

UCWDC® Rules,
Contest Procedures
and Scoring Format
2026 - 2028



COUPLES

UNITED COUNTRY WESTERN DANCE COUNCIL®

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UNITED COUNTRY WESTERN DANCE COUNCIL

Rules, Contest Procedures and Scoring Format

I. GENERAL INFORMATION

A. United Country Western Dance Council®

1. Since 1989, UCWDC® has provided the most unique competitive dance experience in the world.
2. UCWDC oversees the largest competition circuit for country dance in the world, including partner and line dance styles. Our goal is to provide our members with the structure, tools, education, and support they need to thrive in our circuit.
3. The UCWDC creates, revises, and administers the use of this uniform set of dance rules, contest procedures, scoring formats, and rating systems governing all UCWDC-sanctioned events.
4. The UCWDC recruits, develops, certifies, and evaluates Country Dance judges to create a pool from which UCWDC Dance Event Directors may draw.

B. UCWDC's Mission and Vision

1. The UCWDC oversees the largest competition circuit for country dance in the world, including partner and line dance styles. Our mission is to provide our members with the structure, tools, education, and support they need to thrive in our circuit.
2. Our Vision: The UCWDC is inspired by the vision of a thriving global country dance community featuring a world-class competition circuit and a Championship event on every continent.

C. UCWDC Business Office

The UCWDC Business Office is the official center for submitting to the UCWDC, information requests by letter, telephone, e-mail, or fax. Requests will be forwarded to the appropriate UCWDC Directors as needed.

Mailing Address: UCWDC Office
1219 W. Trindle Road
Mechanicsburg, PA. 17055 USA
Email: info@ucwdc.org

II. DANCE RULES

A. Definitions

1. **Amateur** refers to a dance competitor who does not meet any of the Professional Status Specifics outlined in the Division Entry Requirements section of this Rules document.
2. **Basic Rule** refers to the rule that, before adding embellishments or variations, competitors must dance one full, visible basic pattern of the dance per standard phrase of music – or, in the case of Line Dances, a full basic “vanilla” wall of the dance steps specified by the choreographer. More details are provided later in this rules document.
3. **Crossover** refers to either of two opportunities:
 - a. A dance competitor from another dance sport competes in the UCWDC dance sport
 - b. A dance competitor from one UCWDC Dance Type competes in another UCWDC Dance Type
4. **Dance Season** is a year that begins on January 16th and continues up to January 15th of the following year.

5. **Dance Category** refers to the specific dance or motion, such as Rise and Fall, Pulse, Smooth, Cuban, Street, Stage for Line. Two-Step, Waltz, Cha-Cha, West Coast Swing, East Coast Swing, Polka, etc. for Couples and ProAm/ProPro.
6. **Dance Types** refer to the types of dance contests offered by UCWDC, including ProAm, ProPro, Couples, Line, and Teams.
7. **Division** refers to the competition segment in which UCWDC competitors may compete within a Dance Type: Age, Skill Level, and Mixed-Role. For example, ProAm Female Diamond Novice is a division. Division specifics are listed in this Rules document. Not all regional events offer all UCWDC divisions.
8. **Eligibility Period** is the two (2) previous Dance Seasons combined with the current Dance Season. For example, on 3 October 2022, the eligibility period would be from 15 January 2020 to 3 October 2022. On 5 February 2022, the eligibility period would be from 15 January 2020 to 5 February 2022.
9. **Format** refers to the general forms of UCWDC dance competition, including **Classic** (in which music is selected by a DJ and competitors do not know the songs they will dance to in advance) and **Showcase** (in which competition music is either chosen by the competitors or is pre-released to competitors by UCWDC).
10. **Judges' Marks** refer to the placements UCWDC judges may award competitors. These include:
 - M** = Honorable mention
 - B** = bronze
 - S** = silver
 - S+** = silver plus (ProAm only)
 - G** = gold
 - G+** = gold plus (ProAm only)
 - GH** = gold with honors
 - GH+** = gold with honors plus (ProAm only)
 - GG** = gold graduate
11. **Line of Dance** refers to the counter-clockwise movement of dancers around the floor when dancing partner dances.
12. **Mixed-Role** refers to UCWDC competition divisions in which traditional dance-gender roles (i.e. males lead and females follow) are *not* required.
13. **Non-Progressive Dances** remain in one general place on the floor rather than progressing around the outside of the floor. Examples include Swing, NightClub, and Cha Cha.
14. **Overall Championship** (also shortened to "Overall"), refers to UCWDC contests in which individuals compete to be best across five of eight dances. Overall Couples, ProAm, and ProPro competitors must dance at least Two-Step; Waltz; one (1) Swing dance (East Coast or West Coast); and two (2) of the four (4) Alternate dances, which are Triple Two, Polka, NightClub, and Cha Cha. In Line, for an overall, a competitor must enter all Dance Categories offered in that division. In Line Dance Crystal Intermediate, a competitor must dance Rise and Fall, Pulse, Smooth, Cuban and Stage.
15. **Progressive Dance** is a dance in which partners move in a constant flow in Line of Dance around the floor. This contrasts with a non-progressive dance, which does not flow around the dance floor. Examples include Two Step, Waltz, and Polka.
16. **ProAm** is a type of partner-dance contest in which a Professional dances with an Amateur.
17. **Professional** refers to a dancer who meets any of the Professional Status Specifics outlined in the Division Entry Rules section of this Rules document.
18. **ProPro** is a type of partner-dance contest in which two Professionals dance together and one professional is instructing the other.
19. **Shine** refers to a movement in a partnered dance in which a dancer moves independently of a physically connected lead.
20. **SOLO MEDLEY** is a musically mixed, multi-dance Showcase category. It features a medley of dances choreographed to music of the competitors' choice.
21. **SHOWDANCE** is a single-dance choreographed to music of the competitors' choice
22. **Vanilla** refers to a complete rendition of the entire Line Dance step description without variation.

