judging, and qualifying competitions only take place in a few locations each season. The list of nonqualifying competitions approved for trial judges can be found on the same "Judges" page under "Competitions". This is typically updated near the beginning of each calendar year.

How Does One Become a Trial Judge?

The first step to becoming a trial judge is to make sure you meet the minimum criteria as follows:

1. You must be at least 16 years old to begin trial judging and at least 18 years old to earn your first judging appointment.
2. You must be a current member of U.S. Figure Skating, either through a home club or as an individual member.

If you meet the above criteria, the next step is to complete the online Trial Judge Registration Form. The direct link to the form is https://fs12.formsite.com/USFSAIT/TJRegistration/secure_index.html.

One of the questions on the form will ask if you know a judge whom you'd like to have as your mentor. Your mentor will guide you through the trial judging process and maintain all of your official trial papers and records. It's okay if you don't have someone in mind for this role, but if there is a judge with whom you have a good rapport and an existing relationship, you should provide that judge's name on the application. Your



mentor does not have to be from the same club, or even the same state, but they should live in the same section of the country where you live. A map of the US Figure Skating regions and section can be accessed at the following website: http://sk8stuff.com/f_basic_ref/regions_map.htm.

Once you complete the online registration form, you will receive an email from the appropriate Vice Chair on the Judges Management Subcommittee confirming your registration as a trial judge and providing the name of your mentor. Vice chairs are volunteers, so depending on what they have going on at any given time and how easy it is to find a mentor, it might be a couple of weeks before you hear from them. If more than two weeks pass after you submit your registration form, and you still haven't heard anything, please contact the U.S. Figure Skating Director of Technical Services at jnewcomer@usfigureskating.org to notify her of the delay, and they will follow up on your behalf.

The names and email addresses for all Vice Chairs can be found on the U.S. Figure Skating Members Only site (<https://www.usfsaonline.org/>) by logging in, selecting "Leadership", then "Directory", then "Committee", then "Technical and Officials", then "Domestic Officials Recruitment and Management Committee" and finally the "Judges Management Subcommittee (in the "Group 3: Technical" box). The Vice Chairs are a great resource, especially if you have questions about the requirements for appointment, so don't hesitate to contact the appropriate vice chair (based on region of the country and discipline) if you have questions.

Preparing to Trial Judge

Once you have submitted your paperwork (or even before), you will want to make sure you have the materials and knowledge necessary to be successful.

The most important document you will need is the current U.S. Figure Skating Rulebook. These are available, free of charge, online at www.usfigureskatingrules.org. If you prefer to have printed copies, you may print the online versions, or you may purchase one through U.S. Figure Skating Headquarters.

Once you have these in hand, you will want to be sure to familiarize yourself with the sections listed below. Please note that page numbers are not provided, since those change from year to year.

- **Judges Committee rules (DOR 4.00-DOR 5.50).** This section includes rules on the levels and types of judging appointments, what each level of judge is allowed to judge, how to apply to trial judge and the judges standard of conduct, among other things.
- **Rules for All Competitions (1000-1600).** This section is important to review before trial judging or judging your first competition.
- **Rules for Qualifying Competitions (2000-2940).** This section is important to review if pursuing a qualifying competition appointment.
- **Rules for Nonqualifying Competitions (3000-3750).** This section is important to review before trial judging or judging your first competition.
- **Technical Requirements – Singles, Pairs, Ice Dancing or Synchronized Skating (rules 4000-9923).** These sections are where you will find the technical requirements for each level and discipline for tests and competitions. You will also find rules on music requirements and costume requirements and marking of programs in both 6.0 and IJS systems.
- **The remainder of the Test Rules** is divided by discipline. If you are trial judging or judging a certain type of test, it is important that you know all of the rules pertaining to those tests. This includes not



only what is required on each test but also the requirements for passing, general test rules, how tests are to be marked and how reskates will be handled.

