



2026 Season Category Rules

GENERAL RULES:

- These rules are applicable for the 2026 Season and the *2026 Showdown of Champions*.
- *Showdown of Champions* Rules and Qualifications procedures are listed in the 2026 Official Rules Booklet.
- *Showdown of Champions* Penalties and Category Rules infractions are listed in the 2026 Official Rules Booklet.
- Music for the Regional Competitions and Showdown may be on CD or any digital format.
- One point will be deducted from Overall Average Score for any rule infraction.

TEAM AGE DIVISIONS – AMATEUR AND CHALLENGE: 6 & UNDER, 7-9, 10-12, 13-15, 16-19, 20-29, 30 AND OVER

CONTEMPORARY CATEGORIES:

ARTISTIC EXPRESSION:

- Minimum of three (3) dancers.
- Dance must carry out a theme, production, or story.
- A majority of the dance must be clogging.
- Emphasis is on showmanship, creativity, choreography, and execution of dance.
- Stage props and Hand Props are allowed.
 - Stage props: Props that are used as background scenery and/or to modify the dance floor, such as backdrops, curtains, stairs, platforms, beds, etc.
 - Hand Props: Props that are small and able to be held/carried by one dancer, and must be used as part of the choreography. Dancers may set down, place, or transfer props during the dance.
- Average age of dance will be determined by the individuals that are involved in the production of the routine after stage props are set and music begins.
- Any type of music is permitted.
- Time limit is five (5) minutes for the performance of the dance.
- A total of (5) minutes for set-up and take-down of stage props is allowed.

EXHIBITION LARGE TEAM

- Minimum of six (6) dancers.
- A majority of the dance must be clogging.
- Other types of dance forms are highly encouraged.
- Dance should include formations, progressions, body movements, and arm movements.
- Lifts and stunts are **NOT** allowed.
- This dance may **NOT** be re-danced in any other category.
- Hand Props are allowed.
 - Hand Props: Props that are small and able to be held/carried by one dancer, and must be used as part of the choreography. Dancers may set down, place, or transfer props during the dance.
 - If a hand prop is used, failure to use the hand prop as part of the choreography will result in a point deduction.
- Any type of music is permitted.
- Time limit is three (3) minutes.

EXHIBITION SMALL TEAM

- Minimum of three (3) dancers; maximum of five (5) dancers.
- A majority of the dance must be clogging.
- Other types of dance forms are highly encouraged.
- Dance should include formations, progressions, body movements, and arm movements.
- Lifts and stunts are **NOT** allowed.
- This dance may **NOT** be re-danced in any other category.
- Hand Props are allowed.
 - Hand Props: Props that are small and able to be held/carried by one dancer, and must be used as part of the choreography. Dancers may set down, place, or transfer props during the dance.
 - If a hand prop is used, failure to use the hand prop as part of the choreography will result in a point deduction.
- Any type of music is permitted.
- Time limit is three (3) minutes.

MOVING LINE

- Minimum of five (5) dancers.
- Dance must be performed in some form of line at all times.
- Dance may bend, rotate, pass through, expand, and contract formations.
- Progressions, pick-ups, and ripples of steps and body movements are allowed.
- No dancer may have body contact with any other dancer at any time.
- Any type of music is permitted.
- Time limit is three (3) minutes.

PRECISION

- Minimum of eight (8) dancers, four (4) couples.
- This is a couple-oriented category. Couple interaction is required.
- Precision footwork is required.
- There are no figure requirements; however, figures are highly encouraged on the Precision category score sheet.
- Any type of music is permitted.
- Time limit is three (3) minutes.

STANDING LINE

- Minimum of five (5) dancers.
- The dance must be choreographed for one but danced by many.
- The dance must start, be performed, and end in the same line.
- Dance may **NOT** bend, rotate, pass through, expand, or contract formations at any time.
- Precision footwork and body movements are required at all times.
- Progressions (dance steps, body and arm movements) are **NOT** allowed.
- No dancer may have contact with any other dancer at any time.
- Dancers should use entire stage showing the ability to move as a unit.
- Any type of music is permitted.
- Time limit is three (3) minutes.