B. UCWDC Associate Membership

1. Current, dues-paid Associate Membership is mandatory for:
 - a. All competitors before they register for any UCWDC Division at any UCWDC event **or 30 days before the event (whichever is later)**. Birthdate must be included. This allows the UCWDC to track their competitive credentials for each Dance Season and Eligibility Period. Tracking is used to determine eligibility for The Country Dance World Championships, Points Champions, and to graduate competitors from one skill level to the next at the end of The Country Dance World Championships.
 - b. Each and every UCWDC Contest Coordinator, Judge, Scrutineer, and Scoring Director who works at a UCWDC-sanctioned event.
2. New and renewed memberships become current the day the payment is received. Membership expires on the last day of the Dance Season, January 15th. Membership is available online at www.ucwdc.org/become-a-member.
3. A printable copy of the Rules, Contest Procedures and Scoring Format is available at www.ucwdc.org/rules.

C. Gender Requirements and Mixed-Role Divisions

1. In all Couples divisions except Mixed-Role divisions, a dance pair consists of one (1) male leader and one (1) female follower, where the leader leads and the follower follows. Only momentary role reversals are accepted.
2. In Mixed-Role divisions, a dance pair consists of one (1) follower and one (1) leader of any gender, where the leader leads and the follower follows. Both leader and follower must retain their roles throughout each Dance Category.
3. Points will be tracked. Please see [Worlds Qualification & Points Championship - UCWDC](#) for tracking information.

D. Age Divisions and Requirements

1. A competitor's age for the entire Dance Season for UCWDC competition is the age they will be on the last day of that Dance Season.
2. Juniors competitors are those who are less than 18 years of age, with these stipulations:
 - a. All Junior Couples must dance in the older partner's age group.
 - b. Junior Primary – competitors are less than 10 years of age.
 - c. Junior Youth – competitors are at least 10 and less than 14 years of age.
 - d. Junior Teen – competitors are at least 14 and less than 18 years of age.
3. Adult competitors are those who are at least 18 years old, with these stipulations:
 - a. Open age division competitors must be Adults, except in couples where an Adult may dance with a partner who is 16 years of age or above.
 - b. Masters division competitors must be Adults, except in couples where an Adult may dance with a partner who is 16 years of age or above.
 - c. Age-Restricted division competitors may dance in any Age division for which they are eligible, with these stipulations:
 - i. Crystal division competitors must be at least 30.
 - ii. Diamond division competitors must be at least 40.
 - iii. Masters Plus division competitors must be at least 45
 - iv. Crown division competitors must be at least 40.
 - v. Crown Plus division competitors must be at least 55.
 - vi. Silver division competitors must be at least 50.
 - vii. Gold division competitors must be at least 60.
 - viii. Platinum division competitors must be at least 70.

E. Skill Level Divisions

Skill Level Divisions are offered as follows:

1. Couples Syllabus Divisions-including Mixed-Role Divisions:
 - a. Newcomer IV
 - b. Newcomer III
 - c. Newcomer II
2. Couples Divisions- including Mixed-Role Divisions:
 - a. Newcomer I
 - b. Classic III
 - c. Classic II
 - d. Classic II/I
 - e. Classic I
 - f. Showcase
3. Ascension Divisions-including Mixed-Role Divisions (competitors must earn ascension from the next lower division level):
 - a. Couples Classic Masters (and Classic Masters Plus)
 - b. Couples Showcase Masters (and Showcase Masters Plus)
 - c. Couples Classic Crown (and Classic Crown Plus)
 - d. Couples Showcase Crown (and Showcase Crown Plus)

F. Division Entry Requirements

For crossover entry between Dance Types, see www.UCWDC.org/rules. Not every regional event offers every UCWDC division. Please check the individual event.

1. Competitors in Newcomer I must not have multiple top-5 placements on any recognized dance sport circuit (e.g. Ballroom, World Swing Dance Council (WSDC), UCWDC, etc.).
2. Competitors with multiple top-5 placements on any recognized dance circuit must enter no lower than Couples Division III.
3. Competitors with competition or performance experience in any genre of dance—including partner and solo dance genres—must enter at Newcomer II or higher.
4. Competitors in Newcomer I or above may enter any division for which they are qualified except for the following:
 - a. Couples competitors may dance for Overall Championship (see Section III) in only one skill level. While dancing Overall Championship in that skill level, they may dance in the skill level above. If they dance for Overall in the skill level above, from that event forward they may no longer dance in their original level.
 - b. Couples competitors may not enter both Classic and Showcase divisions with the same dance routines.
 - c. Couples partnerships may not enter as a ProAm or ProPro student-teacher partnership at the same UCWDC event, or vice versa. Once a Couples division partnership enters ProAm or ProPro, then they may not go back to Couples in that same Dance Season, or vice versa.
5. When crossing over from one Dance Type to another or returning after the Eligibility Period, a competitor may move down one skill level.
6. Once a competitor has performed for Overall in a UCWDC division of their choice, they may not compete later in a lower skill level in that Dance Type, except for the following:
 - a. Showcase and Spotlight competitors may dance either II or I in Couples Classic. Thus, Showcase competitors may not enter the Classic III level of dance or lower.
 - b. If the competitors do not compete during the entire current Eligibility Period.
 - c. If a Juniors competitor advances into an older age division, he or she may dance one skill level lower, except Junior Primary Advanced and Junior Youth Advanced competitors may dance Novice division as they advance in age.

- d. Any new partnership or couple returning after the eligibility period may dance one skill level lower than the highest-level competitor in the partnership.
 - e. Crown competitors may enter Classic Open I and Showcase Open to vie for Masters. When dancing Open I, or Showcase Open, they may not judge that Dance Type.
 - f. Masters may never move down, except when a Master dances with a new partner who is not eligible for Masters.
 - g. Competitors may not enter Masters and Masters Plus or Crown and Crown Plus at the same event.
 - h. Dispensation may be granted to move to a lower skill level, pending a review of scores and marks across dances, and multiple events (if applicable). The Dispensation Request form is found at <http://www.UCWDC.org/rules>.
7. If a competitor earns a qualifying win in a Showcase division, they must then enter their respective Classic division at the Advanced level for Line Dance or ProAm, or Division I for Couples beginning the next Dance Season.
 8. Masters and Crown division candidates who have become eligible for Ascension only achieve their status after they have danced a full program at that level of competition.
 9. Professional Status Specifics:
 - a. Competitors have ProPro I status if they compete with UCWDC Novice and above ProAm or Line Dance competitors, or Division III and above Couples competitors.
 - i. If competitors have ProPro I status, they are eligible to enter Intermediate Line Dance or Couples Division II or above.
 - b. Competitors have ProPro II status if they dance as a Pro in any lower levels of competitors in any genre.
 - i. If competitors have ProPro II status, they are eligible to enter Novice Line Dance or Couples Division III or above.
 - c. Competitors have ProAm Novice to Advanced status if they teach Wedding Couples, Studio New Students Specials, or Group classes, and/or social dance.
 - d. If a competitor teaches any dance form, they may not enter any Dance Type at the Newcomer level. They must enter no lower than Novice.
 - e. Competitors with ProPro status are not eligible to enter any competitive skill level that they teach, except when teaching Couples Division I or Line Dance Advanced, where they may only enter Couples Open Division I or Line Dance Open Advanced.
 - f. If competitors regularly assist a dance instructor, they may enter ProAm as a student but may not enter the Newcomer level of dance or lower.