In addition to the rulebook, other resources that can help you prepare to judge include the “Singles/Pairs Manual for Test Judges”, the “Dance Manual for Test Judges Training”, the “Moves in the Field Test Standards” and the “Moves in the Field Expectations and Common Errors”. All of these documents are available on the “Members Only” page, click “Officials”, then “Officials Info”, then “Judges” and scroll down to “Test Sessions”.

Trial Judging – Tests

Once you receive confirmation from the appropriate vice chair that you are properly registered as a trial judge, you may begin actually trial judging.

You must request permission to trial judge at a test session. The number of spaces for trial judges is often limited, and the test chairs will also need to do some advanced preparations for trial judges, so they need to know how many are coming.

To request permission, contact the test chair of the club where you would like to trial judge. The names of all club test chairs can be found in the “Member Clubs” section of the U.S. Figure Skating Directory, which is available on the Members Only site (<https://www.usfsaonline.org/>) by selecting “Leadership”, then “Directory” and then “Club” after you log in. The Directory can also be purchased as a printed book when you purchase the Rulebook.

You may want to trial judge at your home club first, where you will likely be more comfortable in this new role. Once you are ready, you may also contact the test chairs of other nearby clubs. You will need to trial judge at multiple clubs in order to earn your appointment. Your mentor and other local judges can be helpful in this process by introducing you to other area judges and keeping you informed of area test sessions. Trial judging with a variety of judges is important in your development as a well informed and educated judge. If there are no nearby clubs or very few tests in your area, you may want to call a 'center' of skating—a large club that operates all year round—and plan to attend one of their major test sessions for maximum trialing with minimum time and expense.

Finding a test session. A Facebook page has been developed to share the information regarding upcoming test sessions (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/392232234175106/>).

Trial Judging – Competitions

If you are interested in trial judging competitions, you must review the list of competitions approved for trial judging which can be found on the “Judges” page under the Members Only page by selecting “Officials”, then “Officials Info”, then “Judges” and scroll down to “Competitions” to determine which competition(s) you want to attend, and then complete the “Request to Trial a Competition”. Please note there are deadlines for registering to trial judge a competition – 30 days prior to an approved nonqualifying competition, and by September 1 for qualifying competitions.

In addition to being allowed to trial judge nonqualifying competitions, trial judges are also allowed to judge Basic Skills competitions. This is a great way to actually try your hand at judging. If this is of interest to you, let clubs in your area know that you would be available to judge if they hold any Basic Skills competitions.



Preparing for Your First Test Session

It is important to begin the trial judging experience with realistic expectations. Trial judging (and future judging activities) will cost you money and time and may cause you some stress and frustration at different times during your judging career. However, keep in mind that the potential rewards are enormous. Since trial judging does require the commitment of both financial and personal resources, it is important to make your trial judging experiences as pleasant, rewarding, productive and efficient as possible. As such, here are several helpful hints you may want to follow as you prepare to trial judge your first test session. You will most likely incorporate many of these hints and activities into your trial judging routine and develop some of your own. Talking with your mentor, other judges and the test chair will be helpful.

Before the test session:

1. To make sure you will be able to judge once you arrive, remember to apply to the test chair in advance.
2. Review the elements that need to be completed during the test and familiarize yourself with the passing standards. In addition to reviewing the U.S. Figure Skating Rulebook and judges manuals for this information, you might also want to review the Trial Judge Test Forms, which are available on the "Judges Page". This page can be accessed by going to your "Members Only" page (<https://www.usfsonline.org/>), then click "Officials", then click "Officials Info", then click "Judges".
3. If you choose to utilize the rulebook electronically, please note that judges (and therefore trial judges) are not allowed to have any electronic communicative device on a judges stand for competitions but may for test sessions (for the purpose of accessing official documents such as the rulebook), so make sure you plan accordingly.
4. Feel free to ask judges ahead of time for helpful hints on how to judge most efficiently and effectively. They will have good 'tips' for you regarding shorthand, what to include in your comments, and what to look for during the tests.
5. Prepare a trial judge bag or briefcase that contains all of the important items you will need during a test session. It should include:
 - a. Clipboard;
 - b. U.S. Figure Skating Rulebook;
 - c. Pencils (with erasers) and pens;
 - d. Blank test sheets;
 - e. Schedules (if the test chair provides the schedule in advance);
 - f. Enough clothes to make sure you are warm enough to concentrate during the session. Do you want to discuss proper dress?? Is there a suggested dress code?? The general dress code for test session judging is typically 'casual business'.
 - g. Food (many clubs provide food for officials only and you may not have time to find something to eat);
 - h. Envelopes pre-addressed with your monitor's address (might need catalog-size envelopes to hold all the papers) and either stamps or some change to cover the cost of postage;
 - i. Your U.S. Figure Skating member number (you will need to provide this on all of your trial judging forms);



