

# Swing Dance America (SDA) Rules

## General Rules

### Statement of Swing

Swing is an American Rhythm Dance based on a foundation of 6-beat and 8-beat patterns that incorporate a wide variety of rhythms built on 2-beat single, delayed, double, triple, and blank rhythm units. The 6-beat patterns include, but are not limited to, passes, underarm turns, push-breaks, open-to-closed, and closed-to-open position patterns. The 8-beat patterns include, but are not limited to, whips, swing-outs, Lindy circles, and Shag pivots. Although they are not part of the foundation of the dance as stated above, 2-beat and 4-beat extension rhythm breaks may be incorporated to extend a pattern, to phrase the music, and/or to accent breaks.

The objective is to provide a competitive performance venue for the various unique styles of swing that have developed across the nation to include the Carolina Shag, Dallas Push, East Coast Swing, Hand Dancing, Hollywood Swing, Houston Whip, Imperial Swing, Jive, Jitterbug, Lindy Hop, Rock-n-Roll, and West Coast Swing, to name a few.

This statement will be used only to identify the presence of Swing content in a performance. It is not intended to be a full definition of Swing, or to be used to evaluate the quality of the performance. Each Judge will evaluate the presence of Swing content, which will be one of the criteria that determine a final score.

### General Rules and Information

1. Contestants must purchase a full “Weekend Pass” to compete in any division and pay the appropriate contest fees.
2. Contestants must sign a waiver and are responsible for reading these rules.
3. Contestants are responsible for checking the contest postings to assure their name is spelled correctly and they are placed in the correct contest/division.
4. “Hustle” includes Three Count, New York, Latin, and Four Count.
5. All divisions will have a **leader** (male or female) and a **follower** (female or male).
6. Contestants must wear the bib number that will be assigned to them at the time of sign in, or by the contest registration desk. There will be a \$10 replacement charge. **Exception:** Followers do not need to wear their bib number during Strictly Swing or Strictly Hustle contests. Couples in routine divisions do not need to wear their bib number.
7. Contestants may compete in all dance divisions they qualify for including Jack & Jill, Strictly Swing, Pro-Am Swing, Pro-Am Hustle, Rising Star, Classic, Showcase and Master Routines. (Dancers must be age 50+ by the end of the event to dance in the Masters Division).
8. If you compete in a Routine Division, you may compete in a different Routine Division or Strictly Swing with a **different** partner. You may compete with the same Hustle partner in a Strictly Hustle, and a Hustle Routine Division.  
**Exception: You may compete with the same partner in two different style Routine Divisions, only if there are Two Routines and Two DIFFERENT dances. For example a West**

***Coast Swing Routine and a Hustle Routine with the same partner.***

9. **Eligibility:** Competitors should choose levels appropriate to their skill and dance styles. We reserve the right to move competitors to more appropriate levels or to reject entries inappropriate for any of our divisions.
10. For specific details on “Hustle” competitions please click on the Hustle Dance Tour button above.
11. **Clothing:**
  - a. Look Nice; Look Presentable. JEANS ARE ALLOWED.
12. **Behavior:** Competitors should conduct themselves maturely and display sportsmanship. Contestants displaying poor behavior may be disqualified from competitor with no refund, or ejected from the event.
13. **Contest Attendance.** If you are not in the ballroom when your name and number are called for your contest division, and have not arrived by the end of all contestants being announced, you will not be allowed to dance in that contests. Be aware of scheduled contest times and be prepared to dance with your bib

### **Judges**

There will be a minimum of (5) judges for all competitions. In addition, SDA will have a Chief Judge and alternate judges available. A referee judge will be used for all routine divisions. All judges scores are final.

### **Judging Criteria**

The Relative Placement System will be used to judge all competitions. All Competitors will be judged using the following criteria:

**Timing** – “How Your Body Connects to the Music”. Swing is a dance beginning on the downbeat. Timing extends to more finely distinctions than a single beat. It includes fractionally ahead or behind the beat, as well as matching the syncopated “swing” of the music.