G. Division Rules

For an explanation of the movements listed below, see Glossary of Movements at www.UCWDC.org/rules
 The UCWDC does not condone obscene, indecent, or profane language or movement.

1. Classic Format
 - a. The songs selected by each DJ or Event Director for each ProAm and ProPro division are not revealed until the competition begins. The songs played for contiguous heats of the same dance and division in ProAm/ProPro must be different and of approximately the same tempo.
 - b. The basic timing(s) and rhythm(s), plus the musical tempo ranges for each dance, are listed in Article M. Dance Categories and Basic Timings in this rules booklet.
 - c. All Couples competitors must enter and dance Two Step to be eligible to compete except for Newcomer, Juniors, Showcase, Masters, and Crown divisions. Failure to do so will result in disqualification in that division.
 - d. Classic Movement Limitations:
 - i. Moves that include lifts (any type), throws, carries, aerals, acrobatics, drops (any type), slashes, pirouettes, fouettés, sitting on the floor, lying on the floor, or bridging on the floor are not allowed except that sitting, lying or bridging on the floor may be done in Masters/Crown ShowDances.

- ii. Rides and drags are not allowed except for Masters, Crown, and Division I competitors, who may do stationary, leveraged (counter-balanced) rotations (rides) and drags.
- iii. Leaps are not allowed.
- iv. Movements that rotate on balance in adagio are permitted to turn only up to 360 degrees except for Masters, Crown, and Division I.
- v. All Couples competitors must start with their bodies touching each other except Masters, Crown, and Division I.
- vi. Couples competitors must follow the Basic Rule which requires them to dance one full, visible basic pattern of the dance per standard phrase of music (32 count for 4/4 time or 24 count for 3/4 time). For phrased dances, the two measures of basic timing must be performed in each phrase of music but need not be back-to-back. The basic pattern must be performed within the character of the dance and in a connected position.
- vii. A stationary split or rotating pedestal is not allowed.
- viii. Dance moves that incorporate shine are not allowed except in Masters, Crown, and Division I, with the exception of Chase, Contra-Chase, Circles, Contra-Circles, and Challenge in Cha Cha. Contra-Chase is also allowed in East Coast Swing and West Coast Swing.
- ix. Free spins are permitted only when they are led from a connected position. Free spins must finish through re-connection or as appropriate to end-of-pattern and cannot initiate additional movement concepts without a physical lead.
- e. Additional Movement Limitations for Newcomer divisions:
 - i. Newcomers must start in one of the seven (7) closed positions: Basic Closed (Right Inside Partner), Left Inside Partner, Right Parallel, (Outside Partner) Left Parallel (Outside Partner), Promenade, Reverse (Counter) Promenade, or Fan.
 - ii. Newcomer I competitors must use the basic timing(s) defined in Article M. Dance Categories through each dance, with the exception of a foot change and patterns described in the UCWDC Syllabus that are not basic timing.
 - iii. Newcomer IV, III, and II Competitors, except for a “starter step”, must use only the patterns from the UCWDC Syllabus listed at www.UCWDC.org/rules for their respective level.
 - iv. Hops, leans, lunges, arabesques, penchés, piqués, attitudes, développés, rond de jambe en l'air, and télé rondés are not allowed.
 - v. Adagio movement is not allowed except for kicks, flicks, floor sweeps, or passé when done without losing the basic timing.

2. Showcase Format

- a. In Showcase, competitors dance to music which is pre-selected for each dance on a rotating schedule. The songs, artist names, and details for usage dates are posted under “Competition Music” at www.UCWDC.org/competition-music. Choreographic interpretation of the music is one of the most important factors being judged. Competitors should select movement that they feel best interprets the musical nuances, tempo, character, and mood of the musical selection and the dance’s characterizing rhythm, motion, and style.
- b. Movement allowances and limitations for Showcase Couples:
 - i. A Couple may enter any dance category of their choice.
 - ii. A Couple may begin in any dance position.
 - iii. Sitting and lying on the floor except to recover from splits are not allowed except in an ending pose and Solo Medleys due to safety issues.
 - iv. Aerials are not allowed except in Showcase Masters.
 - v. Inverted lifts held on the vertical plane (rather than cartwheels that move through the vertical plane) and throws transporting the partner through the air are not allowed except in Showcase Masters.

- vi. The two-beat rule, with the exception of Showcase Masters: A partner may be lifted for up to two beats of music as long as any part of the lifted partner's head, torso, arm, or leg remains at or below the shoulder level of the lifting partner and the lifted partner is not inverted. Medium lifts (with a part of the body at or below waist level) are allowed.
- vii. There are no movement limitations in Showcase Masters.

H. Floor Craft

1. For all dances, competitors shall always be courteous on the floor, as well as vigilant so as not to interfere with other competitors.
2. For Couples progressive dances, competitors must generally move in Line-of-Dance (LOD), counter-clockwise around the outside of the dance floor. When a competitor performs a stationary movement in progressive dance, it should be to the outside of the floor, and must not block the inside lane; the stationary competitor has the right-of way. If another competitor slows or stops, trailing competitors should pass on the inside (toward the center of the dance floor.)
3. For Couples non-progressive dances, competitors must generally remain in place. Once established on a spot, stationary competitors have the right-of-way over any competitor moving toward their space. When spot competitors use traveling movements they must return to their original spot unless they are moving to an empty space. Stationary competitors have the right-of-way for their spot along with reasonable space in which to perform.