The day of the test session:

1. Arrive at the rink early, to allow time to fill in test sheets, meet other judges and learn about the logistics of the session.
2. Introduce yourself to the test chair; this person will be a great source of information during the session. There are several items to ask the test chair about:
 - a. Test session schedule: When you arrive, identify yourself to the test chair and ask to see a copy of the test session schedule so that you can fill in the names of the candidates on your trial sheets.
 - b. Trial judge seating: It is important to ask the test chair where trial judges sit for tests. Make sure you are in your designated seat before the test is scheduled to start. Make sure you can see well from this location.
 - c. Judge-in-Charge (JIC): If you don't know the official judges, ask the test chair to point out the JIC of your panel(s). This person may be different for different tests. You'll want to keep this person in sight to make sure you are in the right rink at the right time. Introduce yourself to this judge and let him or her know that you will be trial judging tests during the session. The JIC will have to sign all of your trial papers once a test is complete and you have filled in all of your comments and scores.
3. Fill out your trial sheets, writing clearly the name of the candidate and the test date, signing your name, and noting your U.S. Figure Skating member number. For dance and pairs tests, be certain you know which partner is the candidate.
4. When you enter the arena to trial judge, make sure you take several pencils, your rulebook, and a pen (for the JIC to use to sign your papers). It is important to be alert but inconspicuous and conduct yourself in a professional manner that won't distract the skaters or the official judges from their duties.
5. For dance trial judges, you should know the dances you will be trialing or judging to the point where you don't require a rulebook. Feel free to have it there for reference purposes, but you should know the dance steps well enough that you don't have to follow the diagrams during the test. In addition, dance diagrams are on the trial sheets.
6. After the tests are over, you may ask the judges to discuss the results with you. For example, you may want to review some of the tests and find out why a particular test passed or failed and how strong or weak various tests were. This process will help you evaluate your reasons for passing or failing a test and your final decisions. If your reasons for your decision match those of the judges, then you are seeing and evaluating the same things in approximately the same manner. It is important to keep your evaluations confidential; they are not to be discussed with people other than the judges involved.
7. When you trial a test session, it is important to give the test chair a stamped, addressed envelope (or manila mailer and money for postage if there are more than four papers) addressed to your mentor. Although your mentor will receive your original trial papers, you should also keep careful records reflecting where, when and with whom you have trialed, and the results of each test. Your record gives you a running score on your progression and serves as a check when your mentor prepares to send in your papers for an appointment. You may ask the test chair to provide you with a copy of your papers before you leave the session. If that is not possible, you may leave a self-addressed envelope (with



appropriate postage) and ask that the test chair mail you copies of your papers in addition to mailing them to your monitor.

Remember that, like judges, test chairs are volunteers, and having trial judges adds to their workload, so please be considerate.