**Technique** – “How Well You Do What You Do.” How well the Competitors execute the movements comprising their dance constitutes technique. We are looking for good footwork, balance, control, frame, and how well turns & spins are executed, and control of arms and hands.

**Teamwork** – How Well You Work Together.” Swing is a connected, partner dance. The demonstration of this connection and the appearance of lead/follow or action/reaction between the partners is an expected part of any competition. It is the ability to work together as a team. One partner ignoring or out-dancing the other, or jeopardizing the safety of the other (or other Competitors), indicates poor teamwork.

**Content/Choreography** – “What You Do.” The selection and order of movements and transitions executed during a dance comprises choreography. Good choreography demonstrates an intimate connection with the music and its phrasing, as well as variety and contrast of movements. **Choreography must be tasteful and respectful to the audience.**

**Showmanship/Presentation** – “How Well You Sell What You Do.” To create an atmosphere of excitement by inviting and generating interest in a performance is the desired effect of good presentation. While providing a good show is one aspect of presentation, a good show is not a substitute for good dancing.

## **Swing Content**

In all divisions, the amount of Swing content that is required or allowed will be evaluated by each judge. A judge will mark his score sheet as follows.

1. **Swing Warning** - If a judge feels there may not be enough Swing content in a routine, they will mark their sheet with an SW and their score will not reflect a lower score.
2. **Swing Violation** – If a judge feels there isn't enough Swing content in a routine, they will mark their sheet with an SV and their score will reflect a lower score.

Review your division for requirements or restrictions.

## **Contest Categories and Qualifications**

**WSDC Jack & Jill Contests** (WSDC Rules Apply. For more information go to [www.worldsdc.com](http://www.worldsdc.com)).

**Competitors are allowed to compete as both Leaders and Followers in skill level Jack & Jills at Swing Dance America.**

Here are details on how it works:

- Leader and Follower points will be tracked separately in Points Registry.
- Competitors qualify for their dance level based on either their Leader or Follower points, whichever is higher.
- Competitors are allowed to compete in their non-dominant role one level down, *as long as they don't qualify in both for the **same** division*. No petitions will be approved for dancing more than one level down.

- Competitors will not be permitted to dance both roles in the same division.

**Newcomer** (skill level). A dancer who has not yet earned WSDC points. Should have practical knowledge of the basic patterns.

**Novice** (skill level). A dancer who has earned less than 15 Novice WSDC points.

**Intermediate** (skill level). A dancer who has earned 15 or more Novice WSDC points and less than 30 Intermediate points.

**Advance** (skill level). A dancer who has earned 30 or more Intermediate WSDC points.

**All Star** (skill level). A dancer who has 45 Advance WSDC points in the last 3 years.

**Juniors** (age level). Competitor must be 10-17 years of age and have a parent or guardian's signed consent.

**Masters** (age level). Competitor must be at least 50 years of age by end of event.

*Chief Judge will determine format for all Jack & Jill Divisions based on number of competitors.*

### **Strictly Swing & Strictly Hustle (Just Dance) Contests**

***Competitors may dance in One Skill Level and one Age Level with a different partner.***

1. ProAm Strictly Swing or ProAm Strictly Hustle means the Professional (Leader or Follower) dances a non-choreographed dance with an Amateur (Leader or Follower).
2. The Amateur must dance at the same level in ProAm Strictly or Pro AM Strictly Hustle that the Amateur dances in Jack & Jills of that particular dance. Example: If the Amateur

- competes in the Advanced level of Swing in a Jack & Jill, that Amateur must also compete in the Advanced ProAm Strictly Swing contest. If the Amateur competes in the Advanced Hustle Jack & Jill Division, that Amateur must also compete in the ProAm Advanced Strictly Hustle.
3. Competitors must demonstrate a minimum of 90% swing content in Strictly Swing Divisions and 90% Hustle in Strictly Hustle Divisions.
  4. No choreographed routines.
  5. No lifts or aerials allowed in all divisions. Partner supported moves are allowed in Advance and Champions divisions only.
  6. Costumes are not allowed, but matching clothing are encouraged.

