

## About Levels and Testing

### Disciplines & Levels

The USFSA defines a system of "Tests" which allow a skater to progress through a sequence of logical steps in his or her competitive development. The Tests also establish a benchmarking structure for competitive purposes. All USFSA sanctioned competitions group skaters according to levels of Tests passed. This allows skaters of similar abilities to compete against each other.

In very general terms, there are 2 types of testing defined by the USFSA: "Learn-to-Skate" tests, and "Judged" tests.

Learn-to-Skate Testing: Within the Learn-to-Skate (Basic Skills) program, testing is used to advance skaters from level to level. This testing is usually performed in front of the skater's instructors, and is very informal. Passage through the Learn-to-Skate program is not required for competitive skaters. Some competitions that offer beginner-level events do use Learn-to-Skate levels to help group competitors, however.

Judged Tests: A much more formal test structure is designed for skaters who have advanced past the basics. These tests are judged by USFSA-appointed judges at formal "test sessions". The results are forwarded to the USFSA which keeps official records of each skater's test accomplishments.

In each skating discipline, many levels of achievement are defined. See USFSA Test Requirements for more information on the specifics for each level. Note that a skater's age does not figure into his or her skating level -- only the demonstration of his/her proficiency through the passing of tests (note though that for competitive purposes there are some age limits placed upon skaters at certain levels -- see Competitive Qualification Requirements for more information).

*A summary of test levels and test disciplines is shown below:*

<b>Singles FS</b>	<b>Moves in the Field</b>	<b>Pairs</b>	<b>Figures</b>	<b>Dance</b>
Pre-Preliminary	Pre-Preliminary	Preliminary	Preliminary	Preliminary
Preliminary	Preliminary	Juvenile	1st	Pre-Bronze
Pre-Juvenile	Pre-Juvenile	Intermediate	2nd	Bronze
Juvenile	Juvenile	Novice	3rd	Pre-Silver
Intermediate	Intermediate	Junior	4th	Silver
Novice	Novice	Senior	5th	Pre-Gold
Junior	Junior		6th	Gold
Senior	Senior		7th	Junior International
			8th	Senior International
Adult PreBronze FS				
Adult Bronze FS			Adult Bronze Fig	
Adult Silver FS			Adult Silver Fig	
Adult Gold FS			Adult Gold Fig	

It is necessary for all skaters to take and pass the Moves-in-the-Field (MIF) test associated with a particular level before taking the Freestyle or Pairs test at that level. It is not possible for a skater to "opt out" of the Moves-in-the-Field tests. Moves-in-the-field is a technical discipline designed to improve skater's abilities in areas such as stroking, turns, edge work, etc.

### How are Tests Conducted?

Test Sessions are held on a regular basis by most USFSA affiliated clubs. A test session is usually a very official event at which many skaters will test. All Tests are judged by a panel of USFSA appointed judges who may not be related to the skater or the skater's coach. All results from a Test Session are sent by the host club's Test Chairperson to the USFSA headquarters, which registers the skater's accomplishment and publishes a notice of that accomplishment in Skating magazine.

Skaters who are ready to test make application to the Test Chairperson of their club (or to another area club if their own club does not hold test sessions). There is usually a small fee associated with the taking of tests. This covers ice time, administrative expenses associated with the paperwork, and the judge's travel expenses (judges are not paid for

their work, however inasmuch as many have to travel quite a distance to get to test sessions, they do receive reimbursement for the costs of their travel). Generally, the Test Chairperson will post a schedule of skater's test times a few days before the test day. Skaters should be at the rink and ready to skate at their appointed time. Your coach may be present at a test session, but should not disrupt the flow of the test.

Usually, a test session is an "all-day" event. You will probably be scheduled in a grouping with several other skaters taking the same or similar tests. Your group will be scheduled for a "warm-up" time, followed immediately by the skating of the tests within that group. Usually, you will be the only one on the ice during your actual test, but for some tests (some moves-in-the-field, and the pre-preliminary freestyle) you may share the ice with others.

There will be judges there to evaluate your performance. Usually, there are 3 judges for all tests. For some tests (lower-level) it is acceptable for a single high-level judge to judge your test, and this is sometimes done when ice-time is limited. The judges are usually off the ice in a hockey-box or similar area, and will usually have clipboards with your test papers on them. Usually, there will be one judge called the "judge-in-charge". If your test requires "instruction" (i.e. if the judges need to talk to you), then it is this judge that does the talking.

When it is time for your Test, the judges or an announcer will inform you of your opportunity.

If this is a Freestyle or Pairs program, or a Dance test, you should skate to your starting position and wait for your music to start. If it is a Moves test or Pre-Preliminary or Adult PreBronze Freestyle test you should go to the judges for instructions on how they want to conduct the test.

When you have finished your test, you should stay on the ice until the judges "dismiss you". You should approach the judges, but not "too close" (sometimes they will need to discuss aspects of your test privately). The judges might ask you to "reskate" an element or two from the test. If this is done, it is because that element was "not quite right", and the judges want to give you another chance to try it. Usually, they will tell you what it was about the element that they would like to see improved. If you are asked to reskate an element, you will be given the opportunity to "warm it up" before you do it for real, if you choose to do so. If you do want to warm it up, you need to tell the judges before you do it that you are doing a warmup.

After you are dismissed, you will need to wait for your results. Usually, the judges will complete a group of skaters before handing in their paperwork. Eventually though, you will get copies of your "Test Papers". These will have the judge's comments on your performance, and at the bottom will have an indication of your "Pass" or "Retry" status. With a 3-judge panel, you must receive a passing mark from at least 2 judges in order to pass the test. Usually, you are allowed to keep your test papers, and you and your coach should use them as a tool for developing your instructional plans.

If you should fail to pass a test, you are required to wait a minimum of 28 days before retrying the test (see section TR 19.02 in the Rulebook).

### Clothing for Tests

A Test is a pretty formal occasion, but is not a competition. There is no audience to impress. You don't need to wear your fanciest dress or clothing. You should dress neatly though (no sweats!). A nice practice dress is more than adequate for any test. If you need it, a sweater or light gloves are fine.

### Finally, note the following about judges

First and foremost - judges are not terrible horrible people, and they don't bite! Judges are often skaters themselves, or past skaters, or parents of skaters. They have your best interests at heart, and really want you to pass (they will not however pass a test for which the skater is not adequately prepared). Don't be afraid of them, and don't let them make you feel nervous. Just skate your best and show them what you can do.

Second - Sometimes at your test you will see more than the normal 3 judges. If this is the case, one or more of them may be a "Trial Judge". This is sort of like an "apprentice" judge. This person is trying real hard to learn how to be a judge -- it takes a long time and a lot of tests to do so. The Trial Judge's marks do not "count" on your tests -- they only serve to establish a performance record for the Trial Judge himself. If there is a trial judge on your test, you may notice that the real judges sometimes take some time to explain fine points of your test to the Trial Judge. Be patient -- this person might someday be a real judge at one of your tests or competitions, and you'd really like them to know what they're doing!