During the test:

1. It is important not to talk with other judges or trial judges during the test session. If you have a question, ask the JIC.
2. When you begin judging, watch the skater carefully—noting the completion of elements as well as the quality with which they are performed. Remember to judge only what you see the skater do that day. Even if you know a skater is capable of completing an element but misses it during the test, you must mark the skater's performance at that moment. Don't be swayed by a skater's reputation or past performances.
3. As you evaluate the test, write as much as you can—there is no such thing as too many notes. Not only is this the best way to show what you know, it will help you practice making useful comments for the skaters once you receive your first appointment and begin judging. Your comments should reflect what the skater does well and what he or she needs to improve in order to pass the test the next time or prepare for the next level.
4. Important hints on marking:
 - a. Write your comments legibly and concisely.
 - b. Learn the fundamentals, and then give a mark to show that you expect these to be done correctly.
 - c. Don't try to guess what the official judges are thinking or writing, your marks should reflect what you think the quality level and outcome of the test should be.
 - d. Add your marks and write/circle the result, 'pass' or 'retry'. Consider what is best for the skater; do you think they have mastered these elements and are ready for the next test?
 - e. Don't worry about making a mistake — every judge has made one at one point or another, and you will most likely make many over the years.
 - f. Keep your papers to yourself.
 - g. Don't allow any one aspect to be the reason for your mark—one detracting point could well be offset by some other very good point. Keep the concept of the “big picture” in mind, and look at the overall performance.
5. Once the tests are completed, give your trial sheets immediately to the test chair or the JIC for their signature.
6. You should be prepared to discuss your results with the JIC if asked to do so. This will help you prepare for when you are an official judge and are asked to talk to skaters about their tests results.



After the test:

1. Following the test, you should take time to listen to the official judges. If they discuss the test with the trial judges, it will be done in a private situation, away from skaters, parents and coaches. Listen carefully to the judges' explanations, don't hesitate to ask questions, but don't discuss the judges' marks or yours unless you are asked to do so.
2. As a trial judge, you should never discuss a test with anyone except the officials who saw the test. Any comments to skaters, parents or coaches are inappropriate. If any of these individuals approach you about a test that you trial judged, refer them to the JIC or to the test chair to set up a time to discuss their questions with the official panel.
3. Before you leave, remember to thank the judges and the test chair for the opportunity to trial judge.

When you spend time in the judges' room, you may see or hear information about skaters that is confidential; it is to remain confidential. Simply note the information YOU need to trial judge and keep anything else you hear to yourself.

Follow up:

After the test session, you may want to contact your mentor to discuss how the session went and review any problems or challenges you experienced. Your mentor will help you identify the areas you might need to improve and also point out the areas in which you are excelling. He or she will help you move toward your next appointment and help you realize your full potential in the judging ranks.

As you begin judging, you will encounter many different circumstances and situations, especially as you begin to travel to rinks outside of your area. Though there are basic standards in terms of how test sessions are conducted, you will find some clubs have their own unique activities. These differences can be as small as whether or not clipboards are provided for each judge or as significant as how much the judges interact with coaches and skaters following a test. You will need to observe these differences when you judge for the first time in a new rink. Remember to stick to the judges' training you have received to that point, but be open to learning from the new judges you meet.

Note: Because almost all trial judges begin by trial judging test sessions, this kit does not get into the details of trial judging competitions. Once you are ready to trial judge competitions, your monitor and other judges are great resources to help you prepare.

Responsibilities of Judges

During the trial judging process and once you become a judge, it is vital to keep in mind the primary responsibilities of figure skating judges. Judging is an honor that is laden with many responsibilities, the most important of which are highlighted here:

1. A judge is an official representative of U.S. Figure Skating and should always conduct themselves in a manner befitting this status. A judge must behave in a dignified manner regardless of the circumstances or situations and must always have patience and be even-tempered, modest and unassuming.



