

NJHC Competition Rules and Definitions

Welcome competitors! Thank you for reviewing the information below and for participating in the 2026 NJHC event as a competitor.

Rules

- Competitors are responsible for reading, knowing and following all contest guidelines, taking special note of the specifics for the different divisions and levels.
- All competitors must purchase one of the 2 full weekend passes or the Competitor pass in order to compete in any division. In addition, competitors must register and pay entry fees before the deadlines.
- You cannot compete at NJHC as a Professional and an Amateur. You are either one or the other.
- Competitors should use the level definitions included below (or ask a reputable dance professional) to determine their level for competition.
- Competition entry deadlines are by 9PM the night before.
- All contestants and attendees must sign a liability release, acknowledge their compliance to the NJHC guidelines and consent to unrestricted use of their photos, video and names which may appear in the event videos, websites and future promotions.
- Good sportsmanship must be exhibited at all times, competitors will carry themselves in a professional manner, treating other competitors and judges with respect.
- A couple consists of one leader and one follower, no gender restrictions except in the Amateur Challenge Division.
- Competitors must check in and be ready to dance 15 minutes before a division. Failure to enter the dance floor when called may result in disqualification.
- Competitors should stay in the ballroom during the entire session of the divisions in case of last-minute adjustments and announcements.
- Judges will mark down any competitor(s) dancing higher level material in a lower level division. Competitors must read the level descriptions and dance within each level's description. This is for the equity of all competitors.
- Judges will be evaluating competitors on the following skills: timing, technique, connection/lead/follow/partnering, content difficulty, musicality, and overall presentation. In solo routine divisions these will also be evaluated: costumes, show-personship, choreography, and specialty moves/tricks permitted in the division. Please see judging criteria for the new Amateur Challenge Division.
- In solo routine divisions: routines may not exceed 3minutes and 30 seconds including an entrance and an exit.
- In Salsa divisions, competitors may "break" "on 1" or "on 2".
- All music for choreographed routines must be a single track on a MP3 or flash drive and clearly labeled. Turn in your music to the DJ at least 60 minutes prior to your division. If you need your music's tempo altered, started in the middle of the track or an early fade out, please have someone edit your music in advance.
- During non-routine competitions, competitors must wear their bib numbers assigned to them upon registration check in. Bib numbers for amateur partnerships should be worn by the leader. For Jack and Jill divisions, all dancers should wear their bib numbers.

- Costumes are recommended for Pro-Am, and Am-Am Routine divisions. Costumes not required for Jack and Jill divisions. Costumes are ***strongly encouraged*** for the “Hustle for the Hounds” competition fundraiser, but may be simple.
- Specific times are available for competitor floor trials: Saturday at 9:00 AM and Sunday at 9:00 AM.
- The consequence of breaking any of the above rules is either a lower placement or disqualification.
- The head judge will resolve any scoring or judging disputes. Those decisions are final.

Definitions

Amateur – As an amateur, dancing is strictly a recreational activity or a competitive sport. You cannot receive financial gain for teaching or performing in any form of dance, full-time or part-time. However, money may be accepted as “scholarship funds” and must be used to further your dance education.

Age definitions Competitors may register for two different age categories within the same competition if offered in the description. (Ex. Open(all ages) and Legends(51yr+ Hustle) In Pro-Am divisions, age is determined by the amateur. In Am-Am divisions, age is determined by the older dancer in the couple.

Open All ages

Legends 51 years and older

Professional – If you teach any partner dance style, you are considered to be a Professional. Whether you teach partner dance full-time or part-time and work in another profession you must register as a professional in all divisions.

Suggested Level Definitions

Novice

*Entry level - 2 years dance experience.; minimal competition experience. *Good basic dancing.

*Rotation limited to ¼ to 1 and ½ turns for both leader and follower. *Connection must be maintained with one or two hands. *Both feet must be on the floor at all times. *No lifts, aerials, dips or drops are permitted.

Intermediate

*2+ years dance experience. *Rotation limited to ¼ to 2 and ½ turns for both leader and follower. *Connection may be released for 1-2 beats. *Both feet must be on the floor at all times. *No lifts, aerials, dips or drops are permitted.

Advanced

*3-5 years experience. *Rotation unlimited for both leader and follower. *Connection may be released/side by sides permitted. *Both feet must be on the floor at all times. *No lifts, aerials, or drops are permitted but dips are allowed.

