

# **NASSPDA Competition Rules**

(Version 111030)

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# Introduction

## Purpose

"NASSPDA Competition Rules" are intended as a guideline for NASSPDA sanctioned and non-sanctioned same-sex partner dance competitions. Compliance with these rules is required to maintain NASSPDA's sanctioning of an event and to be authorized to grant NASSPDA titles. NASSPDA's expressed goal is to achieve a constant high standard for same-sex dance competitions. These rules also attempt to maintain, as much as possible, consistency with the competition rules set forth by ESSDA (European Same-Sex Dance Association).

## Background

The IDSF (International Dancesport Federation; *world amateur organization*) and WDC (World Dance Council; *world professional organization*) Competition Rules and the rules set forth by their national member organizations do not cover dance competitions for same-sex or reverse-role couples. If a dance couple consists of a male leader and a female follower, those rules are applicable.

### Some differences in comparison:

Same-sex competitions have developed their own traditions and, in recognition of that fact, the following are some of the differences that give rise to a need for separate rules for same-sex competitions.

- Greater flexibility regarding principles of participation.
- A classification system for graded events facilitated at each competition.
- No fixed function based on sex regarding 'leader' and 'follower.'
- Less distinction in age.
- No restrictions in choreographies for lower classes.
- Fewer clothing regulations.
- No defined distinction between amateurs and professionals.

"NASSPDA Competition Rules" deal primarily with these particular characteristics, including a system of grading that is intended to provide rules for a fair classification of couples according to proficiency level.

## Value Statement

NASSPDA holds a position on the financial return from same-sex partner dance competitions as follows:

- NASSPDA supports non-profits and independent organizers alike to create a reasonable return from revenues to cover expenses and, if possible, make a modest profit.
- NASSPDA encourages and urges competition organizers to run financially sustainable competitions while ensuring that dancers who need financial support will not be turned away.
- While recognizing that same-sex competitions need to be financially sustainable, NASSPDA encourages and urges competition organizers to ensure accessibility and affordability through volunteering, scholarships, sponsorships, etc.

## **A. NASSPDA's Governing Role**

### **Rule 1 Language & Application of "Competition Rules"**

#### **Rule 1.1**

NASSPDA's official language is English.

#### **Rule 1.2**

These "NASSPDA Competition Rules" apply to all NASSPDA sanctioned and NASSPDA authorized titled events.

### **Rule 2 Glossary of Definitions**

#### **Rule 2.1 Event**

The entirety of one or more days devoted to dancing, which can include social dances, competitions, workshops, and show portions.

#### **Rule 2.2 Competition**

The portion of any event that holds one or more dance contest(s).

#### **Rule 2.3 Category**

A single portion of a competition devoted to and restricted to a particular style of dancing, age group, gender group, and/or particular dance(s) in that style. A category may be either single- or multi-dance (Examples: Men's International Latin ages 45+; Women's Beginner International Waltz).

##### **Rule 2.3.1 Class/Grade (Graded Levels)**

A single portion of a multi-dance category that has been divided through Grading (see Rule 2.10) into different proficiency levels (also referred to as sub-categories) such as A, B, C, etc. (Example: Women's 18+ International Standard C-class).

##### **Rule 2.3.2 Round**

A specific category/class/grade may require elimination rounds due to the number of couples in that category/class/grade (see Section D.2, Rule 2.1). Grading rounds are used to place couples into different grades within a competition category (Example: to separate couples entered in a specific category into grades A, B, and C). Elimination rounds are used to reduce the number of competitors within categories and/or grades (Example: A semi-final round to identify couples within a specific category/class/grade who will advance to the Finals).

##### **Rule 2.3.3 Heat**

A single portion of a round where a limited number of couples is on the floor being judged. If there are too many couples in a round to be on the floor at the same time, the round will be subdivided into multiple heats (see Section D.2, Rule 2.3).

##### **Rule 2.3.3.1. Revolving Heats**

The term 'revolving heats' refers to a system that assigns couples to the heats of each dance in a round of a multi-dance category or grading rounds by a random selection process in such a way that the selected couples of the heats in each consecutive dance are not the same as in the first dance (Example: Women's International Standard grading rounds has enough competitors that 2 heats are required for each of the 3 dances used for grading. The assignment of the couples to heats will be different for each of Waltz, Tango, and Quickstep, i.e., for some of the dances a particular couple could be in heat 1 while for other dances the same couple could be in heat 2).

#### **Rule 2.4 Authorizing**

Category titles authorized by NASSPDA (see Section A., Rule 3 on "Authorizing Titles")

### Rule 2.5 Sanctioning

Competitions sanctioned by NASSPDA (see Section A., Rule 3 on “Sanctioning Events”)

#### Rule 2.6.1. Couple

Couples shall consist of two women or two men dancing together (regardless of sexual orientation). Organizers may also offer separate reverse-role categories.

Everyone shall be welcomed to compete regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity. A transgender person should dance in the category appropriate to the gender that he or she uses to live his or her life and should dance with a partner of the appropriate sex for the chosen category.

#### Rule 2.6.2. Pro-Am Couple

A couple participating in a particular competition is considered to be Pro-Am, if (a) one dancer is paying the other to dance with them during any part of the competition, and/or (b) if a couple self-identifies as a Pro-Am couple by entering such a specified category during that competition.

#### Rule 2.7 Partners

Different categories (either single or multi-dance categories) may be danced with different partners. However, all dances in a particular multi-dance category must be danced with the same partner regardless of grade classification. (Example: If dancers 1 and 2 compete as partners in women’s graded International Standard and are graded into the “B” level, then neither of these dancers can compete in women’s graded International Standard with another dancer even if they would be graded into a level other than “B”.)