I. Costuming and Props: The UCWDC does not condone obscene, indecent or profane costumes or props.

- a. Competitors in all Divisions must wear:
 - b. Traditional looking cowboy hats for all leaders in all levels and divisions.
 - c. Traditional looking cowboy boots with a pull strap, stitching, and at least one inch (1.0" or 2.54cm) heel from top of heel to floor. There is no tolerance on heel height. The boots must have a shaft of at least 7" (seven in/17.78 cm) from top of heel to top of shaft. Acceptable heel styles include: Cowboy, Riding, Walking, Roper Straight, Roper Pitched, Fowler Straight, and Fowler Pitched. Fashion heels are not acceptable.
 - i. Newcomer competitors are encouraged but not required to wear boots except at The Country Dance World Championships, where boots are required for all levels.
 - ii. Junior competitors may not wear boots or other footwear with more than a 1.5 inch/3.75 centimeters heel.
 - d. Dance pants (under-shorts) for any dancer whose buttocks may be revealed during a dance performance.
2. Newcomer IV, III, and II competitors are not allowed to wear costumes that have sequins, rhinestones, beads or metal embellishments, or metallic threads or dots woven into or pressed into the costume. This does not include jewelry, which can include bracelets, necklaces, broaches, hatbands, hair-combs, rings, earrings, collar-tips, button snaps, belt buckles (but not the belt itself), boot bracelets, or stirrups. Discretion and tasteful decorum appropriate to the style of Country and the style of the dance performed is favored.
3. Sponsored logos on costumes are allowed if they are no larger than 5 inches by 5 inches (12.7 centimeters by 12.7 centimeters) in dimension per article of clothing. Logos should be tasteful and not detract from the costume.
4. The entire visual look of the performance is judged, including costuming as well as steps. Therefore, how a competitor presents oneself for performance is part of the final placement on every judge's ballot, in every dance, according to the style and story of the dance.
5. Competitors in Classic and/or Showcase Crown and Masters who choose to discard parts of costumes (i.e. skirts or vests) during their performance cannot leave discarded articles on the dance floor where they may impede other competitors. All discarded articles must be removed by the competitor at the end of the performance.

6. Props are allowed in ShowDance and Solo Medley only. A prop is any item that is not normally worn as clothing. Props must be portable, not living, and delivered to and removed from the performance arena only by the competitors. Performers and props must not touch audience members or event staff. A total time of one (1) minute for prop setup, entrance, prop removal, and exit is allowed. No music may be included during setup/entrance (before the beginning of the selected music). A reprise is allowed afterwards.

J. Choreography Copyright

Like music, under international law, all original choreography is automatically copyrighted when it has been performed and may not be copied, reproduced, or imitated without permission by the owner under penalty of law.

K. Competition Music

1. DJs should make every possible effort to play phrased music for the phrased dances (Polka, Cha-Cha, NightClub, and Waltz).
2. UCWDC strongly recommends that Polkas be 2/4-time, NightClub be 4/4-time and Waltz be 3/4-time.
3. UCWDC strongly recommends that, within a set of selected music for a specific dance, the intro of each song is the same phrase length, and that the music is played to the end of phrase after the 90-second stipulated song duration. For non-phrased dances (Triple Two, Two-Step, East Coast Swing, and West Coast Swing), all music should be pulsed appropriately. That is: Triple Two has soft upbeats, Two-Step has definitive downbeats that are not double-timed, and both Swing dances are danced to backbeat swing music. For Newcomer divisions, non-phrased music for the non-phrased dances is allowed.
4. These competition music length minimums may extend to the end of the phrase
 - a. ProAm – 1 ½ minutes
 - b. ProPro – 1 ½ minutes
 - c. Line Dance ProAm – 1 ½ minutes
 - d. Spotlight (ProAm & ProPro) – 2 ½ to 4 minutes
5. Showcase Music: The songs and artist names are posted under “Music” at www.UCWDC.org/competition-music.
6. For Event Music Selections, all Classic music must be as described below in 7. b, c, and d.
7. Competitor-selected music requirements:
 - a. Competitor-selected music must be as described below for all parts of the dance performance.
 - b. Our sport is inspired by country music and country artists so AI music is not acceptable.
 - c. For the purposes of selecting competition music, music and artists that are identified by the following categories or descriptions are considered acceptable for Country Dance competition music within the UCWDC:
 - i. Country
 - ii. Contemporary Country
 - iii. Country Pop & Country Rock
 - iv. Americana/Alternative Country
 - v. Classic Country/Hillbilly
 - vi. Neo-traditionalist
 - vii. Western Swing
 - viii. Honky Tonk/Hardcore Country
 - ix. Bluegrass
 - x. Bakersfield
 - xi. Nashville/Countrypolitan
 - xii. Progressive Country & Outlaw Country
 - xiii. Urban Country

- d. Two competition dances, Cha-Cha and West Coast Swing, have roots outside the country music genre. Therefore, Tejano music is acceptable for Cha-Cha, and Blues music is acceptable for West Coast Swing. These music types are allowed only for these dances.
- e. Country music artists and songs appropriate for UCWDC competition may be identified by their presence on these platforms or by membership in these organizations:
 - i. Country Billboard or similar Country Music charts
 - ii. AM/FM/Satellite radio airplay on Country Music stations
 - iii. iTunes, Spotify, internet-based music services in the Country genre
 - iv. Record labels within the Country genre
 - v. Country Music Halls of Fame, including national, state, and regional
 - vi. Nashville songwriters performing their own material
 - vii. Nominations for Country Music categories at Grammys and other music industry awards
 - viii. Included on soundtracks for Country-themed movies
 - ix. Music performed at the Grand Old Opry
8. Competitor-selected music is allowed for Showdance and Solo Medley competitions. If a competitor enters two divisions that include a self-selected music dance category, they must have different competitor-selected music for each division.
 - a. A copy of the self-selected music must be accompanied by a properly filled out Competitor-Selected Music Itinerary (see www.UCWDC.org/rules).
 - b. It is the competitor's responsibility to submit music and itinerary prior to the competition at every Regional Event where it is to be used and by **December 1st prior to the The Country Dance World Championships.**
 - c. The music and itinerary will be audited to ensure it meets all requirements.
9. Beyond the duration of the self-selected music, competitors are allowed one minute in total for prop setup, entrance, prop removal and exit. No music may be included during setup/entrance (before the beginning of the selected music). A reprise is allowed afterwards.
10. UCWDC does not condone obscene, indecent, or profane content within competitor--selected music dance categories. While the UCWDC is a family-oriented organization, we cannot censor artistic license. Therefore, when competitor-selected music divisions are occurring before 9:00 pm, patrons should be informed that there may be adult themes portrayed during these competitions.

