

# Figure Skating Question and Answers

## Technical Elements

### How many different jumps are performed by figure skaters?

Jumps can be distinguished by the direction of the takeoff (forward or backward), the takeoff edges (outer or inner), and if the edge is assisted with a toe pick.

Right-handed skaters usually jump in the counterclockwise direction, landing their jumps on a right back outside edge. The following description of jumps will be in the counterclockwise direction.

*The following edge jumps are described, starting from the least to most difficult:*

#### **Bunny Hop**

The bunny hop is a non-rotational jump performed while skating forward in a straight line. It is usually the first jump learned by beginning figure skaters.

The skater starts by stroking forward in a straight line and strokes onto the left foot, followed by springing off the ice with the right leg extending forward and up past the left leg. The skater lands on the toe picks of the right foot and immediately pushing onto the left foot. Bunny hops can be performed in a series of jumps on the same foot, or alternating by jumping from the opposite foot.

#### **Waltz Jump**

The Waltz Jump starts from a forward left front outside edge takeoff. The skater completes a half-rotation jump landing on the right back outside edge.

#### **Salchow Jump**

The takeoff is from a left back inside edge; the typical approach is from a left forward outside three turn. The right leg swings to the front with a scooping motion just prior to takeoff, landing on the right back outside edge.

Some skaters incorrectly scull the right leg on the ice to assist the takeoff. The jump is named after Ulrich Salchow, who dominated skating in the early 1900's.

#### **Loop Jump (Rittberger jump)**

The takeoff is from a right back outside edge. Usually skaters approach this jump by skating backwards, with the left foot crossed in front of the right. Often they look like they are sitting in an invisible chair.

Unlike the salchow, there's no swinging of the free leg into the jump; the skater simply springs upward in a cross-legged position, landing on the right back outside edge. In Europe, this is also

known as a Rittberger jump, after its inventor Werner Rittberger.

#### **Axel Jump (Axel Paulsen Jump)**

The Waltz and Axel Jump share the same forward left front outside edge takeoff. A single Axel Jump is 1.5 revolutions, landing on the right back outside edge. Named after Axel Paulsen, who invented it.

Double (2.5 revolutions) and Triple (3.5 revolutions) forms of the Axel are performed.

*The following jumps are usually performed as single jumps:*

#### **Walley**

A Walley Jump is rarely performed, as it has no base value in events judged under the IJS. The takeoff is from a right back inside edge. The landing is on the right back outside edge.

Sometimes a skater may do two in a row, changing from the right back outside landing edge to an inside edge to begin the next jump.

#### **Half Loop Jump (Euler)**

This jump starts with a loop jump takeoff, but is landed on a left back inside edge. This is a 3/4-revolution jump in spite of the "half loop" name. It's mainly used as a linking element with a salchow in jump combinations, or in footwork sequences.

#### **One-foot Axel Jump**

This jump starts with an Axel takeoff, but lands on a left back inside edge like the half loop. (Roller skaters sometimes call this jump a "Colledge", after 1937 world champion Cecilia Colledge.)

*The following toe assisted jumps are described, starting from the least to most difficult:*

#### **Toe Loop Jump (Mapes or Cherry Flip)**

The takeoff is from a right back outside edge. The skater then reaches back with the left foot and uses the toe pick of the left foot to provide assistance for the jump at takeoff. The landing is on the right back outside edge.

A Toe Loop jump is often performed as the second jump of a combination.

The most common entry into a solo Toe Loop Jump is from an inside three turn.

### **Toe Walley Jump**

If the jump is entered from a forward left outside three turn, followed by a step to a back right inside edge foot and uses the toe pick of the left foot to provide assistance for the jump at takeoff. The landing is on the right back outside edge.

The Toe Loop and Toe Walley are considered equivalent in difficulty.

