

Ice Dancing Q&A

Ice dancing has its roots in ballroom and folk dancing. While the rhythms were easily adapted to ice, the nature of the ice rink forced the steps to become set patterns to accommodate more couples without the danger of running into other couples.

In the free dance event, the most noticeable differences are the prohibition that dancers do not perform the jumps, spins, and lifts allowed in pair programs.

Dancers concentrate on integrating choreography that is designed to express the music. Dancers are also restricted as to separations except while briefly changing positions or holds.

The compulsory dances and original dance are based on traditional ballroom dance rhythms. The rules for the free dance event does not restrict dancers to using music suitable for ballroom or folk dancing.

It is still a requirement that the music has a definite rhythm, and that dancers actually skate to the beat of the music. This is an important distinction as a pair team may interpret the melody or phrasing of the music, but dancers must interpret its rhythm.

How do judges evaluate ice dancing?

Ice dancing is technically very demanding. The steps and turns are very difficult and must be executed with extreme attention to neatness and precision and timing. Dancers are extremely well trained and rarely make a major mistake such as falling.

In the free dance, dancers are required to do specific technical elements such as dance lifts, spins, and footwork sequences

A fall is not technically considered a major error in ice dancing, depending on how quickly the couple can recover and if the fall occurs during a required element.

Judges evaluate how closely the dancers skate together, especially in side by side step sequences, the frequency of changes of positions and holds, combined with skating different steps or in a face-to-face versus side-by-side positions.

Judges also look for bilateral skating of edges and turns and if the steps are equally as difficult for both partners. The flow of the couple across the ice and the program's choreography, unison, and expressing the music are essential in dancing.

The total performance is extremely important in dancing. Dancers must combine both the technical skills (posture, extension, turnout, and pointing the toe of the free leg) with their presentation skills which include upper-body motions and facial expressions.

Differences between Dance and Pairs

The following provides an example of required elements of competitive dance and pair events:

Senior pairs:

- (a) A maximum of 4 lifts, including 1 or 2 twist lifts
- (b) A maximum of 2 different throw jumps
- (c) A maximum of 1 solo jump
- (d) A maximum of 1 jump combination or sequence
- (e) A maximum of 1 solo spin combination
- (f) A maximum of 1 pair spin combination
- (g) A maximum of 1 death spiral
- (h) A maximum of 1 step sequence

Senior dance:

- (a) A maximum of 5 different lifts
- (b) A maximum of 2 different dance spins
- (c) 2 different types of step sequences
- (d) A maximum of 2 different sets of synchronized twizzles