**Novice** (skill level). For couples who both compete at the Novice WSDC level.

**Intermediate** (skill level). For couples who both compete at the Intermediate WSDC level.

**Advance** (skill level). For couples who both compete at the Advance WSDC level.

**Masters** (age level). For couples who are both age 50+ by end of the event.

**Champion** (skill level). For couples who have a least one partner who regularly competes in Invitation/Champion WCS divisions or the Master division of USWDC. Must be at least 18 years of age.

*Chief Judge will determine format for all Strictly Divisions based on number of competitors.*

## **Routines**

## **Music:**

***PLEASE BRING AN ELECTRONIC COPY OF YOUR MUSIC (mp3 format) READY AND AVAILABLE TO DELIVER TO THE APPROPRIATE CONTEST DJ PRIOR TO FLOOR TRIALS.***

***BRING AT LEAST TWO (2) CD'S WITH YOUR MUSIC TO THE EVENT – JUST IN CASE ONE HAS A SKIP, OR ONE GET BROKEN, ETC.***

**Rising Star Division: - Rising Star Tour**

**Dancer Eligibility**

To compete in the Rising Star Tour (RST), each dancer must:

- Never have placed or made a qualifying final of a NASDE Classic or Showcase division (no NASDE points)
- Never have won the RST top point award in previous years
- Never have placed top three (3) in the US Open Rising Star division
  - individuals may petition the RST committee no less than seven (7) days prior to the event at which they wish to compete with a different (eligible) partner by emailing [petition@risingstartour.com](mailto:petition@risingstartour.com).

To graduate the RST:

- Win the RST top point award
- (or) Place top three (3) at the previous years' US Open

**Division Rules**

General:

- At the discretion of the event director(s), contestants may be as young as fifteen (15) years by the end of the event to



participate. If a YASDA or Juniors division is offered during the event weekend, the minor may not compete in both contests with the same partner.

- A couple may consist of opposite- or same-sex dance partners
- The maximum number of entries in each division is at the Event's discretion. Minimum number of entries = three (3). If there are less than three (3) couples, the event shall offer the competitors the opportunity to perform an exhibition, with judges' feedback.
- Expected swing content of any style is 70%. It is at the judges' discretion to determine that the swing content has been met.
- An individual is not permitted to dance twice within the same division; other than the "Pro" in ProAm Divisions.

### Specific

- Performance time is a minimum of two (2) minutes and maximum of three (3) minutes.
- Competitors select their own music.
- Costumes are required.
- Time and judging starts at first movement of performance with or without music.
- Separate entrances are permitted, but must come together within thirty-two (32) beats of the music intro.
- Break-a-ways and side-by-side patterns are permitted, not longer than eight (8) beats.

- Lifts are optional but not required.
- Maximum five (5) partner weight support moves with at least one foot on the ground.

### **Restart Guidelines:**

Couples may request a restart in the following cases:

- The DJ plays the wrong music for your routine.
- The sound system fails.
- Shoe breaks, costume malfunction, or loss of a vital piece of clothing.
- Lights go out in the ballroom during the performance.

Contestants may NOT request a restart in the following cases:

- Dissatisfied with their dance order.
- Dissatisfied with their performance.
- Dissatisfied with their partner.
- Dissatisfied with their music.
- Failure to remember part of the routine.
- If a contestant is injured during their performance. This is for safety concerns.

If a couple completes their routine, but believes they should be allowed to restart due to special circumstances, they **MUST** make their request to the CJ prior to leaving the competition floor.

- If the CJ approves the request, the couple may elect to perform their routine again with the previous performance scores voided.
- If the CJ denies the request, the performance that was completed will count towards scoring the contest.

If a couple has not completed their routine, but believes they should be allowed to restart due to special circumstances, they **MUST** make their request to the CJ prior to leaving the competition floor.

- If the CJ approves the request, the couple may restart their routine with the previous performance scores voided.
- If the CJ denies the request, the couple will be scratched from the contest.