#### Rule 2.8 Role

The choice of the role of leader and/or follower in same-sex couples is not pre-determined. It can be the same in all dances or vary from dance to dance or change within a dance any number of times. For reverse-role couples, the woman shall lead and the man shall follow for a minimum of 75% of each dance.

#### Rule 2.9 Admittance

Competitions shall be open to all levels of dancing from beginner to professional without prior qualifications. Social dancers and competitive dancers shall be equally welcomed. Competition organizers may choose to limit the number of couples for a given event due to space or time constraints.

#### Rule 2.10 Grading

There are no pre-determined classes in same-sex competitions. Grading rounds are therefore required before the competition rounds of multi-dance graded categories. The purpose of grading rounds, also called "separation rounds" or “classification rounds,” is to group all couples of the same average level/quality in the same class (see Section D.1, Rule 2.5, and Section D.2, Rule 1).

#### Rule 2.11 Formation Team

1. Routine must have a minimum of 3 couples or 6 individuals.
2. Formation team competitions may include 2 types of routines:
  - a. Open Dance Routine: Teams desiring to perform routines primarily for entertainment with significant dance content.
  - b. Couple Dance Routine: Any routine that is performed as couples dancing together in a joined configuration throughout the routine except for: entrance, exit, transition, separation where partner changes are made, or a movement is executed where the perception of partnership is maintained.

There is no further distinction of levels in regards to proficiency and/or age.

3. A “Couple Dance Routine” must be primarily partner dancing.

4. The majority (at least 60%) of the time spent couple-dancing must be either same-sex or reverse role.
5. This category allows lifts (see Section D.3, Rule 2.3, Point 3.).

#### Rule 2.12 Showdance

There is no distinction of levels in regards to proficiency, type of performance, choice of dance and/or age. The Showdance category and the Formation Team categories (see Section A., Rule 2.11, Point 5.) are the only categories that allow the incorporation of lifts (see Section D.3, Rule 2.3, Point 3.).

#### Rule 2.13 Membership Requirement

Membership in NASSPDA is not a requirement to participate in a NASSPDA sanctioned event. However, the organizing body of a NASSPDA sanctioned event is required to be an active NASSPDA member.

### **Rule 3 Competition/Event Sanctioning & Title Authorization**

#### Rule 3.1 Requesting a Sanction/Title Authorization

1. Any request for sanctioning an event or for authorizing titles for an event shall be submitted no less than 3 months prior to the planned event. Sanctioning and authorizing requests for the same event do not have to be submitted at the same time, though no titles will be authorized for an unsanctioned event.
2. Forms to request a sanctioning and/or authorization are posted on NASSPDA's website ([www.nasspda.org](http://www.nasspda.org)), and shall be submitted to [sanctioning@nasspda.org](mailto:sanctioning@nasspda.org). Should the applicant not be able to access these forms, all requested information, which is detailed in the respective policy, may still be submitted without presenting the appropriate form. All requests need to be submitted via e-mail.
3. An approved request for sanctioning (and a possible subsequent request to authorize titles) will create a provisional organizational membership with NASSPDA, which requires an immediate payment of the dues required for that membership. An organization which already has an active membership need not reapply for membership.

#### Rule 3.2 Types of Sanctions

1. *One time*: intended for a specific competition, which will occur once on a specific date (for example: The Millennium Ball, Dec. 30, 2999 to Jan. 1, 3000).
2. *Recurring*: intended for a specific competition, which will recur on an annual or bi-annual basis (for example: On the 4th Saturday of April each year, +/- two weeks).

#### Rule 3.3 Sanctioning Requirements

1. In order to be sanctioned by NASSPDA, a same-sex partner dance competition must comply with all NASSPDA standards and rules existing at the time the sanction is approved. Any changes and/or additions to these rules after the approval of the sanction shall be adhered to and need to be implemented, unless these changes or additions were published less than 3 months prior to the sanctioned event.
2. A sanction is provided for a specific event, in a specific geographic region, and on a specific date or time frame.
3. NASSPDA may limit the number of sanctioned competitions in a given time period and/or geographic region to ensure that the calendar of same-sex competitions offers the community of dancers and competitors the opportunity to participate in as many competitions as possible.

4. A sanctioned event/competition may not use the word “Championship” in the name of the event, unless so sanctioned or authorized by NASSPDA. Please note: Authorization of championship titles does not inherently authorize the use of the word “Championship” in the name of an event.
5. NASSPDA will maintain a list of all sanctioned competitions on its website.

#### Rule 3.4 Required Information for Sanctioning

1. Type of Sanction being requested (One-time or Recurring)
2. Name of the competition
3. Specific date of the competition, and if applicable, proposed date range for future competitions
4. City and State or Province in which the competition will be held
5. The following contact information for the person, group or organization requesting the Sanction:
  - a. Name of person or persons in the group, or name of the organization
  - b. Name of the contact person with whom NASSPDA will coordinate
  - c. Contact e-mail address
  - d. Contact phone number
  - e. Website address, if available
  - f. Physical address for official or legal correspondence

#### Rule 3.5 Authorization of Championship Titles

1. NASSPDA may, at its discretion, authorize State, Regional, National, and North American Championship titles.
2. Titles will be authorized only for sanctioned competitions.
3. Authorized titles are not transferable to different events without NASSPDA’s approval.
4. All titles authorized by NASSPDA are the property of NASSPDA and use of those titles is limited to the NASSPDA sanctioned competitions for which they have been authorized.
5. All authorized NASSPDA titles will contain the word "Championship".
6. Competition organizers are free to offer other, non-authorized titles, provided they do not include the word "Championship," and provided that non-authorized titles are not advertised or treated as championship titles by the organizers.
7. State and Regional titles may be authorized on a provisional or recurring basis at the discretion of NASSPDA as follows:
  - a. Titles authorized on a provisional basis must be re-authorized before the next scheduled competition at which they would be awarded (generally annually or bi-annually).
  - b. Titles authorized on a recurring basis will remain in effect indefinitely provided the sanctioned competition with which they are associated continues to comply with all NASSPDA rules and regulations and continues to take place as scheduled.
  - c. Should the competition at which an authorized title (provisional or recurring) take a hiatus, the organizers may request, and NASSPDA may choose to grant, a hold on that title for up to one cycle. If after one cycle the organizers choose not to, or cannot continue to operate the competition associated with that title, NASSPDA may at its discretion grant authorization for that title to a different competition.
8. It is the intention of NASSPDA that the North American and all National titles move from one geographic region to another over time. This is to provide greater ease of access

to all competitors, as well as to ensure that any competition organizer with the capacity to run the North American or a National title event has the opportunity to do so from time to time.