L. Graduation Requirements

1. Competitors graduate on the first day of the next Dance Season, except for the following:
 - a. In a Dance Season, when a competitor competes for the first time in the UCWDC, or returns to competing in the UCWDC after more than the Eligibility Period, or competes for the first time in a new Dance Type (i.e., ProAm, Couples, Line Dance);
 - i. *and*, accumulates more than 50% of GG in their dance(s) in any single division in their skill level (need not be the same division at each event), in their first two (2) competitions (if one of those includes an overall) *or* their first competition and their first overall;
 - ii. *then*, they must immediately graduate to the next higher level.
2. Eligible wins occur if there are three or more competitors competing for overall, except if 51% or more of all judges' marks are grades of S or less.
 - a. In the case of less than three (3) competitors competing for overall, a win counts toward graduation if the majority of judges' marks are grades GH and GG. At least 25% of all grades must be GG.

3. Graduation earned at UCWDC Regional Events:
 - a. A competitor may dance only one level up or down across different dance types.
 - b. There may be no more than one level difference for a single competitor across all dance types. Therefore, if a graduation results in a difference greater than one level, the competitor must graduate in the other types as well, unless they obtain Dispensation. For information about crossover between Dance Types and the Dispensation Request Form, please see www.UCWDC.org/rules.
 - c. If a competitor qualifies for an overall in a division, at a particular skill level, they may dance one or more dances in the next higher skill level at the same event (and must dance Two-Step if it is required).
 - i. From that event forward, if the competitor dances overall in the next higher skill level, they have self-graduated into the higher skill level and may no longer dance in the lower skill level.
 - ii. Note that competitors may not dance at a higher skill level at The Country Dance World Championships.
 - d. Number of eligible wins:
 - i. Couples competitors must graduate to the next higher level in these cases:
 - .1 From Division IV level if they have eligible wins at two (2) or more UCWDC events during the current Eligibility Period.
 - .2 From Division III level if they have eligible wins at two (2) or more UCWDC events during the current Eligibility Period.
 - .3 From Division II level if they have eligible wins at three (3) or more UCWDC events during the current Eligibility Period.
 - ii. Ascension into the Masters divisions occurs when a partnership is formed by two (2) people who have a combined lifetime total of eight (8) first place overall eligible wins (at 4 or more separate events) in the Classic open I and/or Showcase Open divisions at UCWDC events. At least two (2) of their wins must have been danced with the current partnership and at least one (1) of those must have three (3) or more competitors except Showcase divisions, where two (2) are permitted. If the win with sufficient competition does not occur, and the couple has more than 50% GG's at two (2) of their wins (and the Judges on the panels at those events are more than 50% Journeyman or above Partner or Dual Certified), they may ascend on grades alone.
 - iii. Ascension into the Crown divisions occurs when a partnership is formed by two (2) people who have a combined lifetime total of eight (8) first place overall eligible wins (at 4 or more separate events) in the Classic Crystal I (once the competitors turn 40), Diamond I, Silver I, or Gold I/II (which graduated to Crown Plus) and/or Showcase Diamond divisions at UCWDC Events. At least two (2) of their wins must have been danced with the current partnership and at least one (1) of those must have three (3) or more competitors except Showcase divisions, where two (2) are permitted. If the win without sufficient competition does not occur, and the couple has more than 50% GG's at two (2) of their wins, they may ascend on grades alone.
4. Graduation Criteria earned from a Continental Championship:
 - a. At a Continental Championship, the same graduation requirements apply as at any UCWDC Regional Event.
5. Graduation Earned at The Country Dance World Championships ("Worlds"):
 - a. Every competing couple who wins a first-place Overall title at The Country Dance World Championships with grades of G or better must graduate to the next higher level of competition unless they have fewer than three (3) couples competing for Overall in their division.
 - i. In this case, competing couple will graduate only if the majority of judges' marks are grades GH and GG. At least 25% of all medals must be GG.

- b. In addition, all competitors who dance for an Overall Championship at The Country Dance World Championships graduate to the next higher division on a scale which depends on the total number of competitors, as follows:
 - i. Second place overall at The Country Dance World Championships where there were ten (10) to fourteen (14) overall competitors.
 - ii. Second or third place overall at The Country Dance World Championships where there were fifteen (15) to nineteen (19) overall competitors.
 - iii. Second, third, or fourth place overall at The Country Dance World Championships where there were twenty (20) to twenty-four (24) overall competitors.
 - iv. Second, third, fourth, or fifth place overall at The Country Dance World Championships where there were twenty-five (25) or more overall competitors.

M. Dance Categories and Basic Timings

1. Couples Dance Categories:
 - a. The Country Dance World Championship Classic and Showcase Dance Categories are Triple Two, NightClub, Waltz, Polka, Cha-Cha, East Coast Swing, Two-Step, and West Coast Swing.
 - b. These categories will be danced in this order at all UCWDC events with the exception of Masters and Crown Classic, which will dance their chosen dances in two flights in the following order:
 - i. First flight: slow or andante dances: Waltz, NightClub, Triple Two, and West Coast Swing
 - ii. Second flight: fast or allegro dances: Two-Step, Cha-Cha, Polka, and East Coast Swing.
 - iii. Music for all flights will be automated with exactly a 30 second break between dances. A tone will sound 5 seconds before the music begins.
 - iv. Competitors will signify they are not dancing a specific dance by stepping off the floor, in which case they shall stand within 3 feet (1 meter) of the floor and shall not consume food or beverages. In the true spirit of good sportsmanship, all competitors must remain on the side of the floor when not dancing until the end of the flight.
 - v. Flights will occur in the same dance session with at least 10 minutes between flights.
2. Music for Dance Categories
 - a. The following section provides the minimum, maximum and preferred musical tempos in beats per minute (BPM). These basic timings fulfill the Basic Rule for each dance. For complete definitions of each dance, refer to www.UCWDC.org for the FUNdamentals Curriculum and Standards.
 - b. Timing notations in the dance categories: Black indicates a weight change; Grey (or Red) denotes no weight change. To meet the Basic Rule for the phrased dances (i.e. Waltz, Polka, NightClub, and Cha-Cha), two measures of basic timing must be performed in each phrase of music (32 counts for 4/4-time or 24 counts for ¾-time) but need not be back to back.
 - c. The Country Dance World Championships Core Dances:
 - i. **Two-Step:** 168-192. (*Newcomer: 170-178. Platinum/Pearl Newcomer and Novice: 168-178. Novice/Division III for all other ages: 174-186. Platinum/Pearl Intermediate/Division II and above: 174-184. Intermediate/Division II and above for all other ages: 182-192.*)
 Basic Two-Step timings are 1 2 3 4 5 6 ; 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 ; and 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 (QQS S; QQS QQS; QQQQS S).
 Two-Step is a smooth, progressive dance with weaved patterns and rhythm accents that separate the quicks and slows, emphasizing slows.
 - ii. **Waltz:** 84-90. (*For all Newcomer and Platinum/Pearl use upper end of range.*)
 Waltz tempos in self-selected music division must be 120 BPM or less.
 Basic Waltz timing is 1 2 3 4 5 6.
 Waltz is a progressive dance that uses patterns that move diagonally and are performed with rise and fall accentuated with swing and sway emphasizing hover.