The Chief Judge (CJ) may call a restart without the request of the couple if the CJ believes it is fair and in the best interest of the contestants and their fellow competitors. In this case, the couple will be allowed to restart after the next couple in dance order or at the discretion of the CJ.

- The couple may decline the option to restart if they are satisfied with their completed routine.
- If they did not complete their routine, and opt out of the restart, the couple will be scratched from the contest.

## **Judging**

The purpose of Rising Star is to educate and support newer routine competitors. Rising Star routines should be designed to "push" the dancers to grow, rather than "playing it safe".

However, routines should not be so far beyond the dancers' skill levels that they are struggling to authentically "own" the dance.

Beside the rules, judges' scores should take into consideration:

- The amateur status of the competitors. The wide variety of regional expressions of Swing dance.
- The appropriateness of the song and choreography choices for the skill level of the dancers.
- The difficulty level and complexity of the dance skills.

### **Judging & Judging Staff Guidelines**

- All scores count. No scores can be thrown out.
- Judges are encouraged to scribe competitors feedback in addition to scores.
- Chief Judge will make judges sheets transparent and available after awards upon request.
- Judges' feedback comments may be shown to competitors for educational purposes. Please consider their appropriateness, helpfulness, and clarity.
- Minimum of seven (5) Judges.
  - o No more than three (3) of the five or seven Judges should be Tour Event Directors.
  - o No more than three (3) of the seven Judges should be from the same Region (micro-region), Club or Studio.

- Events are discouraged from assigning Significant Others to serve on the same Judging panel, with the exception that one of the partners is a Chief Judge and one is a Referee Judge.
- Mock Judges should not be on the floor with official Judges, so that there is no confusion about who is judging.
- No current RST competitors may serve as Judges.

### **Placement Reporting**

Placements should be reported by the event or whoever handles the event's scoring to [scores@risingstartour.com](mailto:scores@risingstartour.com) no later than seven (7) days after the end of the event.

If contestants under the age of eighteen (18), but at least fifteen (15) years by the end of the event, danced in the contest, please indicate which couples included these contestants with "M" for minor.

### **Points Awarded**

- Single point increments, starting with one (1) point for last place. This ensures every couple's result is registered, and points increase with the size of the contest.

Example, in a contest with nine (9) couples:

9th/1, 8th/2, 7th/3, 6th/4, 5th/5, 4th/6, 3rd/7, 2nd/8, 1st/9

- No points (performance only) when less than three (3) couples

- Each dancer must be eighteen (18) years or older by the end of the qualifying event to earn points towards graduation during a tour year.

### **Event Prize Standards**

- Minimum prize package should include trophy, event pass, and cash. Additional prizes can be offered in the form of products & services.
- No more than \$1,000 cash prize pot, and no less than \$100 per couple registered. Award at least up to 5th place if there are more than ten (10) couples in the contest.
- Award at least up to 3rd place if there are three-ten (3-10) couples in the contest.
- May offer coaching services in lieu of cash prize.
- Trophies to be awarded in alignment with the NASDE divisions.

### **End-of-Tour Prizes**

The RST will conclude at the US Open Swing Dance Championships in November over Thanksgiving weekend. Points will be calculated from the 1<sup>st</sup> tour event up to, and including, the US Open. Winners will be announced and awarded during the awards ceremony at the US Open.

### **1st place**

- Trophy
- Passes to all events on the current tour for the following year

- Winners' prize package, which may include: sponsors' swag, donated lessons and services, cash

## **Other**

- 2nd and 3rd place prize packages will be announced as we accumulate sponsorship
- Scholarships to be announced

## **Contact Info**

<http://risingstartour.com>

<http://www.facebook.com/risingstartour>

Email: [info@risingstartour.com](mailto:info@risingstartour.com)

**Contact for event registration and sponsorship:  
info@risingstartour.com**

This single division includes various styles of Swing including West Coast, East Coast, Lindy Hop, and Shag, Hand Dance.

## **Classic Division**

Swing dancing that allows choreography with an "on the ground" approach to the dance. Drops, leans, circular movements and other partner weight support moves are allowed as long as both partners keep, at least, one foot on the floor.