- a. The North American title and all National titles shall only be authorized on a one-time basis.
  - b. Any person, group or organization seeking to host the North American or any National title must have demonstrated their ability to run such a competition by having previously run a successful NASSPDA sanctioned competition.
9. The following categories must be offered in NASSPDA authorized championships:
- North American Championships –
    1. Women’s & Men’s International Latin & Standard Graded Multi-Dance Categories
    2. Women’s & Men’s International 10-Dance Categories
    3. Formation Team Category  
(the rule requiring a minimum of 3 entries is waived for this category)
    4. Showdance Category
  - National Championships –
    1. Women’s & Men’s International Latin & Standard Graded Multi-Dance Categories
    2. Women’s & Men’s International 10-Dance Categories
    3. Formation Team Category  
(the rule requiring a minimum of 3 entries is waived for this category)
    4. Showdance Category
    5. US only: Women’s & Men’s American Rhythm & Smooth Graded Multi-Dance Categories
    6. US only: Women’s & Men’s American 9-Dance Categories
  - Regional, State & Province Championships –
    1. Women’s & Men’s International Latin & Standard Graded Multi-Dance Categories

Rule 3.6 Eligibility to Garner Title

1. Authorized titles in any graded multi-dance category will be awarded to the highest-ranking eligible couple of Class “A.”
2. The following couples are not eligible to win a NASSPDA authorized title held as part of a particular NASSPDA sanctioned competition:
  - a. A couple in which one dancer is paying the other to dance with them in any part of the competition.
  - b. A couple that has entered any other dance event in this competition as a Pro-Am couple.
3. North American, National, State and Regional titled events shall be "open" competitions, meaning that anyone can enter regardless of residency or citizenship. Participation, however, does not automatically create eligibility to garner a title.
4. Any couple, regardless of nationality, residency or membership, may garner a Regional or State title.
5. To garner a National title, (a) at least one partner (half the members of a formation team) shall be a resident of that country/nation, and (b) within that calendar year this

couple/team may not represent the country/nation of the other partner (half the members of a formation team) in order to garner a National title from that other country.

6. To garner a North American title, both partners of a couple or all members of a team shall be residents of a North American country.
7. At least one partner in a couple shall be an active member of NASSPDA in order to garner either the North American or a National title. A formation team is required to have an active team membership in NASSPDA to garner either the North American or a National title.

#### Rule 3.7 Awarded NASSPDA Championship Titles

1. NASSPDA will authorize championship titles **only** in the following dance categories:
  - a. Men's and Women's graded International Standard
  - b. Men's and Women's graded International Latin
  - c. Men's and Women's graded American Smooth
  - d. Men's and Women's graded American Rhythm
  - e. Men's and Women's International 10-Dance
  - f. Men's and Women's American 9-Dance
  - g. Showdance
  - h. Formation Team
2. NASSPDA may choose to authorize any or all of the above listed titles for a specific competition.
3. Based on NASSPDA's mission to focus on same-sex partner dancing, the Show Dance title will be awarded to the highest-ranking same-sex couple. However, NASSPDA will not impose any restriction on the format of this category for the organizer.
4. NASSPDA will maintain a list of all authorized titles and the competitions at which they have been authorized on its website.
5. NASSPDA will maintain a public list of the winners of all NASSPDA authorized titles on its website.
6. NASSPDA will, at a minimum, pay for the cost of the authorized awards of NASSPDA's annually held North American Championships.

#### Rule 3.8

NASSPDA will maintain a calendar of all North American same-sex dance competitions.

## **B. Organizer's Responsibilities**

### **Rule 1 Registration**

It is NASSPDA's goal to unify the process of registration for all NASSPDA sanctioned events. Until such time as NASSPDA provides a uniform registration process, competition organizers are obligated to provide their own system of registration which accommodates all relevant NASSPDA rules.

### **Rule 2 Compliance Requirements for Sanctioned Competition/Event**

1. A sanctioned competition must not offer any titles using the word "Championship" and/or include this word in the name of the event unless such titles and/or usage have been authorized or otherwise approved by NASSPDA.  
(Other options available to be used: "Challenge," "Trophy," "Dance-Off," etc.)