- d. The Country Dance World Championships Swing Dances:
- i. **East Coast Swing:** 126-144. (*Platinum/Pearl Newcomer and Novice/Division III: 126-136. Newcomer for all other ages: 126-136. Novice/Division III for all other ages: 130-138. Platinum/Pearl Intermediate/Division II and above: 174-184. Intermediate/Division II and above for all other ages: 134-144*).
Single, Double and Triple time swing are all permitted and interchangeable.
Basic Triple East Coast Swing timings are: 1&2 3&4 5 6 and 1&2 3 4 5&6 7 8.
Basic Single East Coast Swing timings are: 1 2 3 4 5 6 (S S QQ) and 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 (S QQ S QQ).
Basic Double East Coast Swing timings are: 1 2 3 4 5 6 (S S QQ) and 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 (S QQ S QQ).
East Coast Swing is a stationary dance that uses rotary patterns and is performed with semi-Cuban, emphasizing downward compression.
 - ii. **West Coast Swing:** 92-100.
Basic West Coast Swing timings are 1 2 3&4 5&6 and 1 2 3&4 5 6 7&8.
West Coast Swing is an un-phrased, smooth, stationary dance with slotted patterns and rhythm accents, emphasizing back-beat.
- e. Non-Country Dance World Championships Swing Dance:
- i. **Pony Swing:** 102-116.
Basic Pony Swing timing is &1 &2 &3 &4 &5 &6 &7 &8.
Pony Swing is generally stationary with revolving patterns performed with Lilt, emphasizing downward action on the numbered counts.
- f. The Country Dance World Championships Alternate Dances:
- i. **Triple Two:** 76-84. (*Platinum/Pearl: upper end of the range. Masters/Crown/AllStars: Lower end of the range.*)
Basic Triple Two timings are 1 2 3&4 5&6 and 1 2 3&4 5 6 7&8.
Triple Two is a smooth, progressive dance with looped and laced patterns performed with curved sway and shaping actions, emphasizing connected feathers.
 - ii. **Polka:** 106-120. (*Platinum/Pearl Newcomer and Novice/Division III: 106-112. Newcomer and Novice/Division III for all other ages: 110-116. Platinum/Pearl Intermediate/Divisions II and above: 102-110. Intermediate/Division II and above for all other ages: 116-120.*)
Basic Polka timing is 1&2 3&4 5&6 7&8.
Polka is a progressive dance with 2-rail (streamlined) patterns performed with Lilt motion, emphasizing downward action on the numbered counts.
 - iii. **NightClub:** 54-60. (*Newcomer and Platinum/Pearl: upper end of range*).
Basic NightClub timing is 1 2&3 4&5 6&7 8& (S QQS QQS QQ).
NightClub is a stationary dance with linear and geometric patterns performed with draping sway and counter sway, shaping actions, emphasizing developed slows.
 - iv. **Cha-Cha:** 102-116. (*Platinum/Pearl Newcomer and Novice/Division III: 102-106. Newcomer and Novice/Division III for all other ages: 102-110. Platinum/Pearl Intermediate/Division II and above: 102-110; Intermediate/Division II and above for all other ages: 108-116*).
Basic Cha-Cha timing is 1 2 3 4&5 6 7 8&.
Cha-Cha is a stationary dance with intersecting patterns performed with Cuban motion, emphasizing the first beat of each measure.
- g. Non-Country Dance World Championships Alternate Dances:
- i. **Shuffle (Ft. Worth Shuffle):** 102-114.
Shuffle timings are 1 2 3, 4&5, 6&; or 1 2 3, 4&5, 6 7, 8&).
Shuffle is a progressive dance with leap-frog or pig-tail patterns, performed with Flat motion shaped in its movement. The dance accents 2 3 (six-count timing), or 2 3 and 6 7 (eight-count timing) with two progressive walks.

- ii. **Schottische:** 120-132.
Basic Schottische timing is 1 2 3 4[kick] 5 6 7 8[kick].
Schottische is a progressive dance performed with plié on 2 and relevé on 4, with zigzag patterns accented with lifted kicks, scoots, hops, or brushes.
- iii. **Rhythm Two (Arizona Two-Step):** 148-160.
Basic Rhythm Two timing is 1 2 3 4[kick or touch] 5 6[kick or touch] and 1 2 3 4 5 6[kick or touch] 7 8[kick or touch].
Rhythm Two is a spot dance performed with semi-Cuban motion and circular patterns.
- h. Solo Performances:
 - i. Solo Medley for Showcase Masters and Crown (4-7 minutes for Masters and 2 ½ - 5 minutes for Crown with no BPM limitations)
This is a musically mixed, multi-dance Showcase category. It features a medley of dances choreographed to music of the competitors' choice that must include a combined total of at least 45 seconds each:
 - (01)For Masters, a swing dance and three (3) other Country Dance World Championships dances for Masters
 - (02)For Crown, a swing dance and 2 other The Country Dance World Championships dances for Crown
 - (03)And not to include Two-Step and Waltz for either, and which must be recognizable in pattern, rhythm, motion, and character.
 - (04)Recognizable patterns from non-UCWDC dances (e.g., Quickstep, tango, Samba, Rumba, Charleston, Clogging, Hip-Hop, et cetera) may only be used as appropriate for musical interpretation.
 - ii. ShowDance for Classic Masters and Classic Crown (2 to 2 ½ minutes, of which 2 minutes must be dancing to music and timing begins when the music starts)
 - (01)This is a single-dance choreographed to music of the competitors' choice.
The dance must be one of the 8 UCWDC dances defined above in Section M.
The music can be one song or a medley of songs and may not contain anything not found on the original CD(s).
Other dances are allowed momentarily for musical interpretation.
The competitor order must be a scheduled drawing for choice or, if no time is scheduled, then random drawing/generator will be used.