TRADITIONAL CATEGORIES:

TRADITIONAL LARGE STANDING LINE

- Minimum of six (6) dancers.
- The dance must be choreographed for one but danced by many.
- The dance must start, be performed, and end in the same line.
- Dance may **NOT** bend, rotate, pass through, expand, or contract formations at any time.
- Precision footwork and body mechanics are required at all times.
- Progressive dance steps are **NOT** allowed.
- Choreographed arm and head movements are **NOT** allowed. Controlled arms are allowed.
- No dancer may have contact with any other dancer at any time.
- Dancers should use the entire stage showing the ability to move as a unit.
- Footwork must be traditional styled clogging steps; i.e. drag-slide and buck. (No contemporary clogging steps; i.e. double doubles, hop scuffs, rock hops, etc.). It will be at the judge's discretion to determine the authenticity of traditional footwork.
- Country, bluegrass, hoedown, or folk music, with or without vocals, is required (No pop, hip-hop, rock, etc.). It will be at the judge's discretion to determine the authenticity of traditional music.
- Time limit is three (3) minutes.

TRADITIONAL SMALL STANDING LINE

- Minimum of three (3) dancers; maximum of five (5) dancers.
- The dance must be choreographed for one but danced by many.
- The dance must start, be performed, and end in the same line.
- Dance may **NOT** bend, rotate, pass through, expand, or contract formations at any time.
- Precision footwork and body mechanics are required at all times.
- Progressive dance steps are **NOT** allowed.
- Choreographed arm and head movements are **NOT** allowed. Controlled arms are allowed.
- No dancer may have contact with any other dancer at any time.
- Dancers should use the entire stage showing the ability to move as a unit.
- Footwork must be traditional styled clogging steps; i.e. drag-slide and buck. (No contemporary clogging steps; i.e. double doubles, hop scuffs, rock hops, etc.). It will be at the judge's discretion to determine the authenticity of traditional footwork.
- Country, bluegrass, hoedown, or folk music, with or without vocals, is required (No pop, hip-hop, rock, etc.). It will be at the judge's discretion to determine the authenticity of traditional music.
- Time limit is three (3) minutes.

TRADITIONAL MOVING LINE

- Minimum of five (5) dancers.
- Dance must be performed in some form of line at all times.
- Dance may bend, rotate, pass through, expand, and contract formations.
- Progressive dance movements, pick-ups, and ripples are allowed.
- Choreographed arm and head movements are **NOT** allowed. However, controlled arms are allowed.
- No dancer may have body contact with any other dancer at any time.
- Dancers should use entire stage showing the ability to move as a unit.
- Footwork must be traditional styled clogging steps; i.e. drag-slide and buck (No contemporary clogging steps; i.e. double doubles, hop scuffs, rock hops, etc.). It will be at the judge's discretion to determine the authenticity of traditional footwork.
- Country, bluegrass, hoedown, or folk music, with or without vocals, is required (No pop, hip-hop, rock, etc.). It will be at the judge's discretion to determine the authenticity of traditional music.
- Time limit is three (3) minutes.

HOEDOWN

- Minimum of eight (8) dancers, four (4) couples.
- This is a couple oriented category.
- Dancers should never intentionally be in step with one another.
- Footwork must be traditional styled clogging steps; i.e. drag-slide and buck (No contemporary clogging steps; i.e. double doubles, hop scuffs, rock hops, etc.). It will be at the judge's discretion to determine the authenticity of traditional footwork.
- There are no figure requirements; however, figures are highly encouraged on the Hoedown category score sheet.
- Traditional instrumental music is required (No pop, hip-hop, rock, etc.). It will be at the judge's discretion to determine the authenticity of traditional music.
- Time limit is four (4) minutes.

SOUTHERN APPALACHIAN TRADITIONAL TEAM

- Dancers: 6 or 8 Couples - Any combination of males and/or females.
- Minimum of 2 big circle figures.
- Minimum of 4 different circle-4 figures (small) with progression between each.
- Corner-partner swing should be added after each circle-4 figure if the figure does not have swings included.
- NO dance lifts, pull throughs, splits, tosses, leaps, cartwheels or flips.
 - A Basket of Flowers is allowed.
 - Basket of Flowers, a traditional figure, is where an individual is lifted between two people while moving in a circle formation.
- Steps: Team should strive for Rhythmic Southern Appalachian Sound.
 - Dancers must not start simultaneously.
 - Footwork must be traditional styled clogging steps; i.e. drag-slide and buck (No contemporary clogging steps; i.e. double doubles, hop scuffs, rock hops, etc.). It will be at the judge's discretion to determine the authenticity of traditional footwork.
 - No dancer intentionally in step with any other dancer.
- Speed of the steps and formations should complement the grace and beauty of the dance.
- Movement: Progression must be on the inside of the set in a counter-clockwise direction. Couples may not progress across the center of the set. Center of the set may be used in big circle figures.
- Music: Traditional style music without vocals
- Caller: Figures MUST be called and heard from within the set.
- Time Limit: 8 minutes