### **Flip Jump (Toe Salchow)**

The takeoff is from a left back inside edge with the assistance of the right toe pick. Like the salchow, the usual entrance is a left forward outside three turn, but usually from a straight-line approach instead of a curved one. The landing is on the right back outside edge.

Some skaters tend to perform a forward outside rocker turn instead of a outside 3-Turn. Judges penalize the incorrect edge takeoff.

*The flip and toe loop look much alike and even experienced observers sometimes have trouble distinguishing them. Here are some things that may help to distinguish them from each other:*

#### **The flip:**

- The skater picks with the same foot they land on, while with the toe loop they pick with the opposite foot.
- The skater picks inside the curve of the jump, while with the toe loop they pick outside the curve.
- The skater turns away from the picking foot as they jump, while with the toe loop the skater jumps towards the picking foot.

#### **The Lutz:**

- The skater picks with the same foot they land on. A toe-assisted jump from the left back outside edge and right toe pick, landing on the right back outside edge.
- Skaters approach the entry to the jump with a curve from the opposite "direction" of the landing curve, creating a serpentine.
- This jump is usually executed in a corner of the rink from a diagonally entry that traversed the width of the rink. Named after Alois Lutz.

### **Split Jump**

The takeoff is the same as a flip, and the jump is landed facing forwards on the left toe pick and right inside edge. You can also do a split jump from a Lutz takeoff.

### **Falling Leaf**

A Falling Leaf is split jump done from a Loop takeoff. The jump is landed facing forwards on the left toe pick and right inside edge.

### **Stag Jump**

A variation of the Split Jump is the Stag Jump, with the left leg tucked up instead of extended. The jump is landed facing forwards on the left toe pick and right inside edge.

### **Split Flip**

The takeoff is the same as a flip with a full split prior to landing backwards on the right back outside edge.

### **Split Lutz**

The takeoff is the same as a Lutz with a full split prior to landing backwards on the right back outside edge.

### **Common terms used to refer to jumps with problems:**

#### **Toe Axel Jump**

Is a cheated jump that is supposed to be a double toe loop, but where the skater incorrectly does an axel-like forward takeoff from the toe pick instead of the correct backwards toe-assisted takeoff.

#### **Flutz Jump**

The intention is to perform a Lutz Jump, but the skater incorrectly changes to an inside edge just before the toe pick (the same edge as for a flip).

A Flutz is scored as a bad Lutz, not as a Flip. A Flip taking off from an outside edge is referred to as a "lip". Lips are not as common as Flutzes.

#### **A Cheated or Under Rotated Jump**

This term refers to under rotated jumps where the skater doesn't perform the full rotation of the jump in the air. The error occurs when the skater does a half-turn on the ice or a skidded or badly hooked edge instead. It's possible to "cheat" both the takeoff and landing of jumps.

The follow is a list of all possible jumps by takeoff edge. In this list the term "natural" rotation refers to a jump that rotates in the same direction as the entrance edge, while "counter" rotation refers to jump rotating in the opposite direction to the entrance edge.

- ❖ BO edge, natural rotation, no toe: Loop, Half Loop, falling leaf
- ❖ BO edge, counter rotation, no toe: Toeless Lutz (rare)
- ❖ BI edge, natural rotation, no toe: Salchow
- ❖ BI edge, counter rotation, no toe: Walley
- ❖ BO edge, natural rotation, toe: Toe Loop, Ballet jump
- ❖ BO edge, counter rotation, toe: Lutz
- ❖ BI edge, natural rotation, toe: Flip, Split, Stag
- ❖ BI edge, counter rotation, toe: Toe Walley

- ❖ FO edge, natural rotation, no toe: Waltz, Axel, One-foot Axel
- ❖ FO edge, counter rotation, no toe: In theory possible, but no record of being performed in competition.
- ❖ FI edge, natural rotation, no toe: Inside Axel
- ❖ FI edge, counter rotation, no toe: In theory possible, but no record of being performed in competition.