2. Competition organizers are required to maintain an active organizational membership in NASSPDA and to comply with all NASSPDA rules and regulations.
3. Sanctioned events are required to list NASSPDA's name at all times in any promotional material and to provide a link to NASSPDA's website on the event's website.
4. Any changes in date, location, name and/or person(s) responsible for the competition should be reported to NASSPDA in a timely fashion and may result in the withdrawal of the sanction.
5. A sanction is not transferable to any other competition or to new ownership of a currently sanctioned competition. New owner(s) must re-apply for sanctioning of the competition event even if the existing sanction is recurring.
6. The granting of a sanction does not imply that NASSPDA has authorized any championship title(s) for that competition. Authorization of championship titles is a separate process.
7. If a NASSPDA sanctioned competition includes a Pro-Am category, the competition organizers are required to do all of the following:
  - a. Announce in advance the definition of Pro-Am to be used for the competition;
  - b. Announce in advance what Pro-Am participation is allowed;
  - c. Announce in advance how Pro-Am participation will be handled (including whether it will be judged separately);
  - d. Abide by their announced policies and procedures.
8. NASSPDA sanctioned competitions/events must offer categories for same-sex couples in International Latin & Standard.
9. Although NASSPDA's focus is on supporting the same-sex dance community and NASSPDA titles are authorized only for same-sex couples, NASSPDA sanctioned competitions/events may include separate categories for any other gender combinations in a couple for leader and follower (female-male, defined as reverse-role couple, and male-female, mainstream's definition of a couple).
10. At the discretion of event organizers, a NASSPDA sanctioned competition may include styles of dancing in addition to the required International styles (American Rhythm & Smooth, Country Western, Argentine Tango, Swing/Lindy, Folk Dancing, Line Dancing, etc.) and configurations of groups of dancers, other than a couple (Formation Team, Multi-Person Showcases, Team Matches, etc.).

### **Rule 3 Compliance Requirements for Authorized Titles**

1. Organizers shall impose no restrictions on participation in NASSPDA titled events that are not included in these rules.
2. Separate grading for male and female couples is required for authorized titled events.
3. Should a particular title be authorized for a category, but not competed, no title shall be awarded for that category in that time period.
4. The competition organizer is required to submit to NASSPDA within 90 days after the competition a list of all authorized titles that were awarded and to whom.

### **Rule 4 Competition Officials, Staff & Volunteers**

#### **Rule 4.1 Officials**

1. The organizer appoints all officials, and the names of these officials shall be announced at the competition and published in the program.

2. Competition officials include the following positions:
  - a. Master of Ceremony (MC)
  - b. Adjudicators/Judges
  - c. Scrutineer
  - d. DJ
3. One or more MC's shall present the entire event.
4. The total number of adjudicators shall be no less than three (3), unless the competition is a NASSPDA authorized championship, in which case the total number shall be no less than five (5). The number of members of any panel of adjudicators must be uneven, and an effort shall be made to have it gender balanced.
5. The DJ needs to be knowledgeable about required tempi and time limits (see Section D.3, Rules 2.1 & 2.2).

#### Rule 4.2 Staff & Volunteers

1. The organizer is required to hire and/or assign staff and/or volunteers for the following tasks/areas:
  - a. Registration/Competition Desk
  - b. "Runners" to assist the Scrutineer
  - c. On-Deck Captain
2. Competition Desk  
 Competition desk availability during the contests is required continuously. Such desk serves the following functions:
  - a. Initial registration point for each couple on arrival
  - b. Supply participants' competition numbers and timetable
  - c. Interface between participants and the competition management for handling last minute changes or cancellations
  - d. Interface between participants and the competition management for suggestions and complains regarding the current competition
  - e. Information point for answering any questions as well as a collection and distribution point for information

#### Rule 5 Competition Results

1. The results of a NASSPDA sanctioned competition shall be reported within 90 days to the Secretary of NASSPDA. This report should include all scores for all rounds of each category, a list of the officials including the panel of judges, and a list of all participating competitors with their assigned number(s) for this event.
2. The results ceremony shall be held at the end of a section of a competition (e.g.: after all graded events; after all American Style; etc.), but no later than 2 hours after a participant's category.
3. Announcement of each placement of the final round is mandatory, and shall start with the lowest rank, followed by the couple's number, name and place of origin.
4. The scrutineer and her/his team shall post to the public the results of each category including all rounds no later than at the end of the day of the event. If the event stretches over more than one day, this shall happen at the end of each day. Furthermore, the organizer is encouraged to additionally publish all results on their respective website.

## **Rule 6 Privacy of Collected Data**

### **1. Registration Information**

All information collected from participants during the registration process shall be used solely by the organizer and assigned officials for the purpose of communications with the participants and to facilitate a smooth operation of the event. All rendered information is considered confidential.

### **2. Graded Events**

Couples' self-assessment of their class(es) shall be kept confidential by the organizer. It shall not be published before, during, or after the competition, nor shall any indirect hints be provided (e.g. distribution of start numbers) that reflect stated preferences (see Section C., Rule 5., Point 5.).

### **3. Other Collected Data**

All data relating to the course and end results of a competition (i.e.: assigned numbers, achieved marks and placements, disqualifications) are considered to be accessible to the public (see Section B., Rule 3, Point 4., and, Section B., Rule 5, Points 1. & 4.).

## **Rule 7 Competition Venue Requirements**

1. The venue must have a suitable floor to dance on, preferably a wooden sprung floor and approximately no less than 80' long and 40' wide.
2. Separate changing/dressing rooms shall be allocated, aside from restrooms.
3. If no warm-up period is scheduled on the floor of the competition, a separate adjacent floor for warm-up is required.

## **C. Participants' Rights & Responsibilities**

### **C.1 Competitors**

#### **Rule 1 Registration**

Competitors are responsible for their own competition registration and the payment of any fee(s). Competitors, who have missed the registration deadline, if one is imposed, are not entitled to compete. The organizer may allow registered persons to enter additional competition categories after such registration deadline and may permit change of partners as long as both partners have registered.

#### **Rule 2 Conduct**

Competitors whose conduct is unbecoming the event and its goals expressed in the mission statement of NASSPDA may be asked to withdraw from competition or leave the premises. All competitors in a NASSPDA authorized title event shall abide by NASSPDA rules in effect as of the date of that event.

#### **Rule 3 Obligation of Attendance**

Once registered for a category, it is the competitors' obligation to be present in the "ballroom" at least one half hour prior to their category, as it is listed and announced by the organizer on the day of the category. Failure to be present at the allocated time may result in a disqualification for that category. This includes all grading rounds for graded categories (see Rule 5.1. below).