N. Competitor Conduct and Ethics

1. All decisions of the contest judges, the Contest Coordinator, and Event Director are final. Competitors are expected to act and comply with the standards and rules outlined in UCWDC Associate Membership Code of Conduct, found at www.ucwdc.org/governance. On any competition registration form, competitors are required to provide their full name, mailing address, birthdate, phone number (cell preferred), e-mail address, and UCWDC Associate Membership number.
2. All Associate Members and participants acting on behalf of the UCWDC are expected to comply with all applicable laws. The UCWDC reserves the right to exclude any competitor from an event for acting in violation of an applicable law, or contrary to the UCWDC Associate Membership Code of Conduct as determined by sole discretion of the UCWDC.
3. Any complaint or challenge to the composition of a judging panel or results from a judging panel must be done post-event and will go to the Judge Review Board. See the UCWDC Judge Certification Code of Conduct at www.ucwdc.org/judge-certification for information.

O. Competitor Data and Privacy

1. Before entering a UCWDC-sanctioned event, competitors may be required to sign an event waiver form that limits the event's liability with regards to injury or other damage, allows data collection and tracking, assigns the distribution rights of audio and video recordings of the attendee(s) to the event, and addresses privacy.
2. Competitors under the legal age of 18 must be accompanied by a parent or legal guardian who has written parental permission to act as "guardian", and who is responsible for the minor's safety and conduct at all times.
3. Information provided on the competition registration form will be used for tracking of performance results to determine divisional graduation status, divisional age eligibility, County Dance World Championships eligibility, and the UCWDC Points Championships.
4. All UCWDC-sanctioned event attendees are expected to act in a friendly, cordial, respectful, and professional manner throughout every event.

P. Competitor Check-in and Staging Procedure

1. For all heated divisions, competitors should report to the Floor Coordinator thirty (30) minutes before a division's first contest heat to check-in and warm up, unless the size of the contest warrants an earlier reporting time (see each event's schedule).
 - a. When reporting, each competitor must make themselves known to the Floor Coordinator by competitor number, confirming that they are dressed, ready, and able to perform in the proper division.
 - b. During the contest, competitors must remain in the staging area, except for during costume changes.
2. Competitor numbers must be touching the spine and must be worn in all divisions except self-selected music categories. However, Choreography competitors must wear numbers.
3. Although UCWDC contests post the heats of competition for all divisions, the exact heat order is not guaranteed.
 - a. A competitor who fails to report to the Floor Coordinator on time or fails to answer the calls of the Floor Coordinator for a specific heat will be disqualified from that dance category.

Q. Judge Meeting

1. Relevant contest information is discussed at the official UCWDC Judge Meeting held prior to each competition session at every UCWDC event.

R. Competitor Meeting

1. Contest logistics and schedules are discussed at the official UCWDC Competitors Meeting held at some UCWDC events. If there is no Competitors Meeting, please see the Contest Coordinator for answers

III. AWARDS & CHAMPIONSHIPS

A. Overall Championships

1. Overall Championship competitors must dance at least Two-Step, Waltz, one (1) Swing dance, (East Coast or West Coast), and two (2) of the four (4) Alternate dances, which are Triple Two, Polka, NightClub, and Cha Cha.
2. An Overall Champion title is awarded only to the first-place Overall winner in each specific division.
3. Overall Eligibility:
 - a. Classic Couples Overall entries (except Masters and Crown) must dance in at least Two-Step, Waltz, one (1) swing dance, and two (2) alternate dances.
 - b. Showcase Masters and Couples Showcase Crown must compete in Two-Step, Waltz, and Solo Medley.

- c. Classic Masters and Couples Classic Crown must compete in Two-Step, Waltz, one (1) Swing dance, two (2) Alternate dances, and a ShowDance.

IV. COUNTRY DANCE WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS ('Worlds')

Each Year the UCWDC presents the Country Dance World Championships, which offers world-class Couples, ProAm, ProPro, Line Dance, ShowTime, and Team competitions.

A. Eligibility

1. Associate Membership: Each individual competitor may begin to accrue qualifications for Worlds only after their Associate Membership dues are current and paid for the Dance Season.
2. To be eligible to compete at The Country Dance World Championships:
 - a. Competitors who are permanent residents of North America (except Mexico) and Europe must qualify by competing at three (3) or more UCWDC Events during the preceding Dance Season, with the exception of:
 - i. All Juniors and competitors from Manitoba and western Canada, who must compete at two (2) or more events
 - ii. Newcomer IV, III, and II who only need to compete at one (1) event to qualify
 - b. Competitors who are permanent residents of Asia must qualify by competing in at least two (2) UCWDC Events during the preceding Dance Season.
 - c. Competitors who are permanent residents of Mexico and Africa must qualify by competing in at least one (1) UCWDC Event during the preceding Dance Season.
 - d. Competitors who are permanent residents of continents other than North America, Europe, Asia, and Africa may enter without pre-qualification but must be active, dues-paid Associate Members before dancing at The Country Dance World Championships.
 - e. Masters, Couples Showcase Open, and Couples Classic Open I must qualify by dancing three (3) full programs except if their permanent residence is Asia or Africa where they must dance one (1) full program.
3. The Country Dance World Championships qualification in Couples does not count for any other Dance Type.
4. The Country Dance World Championships competitors must have competed for the Overall at least once in the division in which they intend to compete, except:
 - a. Masters, Couples Open 1, and Couples Showcase Open competitors in Europe and North America, who must have competed for the Overall Championship three (3) times (in Classic or Showcase or a combination of the two (2)) over the course of three (3) or more UCWDC events.
5. For each Dance Type entered, The Country Dance World Championships competitors must compete in the highest division where they danced for overall during the preceding Dance Season.
6. In a new partnership, at least one partner must have competed at three (3) UCWDC Events and the new partnership must have competed at least once overall in the division they intend to compete at The Country Dance World Championships.
7. If one competitor is competing with two partners, both partnerships must qualify.