Note: A toe assist is never used on a forward take-off jump.

### **How many different spins are performed by figure skaters?**

#### **Back Spin**

The backspin is rotated in the same direction as a forward spin, but on the opposite foot. Most right-handed skaters spin counterclockwise, doing a forward spin on the left foot and a backspin on the right foot.

It is both contradictory and confusingly that a forward spin is performed on a shallow backward inside edge and a back spin on a shallow forward outside edge.

Occasionally you will see skaters flipping a forward spin onto a strong forward outside edge or a backspin onto a strong backward inside edge, which is considered to add difficulty to the spin.

#### **Scratch Spin**

A fast upright spin is called a scratch spin because it is done on the forward part of the blade, so that the toe pick scratches the ice slightly. It can be performed either forward or backwards.

#### **Layback Spin**

The layback spin is considered a version of an upright spin with a backward or sideways lean of the torso. Female skaters usually perform it as a forward spin. It is more difficult to perform backwards.

#### **Camel Spin**

A spin with an arched torso and the free leg held in an elevated position above hip level. A flying camel is a backspin in the camel position entered by means of a jump in which the skater attains the camel position in the air.

#### **Grafstrom Spin**

A camel spin performed on a bent knee. Named after Gillis Grafstrom.

#### **Hamill Camel**

A transition from a back camel spin to a back sit spin by first bending the knee of the skating leg and then turning out the free hip to "flip over" into the sitting position. Named after Dorothy Hamill.

#### **Biellmann Spin**

The skater arches her back and pulls her free leg high over her head. Named after Denise Biellmann.

#### **Illusion (Windmill) Spin**

Similar to a camel spin, but the skater bobs her torso and free leg up and down in phase with the spin. It looks kind of like a windmill.

#### **Josee Chouinard Spin**

This spin is a cross between a camel and a layback. It's usually entered from a camel spin; the skater twists into a face-up position and bends the free leg so that the foot is held near the knee of the skating leg.

#### **Death Drop (Open Axel Back Sit) Spin**

A flying spin with an axel-like takeoff where the skater achieves a horizontal position in the air before dropping into a back sit spin.

#### **Butterfly Spin**

This spin is similar to a death drop, but the jump is from a backward edge and toe tap.

Note: butterflies can be done by themselves just as a kind of leap or acrobatic move, often in a series of two or three in a row.

### **Are there other moves performed by figure skaters?**

#### **Spiral**

A balance position performed on an edge or flat while skating forward or backwards with the free leg extended and held higher than hip level. An easy move, but very dramatic when done with good stretch and speed.

#### **Spread Eagle**

A move skated on two feet with the toes pointing in opposite directions of the curve. It can be done either on outside or inside edges. Any skater can perform the inside curve, but skaters need to work on acquiring the flexibility of turning the ankles to achieve the arc on outside edges.

The effectiveness of this move depends on the speed and an erect body position without their rear sticking out awkward and unattractive position.

#### **Ina Bauer**

A spread eagle variant where one knee is deeply bent and the other leg stretched behind the body. Typically done with an arched back.

#### **Besti Squat**

A spread eagle skated in a squatting position, with bent knees; named from its use by Natalia Bestemianova and Andrei Bukin in their 1988 free dance.

### **Shoot-the-Duck**

A move in which the skater glides on one foot in a squatting position, with the free leg extended in front, similar to a sit spin position.

### **What turns performed by figure skaters?**

#### **Mohawk**

A turn that requires a change of foot while changing direction from front-to-back or back-to-front. A Mohawk is done on from inside-to-inside or outside-to-outside edges. Mohawks are commonly used in free skating as a simple turn or in step sequences. The skater remains on the same curve throughout the entry and exit of the turn.

#### **Choctaw**

A turn that requires a change of foot from front-to-back or back-to-front turns. A Choctaw involves changing a curve from either an inside or outside edge to the opposite edge while changing direction. Choctaws are commonly used in free skating as a more advanced turn or in step sequences.