SMOOTH MOUNTAIN SQUARE DANCE TEAM

- Dancers: 6 or 8 Couples Any combination of male and/or female.
- Minimum of 2 big circle figures.
- Minimum of 4 different circle-4 figures (small) with progression between each.
- Corner-partner swing should be added after each circle-4 figure if the figure does not have swings included.
- NO dance lifts, pull throughs, splits, tosses, leaps, cartwheels or flips.
 - A Basket of Flowers is allowed.
 - Basket of Flowers: traditional figure where an individual is lifted between two people while moving in a circle formation.
- Steps: Gliding step on ball of the foot, (weight on ball of foot, with no heavy heel sound) while performing traditional mountain figures. This is a precision dance. All dancers in step with each other at all times.
- Movement: Counter-clockwise movement in dance progression. Couples may not progress across the center of the set. Center of the set may be used in big circle figures.
- Music: Traditional style music without vocals
- Caller: Figures MUST be called and heard from within the set.
- Time Limit: 8 minutes

COUNTRY HOEDOWN TEAM

- Dancers: 4 Couples. Any combination of males and/or females.
- Minimum of 2 big circle figures.
- Minimum of 4 different circle-4 figures (small) with progression between each.
- Corner-partner swing should be added after each circle-4 figure if the figure does not have swings included.
- NO dance lifts, pull throughs, splits, tosses, leaps, cartwheels or flips.
 - A Basket of Flowers is allowed.
 - Basket of Flowers: traditional figure where an individual is lifted between two people while moving in a circle formation.
- Steps: Team should strive for Rhythmic Southern Sound.
 - Dancers must not start simultaneously.
 - Footwork must be traditional styled clogging steps; i.e. drag-slide and buck (No contemporary clogging steps; i.e. double doubles, hop scuffs, rock hops, etc.). It will be at the judge's discretion to determine the authenticity of traditional footwork.
 - No dancer intentionally in step with any other dancer.
- Speed of formations and steps should complement the grace and beauty of the dance.
- Movement: Quadrille - (4 Couple square) formation with 1 or 2 active couples traveling. All couples must become the active couple sometime during the dance. Inactive couples MUST HOLD HOME position.
- Progression must be on the inside of the set in a counter-clockwise direction. Couples must square set prior to doing first figure (Identify "HOME" position prior to doing any figure or formation by swinging your partner).
- Music: Traditional style music without vocals.
- Caller: Figures MUST be called and heard from within the set.
- Time Limit: 8 minutes

RUNNING SET HOEDOWN TEAM

- Dancers: 4-Couples. Any combination of males and/or females.
- Figures: English quadrille formation with 1 active couple (traveling).
- 4 different visiting couple figures, each led by 1 active couple.
- 1 opening figure, 1 closing figure, with all couples active (i.e., weave the basket).
- 3 connecting figures with all couples active (also called break figures). A break figure occurs at the end of the progression by the active couple when they return to their home position in the circle.
- NO dance lifts, pull throughs, splits, tosses, leaps, cartwheels or flips.
 - A Basket of Flowers is allowed.
 - Basket of Flowers: traditional figure where an individual is lifted between two people while moving in a circle formation.
- Steps: No dancer should be intentionally in step with any other dancer.
 - Traditional Footwork is required, ie drag slide clogging and buck steps.
- Movement: Progression must be inside of the set in a counter-clockwise direction.
- Music: Traditional style music without vocals
- Caller: Figures MUST be called and heard from within the set.
- Time Limit: 8 minutes

4, 6 or 8 COUPLE PRECISION TEAM

- Dancers: 4, 6 or 8 Couples- Any combination of males and/or females.
- Minimum of 2 different big circle figures.
- A minimum of 4 different circles-4 figures (small) with progression between each. Counter clockwise movement in progression.
- NO dance lifts, pull throughs, splits, tosses, leaps, cartwheels or flips.
 - A Basket of Flowers is allowed.
 - Basket of Flowers: traditional figure where an individual is lifted between two people while moving in a circle formation.
- Steps: Dancers should be in step with each other at all times while performing traditional mountain figures. A progressive step change is allowed
 - Traditional Footwork is required, ie drag slide clogging and buck steps
- Movement: Couples CANNOT progress across the center of the set. However, the center of the set may be used in a big circle figure. No Couple may progress outside the set.
- Music: Traditional style of music without vocals. Music break allowed.
- Caller: Figures may be called from the set, but are not required. If they are called, they must be from within the set.
- Time Limit: 8 minutes