2. A judge must make independent decisions based on their observations and supported by intelligent, objective and technically-sound comments. The majority of a panel decides the outcome of a test or event, and the fact that one judge may be in the minority is not necessarily negative. It is the responsibility of each judge, however, to be able to support their decisions with knowledgeable comments. Judges must make decisions independent of what they may hear in the judge's room and in the media, from coaches and other judges, or from past experiences.
3. A judge must concentrate fully on the skater, forgetting the audience, surroundings and other judges except for the demands of courtesy.
4. A judge must treat all coaches and skaters equally and never suggest that a skater should pass or fail because they take lessons from a certain instructor. Judges unwittingly arouse distrust when they appear very friendly to some skaters or coaches but not to others.
5. A judge must always be objective and put aside personal likes and dislikes, club affiliations and personal relationships. Opinions and forecasts publicly expressed before a test or competition are causes for banning a judge.
6. A judge should add their own marks independently before handing in test papers to the JIC and verify that the numbers achieve the desired results. It is important to give credit to the elements performed well and evaluate whether or not the positives outweigh the negatives and, therefore, constitute a passing test. Once the JIC has checked the papers for accuracy in computation, the results can then be discussed.
7. A judge must be prepared to talk to candidates, coaches, parents and other judges about their test decisions and explain the reasons for their marks. It is helpful to the skater if a judge can pinpoint some of the areas that need to be improved for the next time the test is retaken, but the judge must not attempt to teach the skater. A judge should also find something positive to say regarding a skater's performance in order to encourage the skater.
8. Judges are there to serve the skaters and help them with their evaluations. If there are times a judge feels that they may have missed an element or may have not seen a landing completely, the judge should give the skater the benefit of the doubt.
9. When judging an event at a competition with multiple portions (either dance or singles and pairs), a judge needs to keep in mind that each portion of the competition is separate and distinct from the others. Judges must not allow prior performance or standings in the previous event(s) to dictate where they place the skater/team in the current or next event.
10. A judge may give praise to a skater publicly after a test or event; criticism, however, if given at all, should be offered privately and only when requested by those concerned. Judges should avoid arguments at all times; if a coach, skater, or parent become argumentative, especially in public, it is important for the judge to conduct himself or herself professionally.
11. A judge should never criticize another judge or second-guess the reasons why another judge judged the way they did. If approached by someone questioning the results of another judge, the judge should recommend that the person discuss the matter with the appropriate judge only.



12. Judges should remember that individual marks and comments are confidential and should not be divulged except to the skater and the skater's parents and/or coach. Trial judges should pay particular attention to this.
13. A judge must have thorough technical knowledge of what they are judging. Skaters have spent a great deal of time, effort and money learning to perform the test requirements, and they deserve to be judged by knowledgeable officials. It is the responsibility of the judge to commit to continual learning and training.
14. A judge must be sure that he or she is physically able to withstand the strain of judging, has good hearing and good eyesight, and is mentally fit to concentrate on the skating at hand.



Appendix A – Online Resources

Names and Contact Information for Judges Committee Vice Chairs

- Log into your Members Only page (<https://www.usfsaonline.org/>), click “Leadership”, then “Directory”, then “Committee”, then “Technical and Officials”, then “Domestic Officials Recruitment and Management Committee”, then scroll down to “Judges Management Subcommittee”.

Trial judge registration form

- https://fs12.formsite.com/USFSAIT/TJRegistration/secure_index.html

Judges page:

- All of the links below can be accessed from this page: Log into your Members Only page (<https://www.usfsaonline.org/>), then click “Officials”, then click “Officials Info”, then click “Judges”.

Guidelines for Appointment/Promotion as a Judge, all can be accessed on the Judges Page:

- Guidelines for Singles/Pairs Test Judges
- Guidelines for Singles/Pairs Competition Judges
- Guidelines for Dance Test Judges
- Guidelines for Dance Competition Judges
- Guidelines for Synchronized Team Skating Judges
- Guidelines for Theatre On Ice Judges

Trial judge forms for trialing tests: found on the Judges Page.

Manuals: found on the Judges Page

- Singles/Pairs Manual for Test Judges
- Dance Manual for Test Judges Training

Other Important Forms: found on Judges Page

- Application for Appointment/Promotion
- Request for Permission to Trial/Practice Judge a Competition

Competitions approved for trial judging: found on Judges Page

Rulebook

- www.usfigureskatingrules.org

Directory

- <https://www.usfsaonline.org/Members/MemberHome>, click “Leadership”, then “Directory”