



JUDGES HANDBOOK SYNCHRONIZED SKATING SYNCHRO9

2026-2027

30 September 2026

General

This handbook is designed to support Judges and Referees officiating at Synchro9 competitions. It provides answers to unclear situations and should be used as a support tool in addition to the judging criteria.

The guidelines here are intended as supportive interpretation tools for the Synchro9 regulations and general regulations of the Synchronized Skating Sports Rules 2026.

If a situation is unclear and not resolved through this handbook or any other published ISU documents, the decision shall be made in favour of the Team.

Definitions

Fm= free skating move

FTM= Full Team Movement

DF= Difficulty Feature

WBP=Well-Balanced Program Content

Errors, Falls, Deductions and Interruptions		
Falls - Referee	- Ensure any fall meets the definition in the Sports Rules. - Use video replay to check the fall if unsure. - For multiple falls of the same skater, ensure that the skater has fully regained their balance before counting a further fall.	
Falls - Judges	Falls are serious errors and should be captured in the final marks depending on the impact of the error.	
	<u>Technique judges</u> - If the fall occurs in a FTM, it could be reflected in the FTM, the Synchronization or the Skating Vocabulary mark, depending on the severity of the error. The same logic should be applied to fall(s) occurring during a Shape, DF or Pattern. - If the fall occurs outside of a FTM/Shape/DF/Pattern, it may be reflected in all criteria(s) it impacts, such as Synchronization.	<u>Artistry judges</u> - Ensure that the serious error is reflected in the criteria most impacted, regardless of the location of the fall.
Interruptions - Referee	- All Interruptions by one or more skaters of more than 10 seconds will receive a deduction. - Every Skater must be timed separately, and the deductions are cumulative. - Video replay must be used to help measure the timing of interruptions. - It is recommended to use the +10 function of the Referee screen for timing of the interruption.	
Interruptions - Judges	Interruptions of any length are considered errors and should be considered in the final marks.	
	<u>Technique judges</u> - Depending on when and how long the Interruption occurs, one or up to all six criteria can be impacted.	<u>Artistry judges</u> - Depending on when and how long the interruption occurs, one or both marks can be impacted.
Separation	- All skaters must stay close together and must not separate unnecessarily. The goal is to maintain one compact and clear arrangement at all times. - A variety of spacing is encouraged provided that the intention of brief, intentional separations in the choreography is to highlight the artistry and creativity.	

	- Large distances or separations that occur for a long time and/or are not intentional in choreographic design are considered serious errors as they create a break in the program. For example, preparation for certain types of intersections could require some brief separation to form the intersection shape. - Long separation should be considered a serious error (see Score chart for details regarding maximum scores) and considered accordingly in the final marks for both Technique and Artistry.
Music Length	- All programs have maximum program durations but no minimum durations. - A Program time violation of –1.0 points will be made for every 5 seconds in excess.
Duration of Skating	- The time must be reckoned from the moment that a Skater begins to move or to skate until arriving at a complete stop at the end of the program. - If the Team fails to finish the program within the allowed range of time, there will be a deduction for up to every 5 seconds lacking or in excess. - Any FTMs started after the required time (plus 10 seconds allowed) will not be identified will be considered not attempted.

Minimum requirements				
Minimum scores	Technique judges are required to identify the minimum requirement for each Shape, FTM, DF and Pattern as listed in the WBP and apply the minimum scores if a requirement is clearly not met/missing.			
	Shape - Minimum scores of 39/29/19 used only if one or more of the required four shapes is clearly missing. - Poorly executed shapes are still considered executed and will be reflected in the quality of the Shapes.	FTM - Minimum score of 19 used only if there is a clear error in the minimum requirements of the FTMs listed in the WBP.	DF - Minimum scores of 39/29/19 used only if one or more of the required DF is clearly missing. - Poorly executed DFs are still considered executed and will be reflected in the quality of the DFs. - Junior Semi-Final program: Since only 3 DFs are required in the WBP, the DF scores for this program in the Junior category may exceed 39 even if only 3 DFs are included.	Pattern - Minimum scores of 39/29/19 used only if one or more of the required Pattern(s) is clearly missing. - Poorly executed Pattern(s) are still considered executed and will be reflected in the quality of the Pattern(s).
Minimum Requirements	- Meeting the minimum requirements means whether the requirements of the WBP were recognizably attempted by the Team. - If there is a fall, the minimum requirements are met if the judge can recognize that the requirement was included in the choreography but partly or fully missed due to the fall. - For example, if there is a fall immediately before a FTM and all Skaters are executing the FTM except the skater who fell, it is clear the FTM was attempted and meets the minimum requirements. Only evaluate what is performed by the rest of the Team, not the Skater(s) affected by the fall(s).			