RUNNING SET PRECISION TEAM

- Dancers: 4-Couples. Any combination of males and/or females.
- Figures: English quadrille formation with 1 active couple (traveling).
- 4 different visiting couple figures, each led by 1 active couple.
- 1 opening figure, 1 closing figure, with all couples active (i.e., weave the basket).
- 3 connecting figures with all couples active (also called break figures). A break figure occurs at the end of the progression by the active couple when they return to their home position in the circle.
- NO dance lifts, pull throughs, splits, tosses, leaps, cartwheels or flips. A Basket of Flowers is allowed.
- Steps: Running Step. Must start together and remain in step at all times.
- Movement: Progression must be inside of the set in a counter-clockwise direction.
- Music: Traditional style music without vocals
- Caller: Figures MUST be called and heard from within the set.
- Time Limit: 8 minutes

TRADITIONAL PRECISION

- Minimum of eight (8) dancers, four (4) couples.
- This is a couple-oriented category.
- Precision footwork and body mechanics are required at all times.
- Footwork must be traditional styled clogging steps; i.e. drag-slide and buck (No contemporary clogging steps; i.e. double doubles, hop scuffs, rock hops, etc.). It will be at the judge's discretion to determine the authenticity of traditional footwork.
- There are no figure requirements; however, figures are highly encouraged on the Traditional Precision category score sheet.
- Traditional instrumental music is required. It will be at the judge's discretion to determine the authenticity of traditional music.
- Time limit is four (3) minutes.

**DUO/DUET/SHOW DUO/DUET AGE DIVISIONS:
8 AND UNDER, 9-11, 12-14, 15-18, 19-25, 26 & OVER**

CONTEMPORARY DUO/DUET

- Two (2) dancers (any combination of male/female).
- Footwork and dance must be precision oriented.
- Dancers should be synchronized unless doing a step progression.
- No stunts, lifts, or acrobatics allowed.
- Dancers should dance as a couple. Couple interaction is encouraged.
- Progressive dance steps and arm movements are allowed.
- Dancers should use the entire stage showing the ability to move as a unit.
- Any type of music is allowed.
- Time limit is one and one half (1 1/2) minutes.

TRADITIONAL DUO/DUET

- Two (2) dancers (any combination of male/female).
- Footwork must be traditional styled clogging steps; i.e. drag-slide and buck (No contemporary clogging steps; i.e. double doubles, hop scuffs, rock hops, etc.). It will be at the judge's discretion to determine the authenticity of traditional footwork.
- Footwork and dance should be precision oriented.
- Dancers' footwork should be synchronized unless doing a step progression.
- No stunts, lifts, or acrobatics are allowed.
- Dancers should dance as a couple. Couple interaction is encouraged.
- Dancers should use the entire stage showing the ability to move as a unit.
- Country, bluegrass, hoedown or folk music, with or without vocals, is required. It will be at the judge's discretion to determine the authenticity of traditional music.
- Time limit is one and one half (1 1/2) minutes.

SHOW DUO/DUET:

- Two (2) dancers (any combination of male/female).
- A majority of the dance must be clogging. .
- Dancers should use the entire stage showing the ability to move as a unit.
- Dance must carry out a theme, production, or story.
- Costumes and choreography should coordinate with the theme of the dance.
- Stage and Hand Props are allowed but must be incorporated into the choreography and theme of dance.
 - Stage props: Props that are used as background scenery and/or to modify the dance floor, such as backdrops, curtains, stairs, platforms, beds, etc.
 - Hand Props: Props that are small and able to be held/carried by one dancer, and must be used as part of the choreography. Dancers may set down, place, or transfer props during the dance.
- Any type of music is allowed.
- Time limit is two (2) minutes for the performance of the dance, and a total of (5) minutes for set-up and take-down of stage props.

SHORT DUO/DUET:

- Two (2) dancers (any combination of male/female).
- Judging will be based on dancing as a couple.
- Footwork and dance must be precision oriented.
- Dancers should dance as a couple. Couple interaction is strongly encouraged.
- No stunts, lifts, or acrobatics are allowed.
- Each couple will be given at least 48 counts to dance.
- Callbacks may be necessary.
- Event directors will select the music.