## **General**

1. Contestants must be 18 years or older by the end of the event.

2. Competitors will be one Leader and one Follower.
3. Guidelines for expected swing content are 80% in Classic. It is at the judges' discretion to determine that the swing content requirement has been met.
4. An individual is not permitted to dance twice within the same division.

### **Specific**

1. Performance time is a minimum of 2 minutes and maximum of 3 minutes. The clock begins when the performance starts as determined by the chief judge.
2. Competitors select their own music.
3. Costumes are allowed and encouraged.
4. Time and judging starts at first movement of performance with or without music.
5. Separate entrances are permitted but the couple must physically join together within 32 beats of music.
6. Couples must maintain physical contact except for spins, turns, short break-a-ways, and recoveries.
7. Break-away in Classic Division to be no more than 8 beats.
8. Dancers must maintain their own physical contact with the floor during partner weight support moves.
9. At most five partner weight support moves are permitted.

### **Showcase Division**

Swing dancing that allows choreography with flair toward lifts and other partner weight support moves.



## **General**

1. Contestants must be 18 years or older by the end of the event to participate.
2. Competitors will be one Leader and one Follower.
3. Guidelines for expected swing content are 60% in Showcase. It is at the judges' discretion to determine that the swing content requirement has been met.
4. An individual is not permitted to dance twice within the same division.

## **Specific**

1. Performance time is a minimum of 2 minutes and maximum of 3 minutes. The clock begins when the performance starts as determined by the Chief Judge.
2. Competitors select their own music.
3. Costumes are allowed and encouraged.
4. Time and judging starts at first movement of performance with or without music.
5. Separate entrances are permitted.
6. Break-a-ways and side-by-side patterns are permitted.
7. At least three partner weight support moves are required with the partner at knee level or above.
8. At least one partner weight support move is required with the partner above the waist.
9. There are no lift maximums.

## **Pro/Am Routine Spotlight Division**

This division is offered for all styles of Swing including West Coast, East Coast, Lindy Hop, Hand, Shag and Hustle.

1. Students enter with their instructor and perform a choreographed routine to music they choose.
2. Routines are spotlighted.
3. Both the instructor and the student performance are judged.

4. Dance order will be chosen at random and posted prior to the division start time.
5. Music provided by the competitors must be a single track on a clearly labeled CD at least 2 minutes and no longer than 3 minutes.
6. Costumes are encouraged.
7. Lifts and drops are allowed but not required.
8. Time starts with first performance movement.
9. Routines must include at least 75% recognizable swing, or hustle.

### **Masters Division**

1. Both partners must be at least 50 years young by the end of the event.
2. Routines must be at least 60% recognizable swing.
3. Lifts and drops are not allowed.
4. This is a spotlight division.
5. Dance order chosen at random and will be posted prior to division start time.
6. Music provided by competitors. Must be a single track on a clearly labeled CD at least 2 minutes and no longer than 3 minutes.
7. Time starts with first performance movement.
8. Costumes are recommended.

### **Team Division**

1. Each team must have a minimum of two (2) couples.
2. There is a limit of 10 team entries.
3. Each team must dance a minimum of 2 ½ minutes and no longer than 4 minutes.
4. Time begins at start of first performance movement.
5. Costumes are required.

## **Hustle Routine Division**

This division includes all recognizable forms of Hustle including: Three count, Latin, New York and Four Count.

Choreographed Hustle Routine danced in any Hustle style.

1. Routines are spotlighted.
2. Dance order is chosen at random and posted prior to the division start time.
3. Music provided by each couple and must be a single track on a clearly labeled CD at least 3 minutes and no longer than 4 ½ minutes.
4. Costumes are allowed and encourage.
5. Choreographed entrances will be counted towards time limits.
6. Lifts and drops are allowed but not required.

## **Hustle Team Challenge Division**

This is a Team Division that requires Eight (8) members per team.