#### **Three Turn**

The most common one-foot turn, done on a circle with the cusp of the turn pointing inward forming a tracing that looks like a numeral 3. Performed in forward and backward directions on outside and inside edges.

#### **Bracket Turn**

A turn made on one foot from forward to backward (or backward to forward) from one edge of one character to an edge of another character, i.e., outside to inside or inside to outside, where the body rotation is counter to the natural direction of progress causing the cusp to print outward from the center of the lobe curvature. The edge before and after the turn is on the same lobe.

#### **Rocker Turn**

A turn made on one foot from a forward to backward (or backward to forward) edge maintaining the same character, i.e., inside to inside or outside to outside, where the body rotation is in the same direction as the natural progress causing the cusp to point toward the center of curvature of the first lobe. The edge before and after the turn is on different lobes having opposite directional curvature.

#### **Counter Turn**

A turn made on one foot from a forward to backward (or backward to forward) edge maintaining the same character, i.e., inside to inside or outside to outside, where the body rotation is counter to the natural direction of progress causing the cusp to point outward from the center of curvature

of the first lobe. The edge before and after the turn is on different lobes having opposite directional curvature.

#### **Twizzle**

A traveling turn on one foot with one or more rotations, which is quickly rotated with a continuous (uninterrupted) action. The weight remains on the skating foot with the free foot in any position during the turn, and then placed beside the skating foot to skate the next step.

A series of checked three-turns is not acceptable, as this does not constitute a continuous action. If the traveling action stops during the execution, the twizzle becomes a solo spin (pirouette). Performed in forward and backward directions on outside and inside edges.

### **What's the difference between ice dancing and pair skating?**

Ice dancing is derived from ballroom or folk dancing, adapted to ice. ISU rule prevent ice dancers from doing the athletic jumps, spins, lifts, etc. that pair skaters do. Ice dancers perform jumps, spins, lifts, etc. that are restricted, thus forcing them to concentrate on the use of choreography to express their music. Ice dancers can separate while changing positions or holds, and performing synchronized twizzles.

This major distinction between pairs and dance is that a pair team may interpret the melody or phrasing of the music, but dancers must interpret its rhythm.

The compulsory dances and original dance originated from traditional ballroom dance rhythms; however, the rules for the free dance allow dancers to use music outside what is traditional for ballroom or folk dancing. They are still required to use music that has a definite rhythm, and that they actually dance to the beat of the music.

### **What are judges really looking for in ice dancing?**

Ice dancing is a very technical discipline; the steps and turns dancers perform are not only very difficult, but they also have to be executed with extreme attention to neatness and precision and timing.

Dancers rarely make a major mistakes like falling so it is often harder for a casual spectator to evaluate ice dancing performances than free skating.

Judges evaluate issues such as:

- ❖ Speed/Power, Flow, Ice coverage

- ❖ Unison and how close the man and woman skate together
- ❖ The number and variety of positions and holds
- ❖ Skating different steps or in a face-to-face position instead of doing a lot of side-by-side shadow skating
- ❖ Variety and difficulty of edges and turns instead of plain stroking and two-foot skating
- ❖ Carriage, style, presentation
- ❖ The posture of the skaters, and the extension, turnout, and toe point of the free leg
- ❖ The difficulty of the man's steps and ladies steps
- ❖ Ability of the couple to skate in unison to the music
- ❖ Ability to incorporate upper-body motions and facial expressions as part of the dancer's interpretation of the music

In many ice dancing competitions, the quality of the skating is at such a high level that a fall can drop a couple several places, especially if the fall interferes with the flow of the program because takes them an extended period of time to get up again.

In ice dance programs consist almost entirely on footwork choreographed to the music – rapid recovery and picking up the steps to the music is critical.

In the 1980's and into the early 1990's, the emphasis in ice dancing was becoming so excessively theatrical and dancers were incorporating so many non-skating elements into their programs that dance events were becoming very hard to judge by any objective technical standards.