	- Only intentional mistakes in choreography should be penalized for missing minimum requirements. Execution errors should be reflected in the quality of the affected Shape/FTM/DF/Pattern.
Repetition Restrictions	- Only the FTMs, DFs, and Patterns listed in the WBP for each Program will be counted towards each Difficulty score criteria. Additional DF's/Patterns are considered in Skating Vocabulary, Synchronization, Originality and Performance. - The required DFs and Patterns may be repeated. - FTMs may not be repeated. If FTMs are repeated, the FTM score will be limited to 19 because it no longer meets the minimum requirements. - Common sense should be used in assessing whether something is repeated. Teams should not be penalized for trying to engage in maximum choreographic freedom and judges are encouraged to only take the penalty of repeating a FTM if it is clearly an intended repetition of FTM. - Examples: - o Intersecting/passing through or by during a transition while executing Skating Movements does not mean that an Intersection/Creative Intersection is repeated. - o Executing two turns and some body movements does not mean that a Choreographic Series is repeated.

Other matters	
Shapes – General	- Four basic shapes (Block, Circle, Line, Wheel) are required as a minimum for every program and can be demonstrated by some or all Skaters, provided that the minimum numbers of Skaters in a line/circle/spoke etc in the Sports Rules are met. - Technique judges should focus on the - o quality of the shape - o spacing - o number and complexity of changes in configuration of the same Shape - o variety/use of all shapes throughout the program.
Difficulty Features - General	- The DFs considered in the Difficulty Feature score must be chosen from the list in the WBP. Possible other Difficulty Features included in the program will only be awarded in the Synchronization, Originality and Performance scores. - The DFs are assessed by the quality of execution, variety and complexity. - Complexity is defined as including multiple layers of skating vocabulary (including but not limited to hand holds, body movements and turns). It can also be defined as a jump without any preparation, an Intersection without any preparation etc.
Patterns – General	- There is no minimum number of Skater(s) required to execute a Pattern but it must be recognizable. - The Pattern/Ice Usage criteria is not only based on the number but rather the quality of the patterns and intentional ice usage (Technique) or the intentional and creative use of the patterns within FTMs and throughout the program choreography (Originality).
Holds – General	- The use of different holds will not be considered different movements during FTMs and should therefore not be penalized but rather awarded in other criteria.

Starting Round	
Street dance	- The required theme is Street Dance. The Referee shall take a deduction for music requirements not being met if the majority of the music does not meet these requirements. - A broad interpretation of Street Dance shall be used and considered acceptable. - Transitions between different songs used in the program and at the beginning/end of the music may be used without penalty, even if they do not meet the requirements. - Referees shall consider the program as a whole and only take the deduction if the majority of the music does not meet the requirements of the required theme.
Full Team Movements	
Creative Dance	- Any movements prior to/after the FTM are considered as transitions and reflected accordingly in the scores. - Maximum creativity is encouraged.
Choreographic Series	- Skaters may use different edges and skating directions provided they are all still executing the same turn/movement (such as a bracket). - Maximum creativity is encouraged.
Free Skating Move	- Timing requirements set in the Sports Rules for fms must be met. - Syncopation is permitted. - Maximum creativity should be encouraged. - Skaters may use different feet, edges, directions and movements, provided they are all executing the same fm position (such as a spiral). - Skaters may use different edges and skating directions provided they are all still executing the same fm position (such as a spiral).
Intersection	- All Skaters must execute the same movement(s) at the axis of the intersection (pi – point of intersection). - Depending on the movement chosen, the actual movement may occur just before, at or after the axis of the intersection. - For example, the entry edge of a jump may start before the axis of the intersection but the jump itself could occur after the axis of the intersection. The movement is still considered at the axis of intersection as the entry edge has started and occurs during the axis. This will meet the minimum requirements and should be applied to all other movements. - The overall execution, timing and placement of the movement will be assessed in various criteria.
Group Lift	- Syncopation is permitted. - The positions of the lifted Skater(s) must be the same. The positions of Supporting Skater(s) may vary due to the potentially different number of Supporting Skaters in each group.