#### **Rule 4 Dress Rules**

1. Dance couples must wear functional and festive attire.
2. The competitors' clothes should be in accordance with accepted rules of decency and good taste (no bare buttocks or breasts; tangas are not permitted).
3. Competition clothing as described by the Dress Regulations of the IDSF and WDC, and all its member organizations, are permitted.
4. The same costumes worn during the finals should be worn at the results ceremony.
5. The competition management has the right to instruct any couple to change their clothes and to disqualify any couple that refuses to comply.

#### **Rule 5 Participation in Graded Events**

1. Participation in grading rounds is mandatory for all couples competing in graded events.
2. Couples are graded separately for each competition category.
3. Couples will be graded/classified by the adjudicators based on their performance in the grading rounds and independently of self-assessment or any former results.
4. Each couple shall state their class preference within each category at the point of their registration. Couples who are not experienced with same-sex dance competitions are still required to estimate their expected entry level. Couples who are experienced with same-sex dance competitions are expected to register themselves consistently and fairly, based on personal experience and previous results.
5. Self-assessment of couples serves the purpose of enabling organizers to create a rough timetable for graded categories after registration, as well as to provide the judges with a guideline for the expected numbers of couples in each class. However, details of self-assessments shall never be shared with adjudicators.

### **C.2 Officials**

#### **Rule 1 Technical Manager / Scrutineer**

The technical manager of an event is responsible for all scrutinizing functions of the competition. This includes responsibilities such as the orderly formation of the adjudicators, time schedules, groupings of competitors, number of rounds and number of couples qualified for each category and round.

#### **Rule 2 Head Judge**

The head judge's function is to guarantee the course of the competition in accordance to NASSPDA rules and guidelines. He/she is available for providing support requested by the scrutineer, and has the authority to make decisions on matters not covered by these guidelines as well as all other matters or situations arising. His/her decision (if necessary after consultations) is final.

The head judge has the authority to exclude dance couples from a competition category or from the entire event. Possible reasons for exclusion are:

- Indecent behavior
- Unsports(wo)manlike conduct
- Refusal for promotion or demotion regarding grading
- Willful skipping of any grading round
- Medical reasons

The head judge may be one of the judges on the invited judging panel.

### **Rule 3 Master of Ceremony (MC)**

The MC's main function is to announce the dances and the competitors' numbers, and to cue the music. He/she/they, along with the head judge, are responsible for the running and progress of the competition.

### **Rule 4 Adjudicators/Judges**

#### **Rule 4.1 Function & Task:**

1. The judging by the adjudicators will be based on international standards as supplemented by the additional judging criteria of these NASSPDA rules.
2. The adjudicators are charged with executing instructions given them by the competition management, unless these instructions are in conflict with any rules and/or requirements in this document.
3. The adjudicators shall mark impartially at all times.
  - a. A judge should disqualify oneself from judging an event, if that judge feels that circumstances inhibit an impartial judging, such as family relations to a competitor (see also below under Rule 4.2 Qualifications), diminished eyesight or any other medical condition that prohibits full concentration, etc.
  - b. Size and shape of a dancer's body along with other aesthetic considerations, such as choice of costume(s), shall not be considered a judging criteria. It should be noted that the overall look of a same-sex dance couple might not adhere to mainstream standards of aesthetics. In same-sex dance competitions, it is important to allow possible new expressions, which are in alignment with NASSPDA's expressed mission to "acknowledge and celebrate its origins in the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender community," and "encourage the inclusion of dancers from diverse backgrounds with regard to race, ethnicity, gender, age, [dis]ability, gender identity and/or expression."
4. The adjudicators' decisions are final.

#### **Rule 4.2 Qualifications**

1.
  - a. An adjudicator for a sanctioned event shall have one of the two following qualifications (see exception under b.):
    - License for judging from an official dance sport association
    - Prior experience competing in same-sex competitions at top level
  - b. An adjudicator for a National and/or North American titled event shall have one of the two qualifications listed above, and in addition have previous experience in judging a NASSPDA sanctioned competition.
2. NASSPDA reserves the right to reject a judge, even if all criteria are met, and to accept a judge not meeting all the listed criteria.
3. An adjudicator may not be a competitor at the same event.
4. Adjudicators are not allowed to judge their life partner and/or close family relatives.

#### **Rule 4.3 Judging Criteria**

Adjudicators' judgement of all couples shall be based on all of the following elements:

- Musicality: interpretation of music into suitable passages of movements, time and rhythm

- Quality of movement: fluency of movement
- Harmony in a couple and interaction between the partners (partnering)
- Character of the dance
- Choreography
- Charisma, presentation
- Technical performance

If a couple executes a change of lead successfully within a dance (please note that the number of lead changes are not limited), judges shall consider it to be an additional plus in the overall judgment and shall place that couple higher against a couple of equal technical performance quality that does not switch the lead within that dance (see also notes below).

NOTE:

- A. Changes of lead added to a couple's routine are considered to represent a higher degree of difficulty. If executed well, they should be reflected in a higher score and not considered a break in the continuum of the dance.
- B. The character of dance shall not be judged based on a stereotypical understanding of gender roles. It shall be understood and considered positively that a change in lead can change that characterization by breaking a harmonious continuum.
- C. As in mainstream competitions, the "amateur" identified in a Pro-Am category shall be the only one judged, not the "professional."

### **C.3 Vendors**

#### **Rule 1 Commercial Use and Advertising**

It is forbidden to undertake commercial activities and/or distribute or place any printed material in or around the dance venue without approval of the organizer.

### **C.4 Spectators**

#### **Rule 1 Conduct**

Spectators whose conduct is unbecoming the event and its goals expressed in the mission statement of NASSPDA may be asked to leave the premises

#### **Rule 2**

All spectators shall abide by all rules set forth within this document and any additional rules by the organizer(s) applicable to spectators.