To correct this problem, the ISU added more restrictions against non-skating elements have been tightened up, and now dancers are required to do specific technical elements -- lifts, spins, and footwork sequences -- in their free dances.

The current rules for the free dance allow skaters to use any music that has a definite beat. However, at the same time the restrictions

### **Is there a difference between speed and power?**

Speed, power, and flow are terms referring to how fast the skaters move over the ice, not to whether they are performing fast footwork. Seeing skating live allows the eye to compare a much wider background than the TV camera. A skater's speed is immediately obvious even to an untrained eye when watched in person compared to the same skating on TV.

The judges look not only for speed represented by strong, powerful stroking that continues throughout all program elements like jumps, footwork, and lifts, and to flow out of them cleanly. It's especially impressive when the skaters can build and maintain speed without obvious pushing,

through footwork and turns instead of plain stroking or crossovers.

### **Why do men so rarely do layback spins?**

Some coaches and judges suggest that men generally have less flexibility in their backs than most women do. However, female skaters who are not naturally flexible are required to learn how to do a decent layback spin because it's a required element in the short program for them.

Men don't have this requirement so they don't have the motivation to learn this spin. Increasingly males skaters at international competitions are using modified attitude positions to add variety to their programs.

The sport of figure skating in the USA also seems to be hypersensitive about encouraging male skaters to perform effeminate moves.

### **What is a poor or good free leg position in a layback spin?**

As a general rule the free leg is turned out at the hip and carried with the toe pointed, however there are a lot of possible free leg variations:

- ❖ Held high in attitude position with a bent knee
- ❖ Extended out to the side with the knee straight
- ❖ Held closer to the skating leg with the knee straight, etc.

The free leg will continue the curve of the arched back through the hip and thigh, and it will look like the leg is being held with some tension, rather than simply dangling there.

A very common fault is for the free leg to be lifted at the knee rather than the hip, which is an unattractive position.

Judges tend to be more concerned with the back position than the free leg position. A skater who doesn't actually bend backwards in the spin won't get full credit for it, no matter how pretty the free leg position is.

### **Is a Toe Loop/Half Loop/Salchow a jump combination or a jump sequence?**

The Half loop is considered a true jump, so this is a jump combination consisting of three jumps. It is not, however, a combination of two full revolution jumps back-to-back.

A jump combination is distinguished from a jump sequences is that in a combination, there are no intervening steps or turns between the jumps;

the landing edge for each jump forms the take-off edge for the next.

### **What is a Flutz?**

A Flutz occurs when a skater switches from the necessary outside edge takeoff to the inside edge takeoff.

A skater who does not show an ability to control the edge and to do the jump correctly is penalized in the marking compared to skaters who do demonstrate proper control and technique.

A Flutz is performed by skaters because it looks approximately like a Lutz. It has become commonplace now for skaters to attempt a Lutz as early as possible in their skating careers because it's perceived as an important competitive advantage. Once a Flutz is learned, it is very difficult for skater to un-learn and fix later on in their careers.

The degree of the change of edge varies - Some skaters tend to roll over onto the flat or to a slight inside edge after they have planted the pick, a blade length or so before they actually leave the ice. This is not considered to be acceptable technique.

An egregious Flutz occurs when the skater switches from an outside edge to a deep inside edge several feet before planting the pick, making a big S-shaped tracing; and those in which the skater is never able to demonstrate a controlled outside edge at all on the entrance.

Judges have a range of deductions, which they can apply, depending on how close to the pick the skater can maintain the correct edge.

In the short program, if a skater does a Flutzed Lutz in combination, and a Flip as the solo jump out of footwork; they are penalized for doing a bad Lutz, not for repeating the Flip. Similarly, in the free skate, if a skater does both a Flutz and a Flip, they are not penalized for repeating a jump.