	Technique judges - “Creativity” for the entry and/or lifted position is a broad definition and should be assessed as present or not. - A creative/difficult position is a position which may be considered unique or difficult for the Skater to execute and maintain.	Artistry judges - The quality of creativity will be captured in the Originality score. - Creativity is defined as anything that is innovative, novel, unique, unusual, purposeful, etc. It does not need to be difficult (this is captured in complexity for the technique score).
Required Patterns		
Mirror Image Pattern	- There is no number of Skater(s) required for this Pattern as long as it’s recognizable.	

Semi-Final Round	
BPM requirement 110-120	The required beats per minute (BPM) of the music in the semi-final round is 110-120 BPM. The Referee shall take a deduction for music requirements not being met if the majority of the music does not meet these requirements. • A +/- 10 rule is applied: Music of 100-130 BPM is acceptable and shall not be penalized. • Transitions between different songs used in the program and at the beginning/end of the music may be used without penalty, even if they do not meet the requirements. • Referees shall consider the program as a whole and only take the deduction if the majority of the music does not meet these requirements.
Full Team Movements	
Spin	- All Skaters must execute the exact same spin from start to finish. - Pair spins are not permitted as they do not meet the minimum FTM requirements. Teams may execute solo or group spins.
Step Sequence	- Not all turns/steps must be difficult. The variation and level of difficulty/quality are assessed in skating vocabulary). - A series is defined as at least two turns (on one foot) where the exit edge of the first turn is the entry edge of the second turn. - Any turn(s) and a loop may be included as long as the exit edge of the previous turn is the entry edge of the next turn (for example FO rocker – BO choctaw – FI counter). - The turns/steps must be recognizable. - Maximum creativity is encouraged. - Skaters may use different edges and skating directions provided they are all still executing the same turn/movement (such as a bracket).
Creative Intersection	- “Creativity” for the entry is a broad definition and should be assessed as present or not. - Depending on the movement chosen, the actual movement may occur just before, at or after the axis of the intersection.
Difficulty Features	
	- Junior: A Junior Team may execute only 3 DFs and will not be capped at a score of 39 for their DF score.
Free Skating Moves	- Only one fm is required - Additional fms may be included

Final/Placement Round	
Full Team Movements	
Set of Twizzles	- May have more than 2 Twizzles. - A maximum of 4 foot placements may be used in-between each Twizzle.
Series of Free Skating Moves	- May have more than 2 fms. - Each fm must be held for 3 seconds or if there is a change, 2 seconds before and 2 seconds after the change. - There is no limit or requirement of turns/steps/linking steps between the execution of the two fms but the FTM should be performed closely connected to each other. - A lunge may be used as a two-foot fm. - A two-foot shoot the duck or a sliding movement are not permitted. - Skaters may use different edges and skating directions provided they are all still executing the same fm position (such as a spiral).
Creative Lift	- Pairs, groups or any combination are permitted. - Different movements and/or positions are permitted. - Syncopation is permitted. - If a lift is not maintained off the ice for at least 3 seconds, minimum requirements are not met. - o If 3 seconds are not achieved due to a fall or a collapse, the minimum requirement is considered to be met and the fall/collapse is considered a serious error.
Creative Dance	- Any movements prior to/after the FTM are considered as transitions and considered accordingly in the scores. - Maximum creativity is encouraged. - Mirror image is permitted, including some part of the Team starting at the opposite barrier than the rest of the Team. If opposite barriers are used, it will not be considered a large separation/serious error for this FTM only.
Difficulty Features	
Series of at least 3 turns	- Any turn(s) and a loop may be included as long as the exit edge of the previous turn is the entry edge of the next turn (for example FO rocker – BO choctaw – FI counter). - The turns/steps must be recognizable. - Maximum creativity is encouraged. - Skaters may use different edges and skating directions provided they are all still executing the same turn/movement (such as a bracket).