## **D. Event's Structure**

### **D.1 Categories**

#### **Rule 1 Overall Competition Categories**

- A. Multi-dance graded Categories:
  1. Women's & Men's International Standard
  2. Women's & Men's International Latin

3. Women's & Men's American Smooth
  4. Women's & Men's American Rhythm
  5. Women's & Men's International 10-Dance
  6. Women's & Men's American 9-Dance
- B. Showdance  
 C. Formation Team  
 D. Women's & Men's Single Dance Categories in all styles

## **Rule 2 Sub-Distinctions of Competition Categories**

### **Rule 2.1 Distinction of Dance Styles**

There are three major distinctions of dance styles with sub-divisions:

#### **International Style (danced in the order listed)**

Standard: Waltz, Tango, Viennese Waltz, Slowfoxtrot, Quickstep

Latin: Cha Cha, Samba, Rumba, Paso Doble, Jive

#### **American Style (danced in the order listed)**

Smooth: Waltz, Tango, Viennese Waltz, Foxtrot

Rhythm: Cha Cha, Rumba, Bolero, Swing, Mambo

Additional dances not part of the American Style multi-dance categories:

Argentine Tango, Hustle, Merengue, Peabody, Salsa, other styles of Swing

#### **Country Western**

Two-step, Waltz, Nightclub Two-step, Triple Two-step, Polka, East & West Coast

Swing, Cha Cha

### **Rule 2.2 Distinction by Gender**

In principle, separate judging and competitions for female couples and male couples is preferred. If an organizer wishes to present combined competitions for female couples and male couples for any reason, this must be coordinated with NASSPDA and clearly stipulated in all publicity prior to the competition. If any of the female or male categories have less than 3 couples registered, an organizer may combine equal level categories, and have them either judged together or separately on the day of the event (Exception: Multi-dance graded Categories, see "Separate Grading Requirements," Rule D.2.1.4.). However, the combining of categories will not affect how NASSPDA-authorized separate male and female titles are awarded.

### **Rule 2.3 Distinction by Age**

The all over age restriction is 18, and is considered the adult category. A senior level in the "Multi-dance graded" and "Single Dance" categories may be offered. The age restriction for senior categories is set at 45. Both partners in a couple shall be 45 or above at the time of the competition. An additional level higher in number of years of age may be offered. If the numbers of participation is low in each category, it is recommended to run senior and adult categories at the same time, but have them be judged separately. Alternatively, all couples may be simultaneously judged against each other, with the resulting placements automatically reflecting the placements of the senior couples against each other (e.g., if there are 7 couples, 5 adult only and 2 senior, and the 2 senior couples placed in 3rd and 6th place, then the 3rd place couple would be automatically 1st place in the senior category, but a 3rd in the adult category). Proof of age is required for all senior categories on the day of the event. If the senior categories are held separately from the adult categories, all couples entered in the senior categories may also compete in the adult categories.

#### Rule 2.4 Distinction by Dance Level

To achieve a fair contest, equally levelled couples must compete together in the same category and level.

#### Rule 2.5 Distinction for Multi-Dance Graded Levels

Five class levels are defined for the multi-dance graded categories (see Section D.1, Rule 1.A.), which have a fixed required number and style of dances.

##### Class "A" (top level)

*Standard: Waltz, Tango, Viennese Waltz, Slow Foxtrot, Quickstep*

*Latin: Cha Cha, Samba, Rumba, Paso Doble, Jive*

*Smooth: Waltz, Tango, Viennese Waltz, Foxtrot*

*Rhythm: Cha Cha, Rumba, Bolero, Swing, Mambo*

##### Class "B" (advanced level)

*Standard: Waltz, Tango, Slow Foxtrot, Quickstep*

*Latin: Cha Cha, Samba, Rumba, Jive*

*Smooth: Waltz, Tango, Viennese Waltz, Foxtrot*

*Rhythm: Cha Cha, Rumba, Swing, Mambo*

##### Class "C" (intermediate level)

*Standard: Waltz, Tango, Quickstep*

*Latin: Cha Cha, Rumba, Jive*

*Smooth: Waltz, Tango, Foxtrot*

*Rhythm: Cha Cha, Rumba, Swing*

##### Class "D" (beginner level)

*Standard: Waltz, Tango, Quickstep*

*Latin: Cha Cha, Rumba, Jive*

*Smooth: Waltz, Tango, Foxtrot*

*Rhythm: Cha Cha, Rumba, Swing*

##### Class "E" (newcomer level; can only be entered one time)

*Standard: Waltz, Tango*

*Latin: Cha Cha, Rumba*

*Smooth: Waltz, Foxtrot*

*Rhythm: Cha Cha, Rumba*

It is possible to carry out competition categories with less than five classes. This can be declared by the organizer after the end of registration, or can be a result of the grading rounds (see Section D.2, Rule 1). Other multi-dance events/categories, graded or non-graded may be created within the Country Western style dances (please see competition rules and event calendar of IAGLCWDC at [www.iaglcwdc.org](http://www.iaglcwdc.org)).

#### Rule 2.6 Distinction for Single Dance Non-Graded Levels

Levels for non-graded and/or single dance categories may be determined by one of the following three factors:

- Restricted by syllabi from various organizations that are members of the NDCA
- Restricted by a level of proficiency defined by the organizer
- Accumulation of points from competition to competition

The first method is widely used at all kinds of competitions worldwide. However, the syllabi and resulting level distinctions differ greatly by style and country. In order to ensure fair application of this method, an invigilator should be added to the judging panel. The second method has been used more universally in same-sex competitions, but it requires a very distinct

description of each proficiency level (such as years of experience, prior competition experience, etc.). The third method can only be used if and when NASSPDA has established a point system for NASSPDA sanctioned competitions. Regardless of the method and just as for multi-dance graded categories, it is strongly recommended to offer an entry-level category for rank beginners (could be called “Newcomer;” see Class “E”), which a couple is eligible to enter only once.