1. Four (4) male leaders, and Four (4) female followers.
2. Four Leaders: 2 Hustle Professionals (Pros), and 2 Amateurs (Ams).
3. Four Followers: 2 Hustle Professionals (Pros), and 2 Amateurs (Ams)
4. One couple from each team will dance in competition with couples of the same construct from the other teams, in a “lead/follow” or Strictly Hustle (Just Hustle) contest for about 2 minutes per couple. The dance order of the couples from all Teams is as follows:
  - a. Amateur – Amateur
  - b. Pro/Am (Female Pro)
  - c. Pro/Am (Male Pro)
  - d. Pro/Pro

5. Each of the above couples will dance and compete. The judges will rank each couple after each round. The Team with the lowest cumulative score after all pairing above have danced in competition with couples of the same construct from the other team, wins the tournament.

## **Swing Dance America (SDA) - COMPETITION RULES for Tournament-Style All-American**

### **GENERAL:**

1. Open to All Levels (including Champions)
2. Gender Neutral
3. Choose 1 Role – Lead or Follow (Competitors cannot compete in both roles)
4. No Lifts – any couple doing a lift will be disqualified
5. Scoring will be based on solid swing content and technique. Musicality and showmanship will be used as tie-breakers at each judge's discretion

### **PRELIMS:**

1. The number of heats will be dependent on the number of entries
2. Dancers will be paired randomly for the prelim round(s) (and semifinal rounds if needed) and scored as a couple
3. Couples will receive a raw score based on a consistent scale that all judges will abide by; and, all couples are scored
4. Each heat will have a minimum of 3 songs, with each song approximately 2 minutes long
5. The top 16 couples will advance to the Finals
  - Note: In the event a dancer needs to dance in multiple Prelim and/or Semifinal heat(s) and advances to the finals with multiple partners, that dancer will only dance as a member of one couple in Finals. In

this circumstance, the dancer(s) in the next qualifying placement(s) in that role will advance to the Finals.

- Example: Leader “A” competes twice and places in the top 16 couples with two partners (Followers “X” and “Y”). Leader “A” advances, as do both Followers “X” and “Y”. The Leader that placed 17th in Prelims will be advanced to Finals.

FINALS:

1. Each dancer that advances to the Finals is awarded a point value based on their placement with their partner in the Prelims

- The highest ranked couple based on the raw scores is given 1 point (each)

- The second ranked couple are each given 2 points

- This continues through all 16 placements

2. Each Leader and Follower are then randomly drawn into new partnerships for the Finals

3. The raw score for each partner in the new partnerships are then combined

- 1st place leader draws 12th place Follower = 13 points for this couple

- 4th place leader draws 1st place Follower = 5 points for this couple

- 14th place Leader draws 9th place Follower = 23 points for this couple

- This continues to generate a combined score for all 16 couples advancing to the Finals

4. The Tournament Bracket for the Head-to-Head Finals is then built as follows

- The couple with the lowest combined score is Seeded 1st

- The couple with the next lowest combined score is Seeded 2nd

- This continues through all 16 placements

5. A “Two-Tiered Bracket” is then built, with the following match-

ups:

- 1st seeded couple against 16th seeded couple
- 4th seeded couple against 13th seeded couple
- 8th seeded couple against 9th seeded couple
- 5th seeded couple against 12th seeded couple
- 6th seeded couple against 11th seeded couple
- 7th seeded couple against 10th seeded couple
- 3rd seeded couple against 14th seeded couple
- 2nd seeded couple against 15th seeded couple

6. The Tournament Finals then has the seeded couples dance against each other for approximately 1 minute

7. After dancing, the couples turn their backs to the judges and the judges vote which couple advances to the next round

8. The Tournament format consists of multiple rounds for the Finals;

- 16 couples – comprising 8 “Head-to-Head” dance-offs
- 8 couples – comprising 4 “Head-to-Head” dance-offs
- 4 couples – comprising 2 “Head-to-Head” dance-offs
- Placement Rounds:
  - o 3rd Place – the couples who do not win in the previous round compete for 3rd Place
  - o 1st & 2nd Place – the 2 remaining couples dance against each other to determine the winner