B. Acceptable Use of Championship Titles

1. Titles are bestowed upon winners by the UCWDC. Any title that is used by the recipient to misrepresent the credential or to mislead the public in its declaration may be voided and withdrawn.
2. At The Country Dance World Championships, an "Overall Champion" title is awarded only to the first-place Overall winner in each specific division.
 - a. When this title is used, the year and the full name of the division must precede that title; e.g.: "John Doe is the 1988 UCWDC Classic Silver II World Champion."
 - b. Conversely, when used in a competitor's dance resumé, 2nd Place through 5th Place Overall winners' titles must be followed with the full name of the division; e.g.: "John Doe is the 3rd Place Classic Silver II" winner at the Country Dance World Championship".

3. At The Country Dance World Championships, a “Points Champion” title is awarded only to the first-place Points winner in each specific division for the previous Dance Season (in January, 2026 the 2025 Points Champion is awarded).
 - a. When this title is used, the year and the full name of the division must precede that title; e.g.: “John Doe is the 1988 UCWDC Couples Classic Silver III Points Champion.”
4. At Regional UCWDC Sanctioned Events, an “Overall Champion” title is awarded only to the first-place Overall winner in each specific division.
 - a. When this title is used, the full name of the division must precede that title; e.g.: “John Doe is the Classic Silver II Overall Champion.”
 - b. Conversely, when used, 2nd Place through 5th Place Overall winners’ titles must be followed with the full name of the division; e.g.: “John Doe is the 3rd Place Overall Classic Silver II” winner.

V. CONTINENTAL CHAMPIONSHIPS

Each year the UCWDC may present a Continental Championship in one of its represented regions. All qualification requirements for the Continental Championship shall follow The Country Dance Worlds Championships format, unless noted otherwise.

VI. INVIGILATION

Invigilation will be used when deemed necessary and useful. The specificity of any duties of an Invigilator should will be described in www.UCWDC.org/rules.

VII. GLOSSARY FOR RULES

A. Movements that incorporate any of the following defined dance concepts are subject to allowances and limitations as stipulated. Where height levels are indicated in the definition of a movement (i.e., knee level, waist level, shoulder level, head level, et cetera), those levels shall be determined by a contestant’s standing upright and flat-footed. Movements are considered stationary when they are done in place and are not rotated on an axis or transported across the dance floor.

B. The following list of definitions is specifically relevant to UCWDC competition rules.

1. Acrobatic Concepts:

- a. **Lift:** any move where both feet of one partner are propelled off the floor and weight is fully supported by the other partner.
- b. **Low Lift:** any lift where some part of the body of the lifted partner (not to include hair) is at or below the (standing) knee level of the lifting partner.
- c. **Throw:** any move where both feet of one partner are propelled off the floor and transported through the air by momentum of the standing partner.
- d. **Drag:** When one partner supports the other partner, and the supported partner is pulled across the floor while maintaining contact with the floor
- e. **Aerial:** any move where a person propels both feet off the floor and passes them above of the level of the top of their head and no other contact, or only momentary contact, with the floor is maintained.
- f. **Acrobatic:** any move where either partner independently or in partnership passes any part of their torso above and across the level of the top of either partner’s head or passes their head through the legs of the standing partner, and contact with the floor is maintained.
- g. **Drop:** any move where the head and torso of a one partner is lowered below the knee level of the other partner and weight of the lowered partner is at least partially supported or counter-balanced by the standing partner.

- h. **Ride (or leaning Horse & Cart):** any move where weight is at least partially counter-balanced (leaning-out or dipping away) by the other partner. To execute a ride, the supporting partner rotates the riding partner on an axis around the floor.
- i. **Slash:** any move where one partner is stationary and propels their partner from one side of their body to the other.
- j. **Floor Split:** any move where a person slides his or her foot or feet apart with straight legs, until the base of the torso connects with the floor.

3. Adagio Concepts:

- a. **Adagio:** any balanced or counter-balanced move where a competitor has only one foot in contact with the floor and the second foot is elevated, e.g., attitude, arabesque, développé, rond de jambe, tele rond de, penché, passé, pirouette, pedestal, piqué, fouetté, et cetera.
- b. **Jeté:** any move where a contestant leaps from one foot to the other foot, transporting his or her torso through the air and across the floor.
- c. **Grand Jeté:** any move where a contestant leaps from one foot to the other foot, elevating his or her torso through the air and across the floor, while performing a split line elevated from and parallel to the floor.
- d. **Fouetté:** is any move where a contestant executes a rondé in conjunction with using the momentum of the movement to turn in a passé position. Consecutive fouetté movements may be performed by going from the turning passé position, then executing another rondé, turning in passé, executing another rondé, turning in passé, et cetera.
- e. **Leap:** Any propulsion whether using one foot or two that travels across the floor.
- f. **Tour Jeté:** any move where a contestant from one foot to the other, transporting his or her torso through the air and across the floor, while performing one-half turn and upon landing, executing an arabesque or penché position.

4. Floor Concepts:

- a. **Kneel:** any move where a contestant contacts the floor with one or both knees.
- b. **Sit:** any move where a contestant contacts the floor with one or both buttocks.
- c. **Lie:** any move where a contestant contacts the floor with any part of his or her pelvic, hip, or buttock region of the body and also contacts the floor with any part of his or her upper body (hands, arms, rib cage, shoulders, or head).
- d. **Bridge:** any move where a contestant contacts the floor with his or her feet or knees and braces his or her weight off the floor by contacting the hands, arms, shoulders, or head, and with no part of his or her pelvic, hip, or buttock region contacting the floor, raises his or her torso higher than or level with his or her head.

5. Partnership Concepts:

- a. **Shine:** any move where a contestant in pairs performance is not bodily connected to his or her partner, and the move is deemed non-leadable. One partner holding or leading by an article of clothing worn by the other partner but not physically touching the other partner's body is not considered bodily connected, therefore such movements will be deemed shine. Shine does not include moves that conclude without connected lead & follow, but finish based on the pattern structure of the dance, e.g. an anchor after a free spin that occurs without connection to conclude a West Coast Swing pattern.

END OF COUPLES BOOKLET