#### Rule 2.7 Participation of Pro-Am Couples

NASSPDA’s focus is on the participation of its community and the celebration of same-sex partner dancing. Its position on the inclusion of Pro-Am couples in same-sex partner dance competitions is based on the following principles:

- NASSPDA recognizes the mutual value of Pro-Am couples for the organizers as well as the partners of such couples.
- NASSPDA does not recognize mainstream definitions of professionals and amateurs.
- NASSPDA supports the categorization of dancers by their proficiency level.
- NASSPDA strives to ensure that the values of inclusion, participation, and fairness are upheld in every same-sex partner dance competition.
- NASSPDA urges Pro-Am couples to identify themselves as such to the community and to competition organizers to ensure a fair application of its rules.

Based on these principles, NASSPDA recommends that competition organizers offer separate Pro-Am categories, if the number of participation makes that a feasible option, and discourages Pro-Am couples from participating in graded multi-dance categories.

## **D.2 Organization**

### **Rule 1 Grading System**

#### **Rule 1.1 Procedure to Achieve Grades**

Depending on the size of participation, one grading round might be deemed sufficient. For categories in which more than 20 couples registered, it is recommended to run a non-judged “sighting round,” also called “general look,” to give the judges an idea of the potential classes prior to grading. If it seems necessary to further qualify and/or confirm the result of the actual grading round, another round may be called for each established class, during which any number of the 3 required dances for grading rounds may be used.

The method for grading used by the judges shall be based on the number of couples entered in a multi-dance graded event, remembering that female and male couples are to be graded separately, as follows:

#### A. Grading by Scoring:

If the number of couples is large enough to require splitting a grading round into more than one heat for any of the dances used, scored grading must be used and heat assignments must be at random (See Section A. Rule 2.3.2.1.), not by self-assessed class.

The following system shall be used to get a fair grading/classification result:

In accordance to the judges’ assigned letter grades, meaning classes, for each couple per dance, each assignment shall be translated into a number (e.g.: Class E = 1, Class D = 3, Class C = 5, Class B = 7, & Class A = 9). The sum of all numbers for each couple places that couple in its assigned class, which is defined by the closest groupings of the resulting sums.

The judges shall be informed of which couples will be dancing in each heat prior to the beginning of the heat either by being provided prepared judging sheets and/or by a clear

announcement from the MC of each couple's number at the beginning of each heat. Notification to the judges of which couples will dance in each heat is especially important if the system of 'revolving heats' has to be applied (see Section A, Rule 2.3.2.1).

It is recommended to allow 10 seconds per couple for a classification. The length of music played for classification rounds shall never be less than 1.0 minute and shall not exceed 2.0 minutes. This means that the maximum number of couples per heat shall not exceed 12 nor go below 6, except where less than 6 couples are entered, in which case other systems of grading might be employed (see below). All heats shall contain as equal a number of couples as mathematically possible (for example: if 31 couples are entered, there shall be two heats of 10 and one heat of 11 couples, not two heats of 11 and one of 9). The resulting length of music played shall be announced to the competitors prior to starting any classification rounds, so that the competitors can pace themselves.

B. Grading by Consensus:

If the number of couples is small enough to run a single grading heat for all of the dances used, organizers shall have the option of using a consensus grading process. This process is based on a consensus reached between the adjudicators through discussion, and then communicated to the head judge, who will have the final word on any indecision of the judging panel.

C. Grading by Declaration:

If less than 3 couples are registered for all classes in one style of dance, the organizers shall have the option of grading the couples by declaration. Declaration of a class for any couple happens by the organizers in consultation with all affected competitors. The declared class does not have to match the self-assessment of a couple made at the time of registration.

Rule 1.2 Non Prepared Dance for Graded Class

Couples may be placed in a higher class than expected. If any dance in that class has not been prepared by a couple, that couple shall remain on the floor during that dance, but stand near the edge of the dance floor (visible for the judges). This couple shall automatically be marked last for that dance by the judges.

Rule 1.3 Dances for Grading Rounds

The following dances shall be used for all grading rounds in their respective style of dance. If potential E-Class couples participate, who have not prepared the third dance, they are excused from participation in that dance during the grading rounds. However, these couples may still be upgraded, based on the 2 dances presented in the grading rounds.

- International Standard: Waltz, Tango, Quickstep
- International Latin: Cha Cha, Rumba, Jive
- American Smooth: Waltz, Tango, Foxtrot
- American Rhythm: Cha Cha, Rumba, Swing

Rule 1.4 Separate Grading Requirement

Male and female couples shall be danced separately for all categories in both the grading rounds and the competition rounds. If after separate grading, less than 3 couples have been graded into the same class, then that competition class shall be run as a combined male and female category. If that competition/category is authorized for a NASSPDA title and that title is specified to be separated between male and female couples, then those titles shall still be awarded separately even though the placements are not.

## **Rule 2 Course of Competition**

### **Rule 2.1 Competition Rounds**

1. If one category has more than 8 couples entered/registered, elimination rounds shall be held in the following stages:
  - a. First, second, third, etc. Preliminary Rounds – two-thirds to one-half of the participating field shall be recalled by the judges through the usage of the Cross System (see “Judging Format” below) for each consecutive round.
  - b. Quarter Final – (as above)
  - c. Semi-Final – 6 to 8 couples shall be recalled by the judges through the usage of the Cross System (see “Judging Format” below).
  - d. Final - This final round shall be marked by the judges through ranking the couples against each other (see “Skating System” below).
  - e. Repechage Round – This round may be inserted one time in between any of the above listed rounds.