TRADITIONAL SHORT DUO/DUET:

- Two (2) dancers (any combination of male/female).
- Judging will be based on dancing as a couple.
- Footwork must be traditional styled clogging steps; i.e. drag-slide and buck (No contemporary clogging steps; i.e. double doubles, hop scuffs, rock hops, etc.). It will be at the judge's discretion to determine the authenticity of traditional footwork.
- Footwork and dance should be precision oriented.
- Dancers should dance as a couple. Couple interaction is strongly encouraged.
- No stunts, lifts, or acrobatics are allowed.
- Each couple will be given at least 48 counts to dance.
- Callbacks may be necessary.
- Event directors will select the music.

AMATEUR SOLO FREESTYLE AGE DIVISIONS:

6 & under, 7-9, 10-12, 13-15, 16 & OVER

CHALLENGE SOLO FREESTYLE AGE DIVISIONS:

6 & under, 7-9, 10-12, 13-15, 16-19, 20-29, 30 & OVER

Amateur Freestyle: Dancers may compete, as amateur, for three (3) calendar years. Amateur dancers may compete in the Challenge division but once a soloist dances in Challenge Freestyle, they are no longer eligible to dance in Amateur Freestyle.

Challenge Freestyle: This solo division is open to any dancer, regardless of past winnings.

- Judging will be based on dancing in a line, rise and shine, and/or moving in a circle.
- Freestyle is defined as the dancer's self-expression using any style or combination of styles in performing their art.
- Dancers may combine drag-slide clogging with buck.
- Males and Females **WILL** compete against each other..
- At the Showdown of Champions, males and females will compete against each other for the overall National Champion.
- Each dancer will be given 32 beats at the beginning to rush the judges and 32 beats to rise and shine.
- Callbacks may be necessary.
- Event directors will select music.

TRADITIONAL SOLO AGE DIVISIONS:

6 & under, 7-9, 10-12, 13-15, 16-19, 20-29, 30 & OVER

Amateur Traditional: Dancers may compete as amateur for three (3) calendar years. Amateur dancers may compete in the Challenge division but once a soloist dances in Challenge Traditional, they are no longer eligible to dance in Amateur Traditional.

Challenge Traditional: This solo division is open to any dancer, regardless of past winnings.

- Judging will be based on dancing in a line and rise and shine.
- Footwork must be traditional styled clogging steps; i.e. drag-slide and buck (No contemporary clogging steps; i.e. double doubles, hop scuffs, rock hops, etc.). It will be at the judge's discretion to determine the authenticity of traditional footwork.
- Males and females **WILL** compete against each other.
- Each dancer will be given at least 32 counts to dance.
- Callbacks may be necessary.
- Event directors will select music.

**CHOREOGRAPHED SOLO AGE DIVISIONS:
7 AND UNDER, 8-9, 10-11, 12-13, 14-15, 16-17, 18-25, 26 & OVER**

Amateur Choreographed: Dancers may compete as amateur for three (3) calendar years. Amateur dancers may compete in the Challenge division but once a soloist dances in Challenge Choreographed, they are no longer eligible to dance in Amateur Choreographed.

Challenge Choreographed: This solo division is open to any dancer, regardless of past winnings.

- Emphasis will be on sound, rhythm, and entertainment value. Choreography of dance will be judged on creativity complexity, execution, and presentation.
- Other dance forms are encouraged.
- Males and Females **WILL** compete against each other.
- Dancer should use the entire stage showing the ability to move while executing footwork.
- Stage and Hand Props are allowed but must be incorporated into the choreography of dance.
 - Stage props: Props that are used as background scenery and/or to modify the dance floor, such as backdrops, curtains, stairs, platforms, beds, etc.
 - Hand Props: Props that are small and able to be held/carried by one dancer, and must be used as part of the choreography. Dancers may set down, place, or transfer props during the dance.
- Any type of music is allowed.
- Time limit is one and one half (1 1/2) minutes.

**A CAPELLA SOLO AGE DIVISIONS:
11 & under, 12-14, 15-18, 19 & OVER**

- Judging will be based on rhythm, sound, variety and clarity of footwork.
- Males and Females **WILL** compete against each other.
- Each dancer will be given 32 counts.
- Any percussive dance style may be used.