Explanation:

Judges will be asked to advance only 50% of the number of couples required for the next round, which ordinarily would be two-thirds to one-half of the previous round. All couples who are not advanced to that next round will be asked to compete again in the repechage round, and the judges will choose from the repechage round the remaining number of couples required to fill that next round. (e.g., if 14 couples are competing in round “A” and 8 couples are desired in round “B,” then the judges will advance 4 couples from round “A” to round “B,” invite the remaining 10 couples to dance in the repechage round, and then choose 4 additional couples from the repechage round to advance to round “B.”)

2. Open judging (showing of the chosen rank in each dance for each couple after each dance) is allowed only for the finals of the A-Class.
3. Two finals of different dance styles can be combined and the dances of these finals can be presented alternately, provided a couple has not been selected for both finals.
4. If a category has only one couple entered, the organizer may a) have the couple demonstrate its skills uncontested and unjudged, b) combine male and female couples of the same level and category into one overall judged category, or c) cancel the event, in which case a refund might have to be issued depending on the organizer’s prior publicized rules (Exception: Multi-dance graded Categories, see “Separate Grading Requirement,” Section D.2, Rule 1.4).
5. Separate grading and competition rounds/heats may be run simultaneously, provided the judges are instructed to judge these separately, there is enough space on the dance floor, and these rounds/heats use the same music.

### **Rule 2.2 Upgrading of Winning Couple**

The winning couple of a lower category may be offered the opportunity to participate in the same event in a higher level of the same category.

### **Rule 2.3 Number of Couples on the Floor**

The number of couples that shall be allowed on the competition floor at any given time shall be in adherence to other established guidelines of respective dance organizations that regulate this in the mainstream competition circuits. If preliminary rounds have to be split into multiple heats,

couples shall be assigned to heats at random, and for multi-dance categories the system of 'revolving heats' shall be applied (see Section A, Rule 2.3.2.1).

## **D.3 Format**

### **Rule 1 Judging Format**

All preliminary rounds and semi finals shall use the cross system, whereas for all finals the skating system shall be used.

Cross System: During the first and further competition rounds and the semi finals, the adjudicators shall use the "cross system" (closed selecting classification by cross signs for each dance). The quantity of cross signs/cross votes must be noted on the ballot. For multi-dance categories, the cross votes for all dances of a couple must be added.

Skating System: During the finals the "skating system" shall be employed (rank qualification by majority classification). The couples must be classified after every dance with rank numbers (1 for the first, 2 for the second, etc.). The rank for each dance must be decided by an absolute majority of the classifications delivered. For multi-dance categories, the ranks must be determined by the summed total of the ranks of all dances.

### **Rule 2 Tempi & Style Restrictions**

#### **Rule 2.1 Tempi**

For all styles of dances with the exception of Formation Team and Showdance competitions, the tempi required shall be in adherence to other established guidelines of respective dance organizations that regulate this in the mainstream competition circuits.

#### **Rule 2.2 Duration & Format of Dance**

1. Multi- and Single Dance Categories:  
Each dance shall be played 1.5 to 2.0 minutes per round, except Jive and Standard Viennese Waltz, which shall be played for 1.0 minute only. In any grading round, the duration of the graded dances may range from 1.0 to 2.0 minutes.
2. Formation Team:
  - a. Routine must be at least 3.0 minutes long, but no more than 5.0 minutes, including entering and exiting the dance floor.
  - b. Routine may include changes in rhythm, but such changes are not mandatory.
  - c. Routine must include at least 2 changes in formation.
  - d. Routine may be based on one dance only or multi-dances.
3. Showdance
  - a. Routine shall be no longer than 4.0 minutes long.
  - b. Routine may include changes in rhythm and dance style.

#### **Rule 2.3 Prescribed Figures**

1. No syllabi restrictions are applicable for all listed "Overall Competition Categories," with the possible exception of "Women's & Men's Single Dance Categories," if the organizer(s) has posted such a restriction as a distinction for levels, including in such categories offered for "Reverse-Role" couples.
2. Figures that might endanger or hinder other couples are not permitted.
3. Lifts are not permitted in any categories, except Showdance and Formation Team categories. NOTE: A lift is any movement during which one of the dancers has both feet

off the floor at the same time with the assistance or support of the partner. The exception is an “assisted jump,” which is permitted, but may last no more than 4 beats of the music.

4. International Standard: Though this style is particularly defined by a continuous “closed hold,” this requirement does not apply for changing the lead.

### **Rule 3 Requirement(s) for Offered Categories**

1. Not all categories and/or sub-distinctions listed (Section D.1, Rule 1 & Rule 2) have to be offered at each sanctioned competition.
2. All listed multi-dance graded categories and distinction of levels must be offered by any title-authorized competition. However, “Women’s & Men’s International 10-Dance and American 9-Dance” may be omitted due to a lack of participation and time constraints, in which case the results of the 2 respective separate categories in each style may be used to calculate an overall result for those omitted categories.

## **E. Arbitration of Disputes & Non-Compliance**

### **Rule 1 General Exceptions**

NASSPDA reserves the right to grant an exception to any policy. Such exceptions may only be granted by a majority vote of the Board of Directors of NASSPDA.

### **Rule 2 Exceptions for a Specific Event**

If a situation arises during a competition that is not covered by these rules, an appeal may be made to the Board of NASSPDA or to any representative designated by the Board. Any decision made on the day is final, but does not necessarily establish precedence.

### **Rule 3 Consequence of Non-Compliance**

1. Any infraction of NASSPDA’s most recently updated and posted rules should be reported in writing to the Board of Directors within 30 days of such an incident.
2. Infractions will be judged case-by-case.
3. If NASSPDA determines that an infraction has taken place, the NASSPDA Board of Directors will ask for a correction of the infraction within a specific time limit. If that time limit has not been adhered to, this may result in loss of membership status, loss of sanctioning and/or authorizing of titles, and in extreme cases barring of participation at future NASSPDA-sanctioned events.