Divisions

NEW! Amateur Hustle Challenge

Three separate divisions, Combined prize of \$1000 in cash and awards to the top 3 finalists of each division. Choose your best match from the following 3 divisions:

Seasoned amateur dancers – competing and dancing for over 5+ years.

Same gender - two amateur dancers of the same gender

Fast track - amateur dancers competing for less than 5 years.

*Competitors can only dance in one category - Seasoned amateur or Fast Track. All can compete in the Same Gender. Male/Female for Seasoned and Fast track divisions.

* Evaluation criteria: Timing 25%, Costume/Showmanship 25%, Fun Factor 25%, Execution = 25%

*No more than 5 couples in a heat. Each heat is a minimum of 90 seconds. Judges may request more time and competitors will be informed. Initial heats are semi-finals.

* Highest ranked Semi Finalists will be called back for a final round of each division which will immediately follow the semifinal rounds.

* The music for each heat will be contemporary/recognizable hustle songs chosen by the DJ (112 - 115 bpm).

* No overhead lifts. No accessories/props permitted on the dance floor.

* Professional attire is highly recommended.

Jack and Jill Hustle

*Register as an individual leader or follower. *Randomly paired with a partner. *DJ

provides the music. *Danced in heats. *Competitors choose skill level based on descriptions. *Competitors may just lead(or only follow) in two age divisions that they qualify for by their age and dance in one level and “dance up” in another level = no more than four entries per competitor.*Competitors may lead in one level and follow in a different level and may do two different age divisions that they qualify for by their age within those two levels = no more than four entries per competitor. *Evaluation criteria: timing, technique, connection, social dancing skill, presentation, lead, follow, and content’s difficulty.

Specialty Jack and Jill Hustle Descriptions:

Open to both Pros and Amateurs, single division/level/age.

Switch it Up

A fun Jack and Jill for hustle dancers who can both lead and follow. Dancers will switch leading and following roles repeatedly on cue.

Turn the Beat Around

A Jack and Jill to challenge couples to “shift gears” and dance to a wide variety of tempos.

Surprise

The name says it all! Pairings in this Jack and Jill will be given a special challenge once they are on the floor!

WCS/Salsa/Bachata/ChaCha

*Register with a partner. *DJ provides the music. *Danced in heats. *No routines.

*Competitors choose skill level based on descriptions. * Competitors may only dance in one level. *Competitors may dance in two age division that they qualify for by their age.

*Each entry requires a separate fee. *No lifts, aerials, or drops are permitted.

*Evaluation criteria: timing, technique, connection, social dancing skill, presentation, lead, follow, and content’s difficulty.

Routines: Classic Hustle, Theater Arts Hustle and Showcase(any dance style but Hustle): *Hustle Routines must consist of 50% Hustle. *Competitor supplies music.

*Costumes highly recommended. *Routines must be no longer than 3.5 minutes long including an entrance and an exit.

*Classic Hustle Content Permitted: side-by-sides, dips, leaps and jumps (unassisted by partner), drops (drops must have one foot of both dancers on the floor at all times). *No lifts or aerials allowed.

*Theatre Arts Hustle Content Permitted: lifts, aerials, drops, dips, anything goes, etc.

*Evaluation criteria for All Routines: timing, technique, musicality, choreography, lead, follow, connection/partnership, presentation/show-personship, costumes, and content difficulty.

Pro/Am Hustle, WCS, Salsa, Bachata, and ChaCha

*A Pro (teacher) dances with an Amateur (student). *DJ provides music. *Competitors choose skill level based on descriptions. * Hustle Competitors may dance “up” one level as well. WCS/Salsa/Bachata/ChaCha and Triple Threat may dance in one level only.

*Competitors may dance in two age levels that they qualify for by their age. *Each entry requires a separate fee. *Danced in heats. *Lead and follow only; no routines. *No lifts, aerials or drops allowed. *Dips permitted in Advanced levels only. *Evaluation criteria: timing, technique, connection/partnering/ lead/follow, social dancing skill, presentation, and content difficulty.

Team Showcase

*Non-competitive showcase. *Register as a team. *Any single dance style or combination of styles may be presented. *Open to all ages, combination of genders and levels. *Consist of 3 or more dancers. *Costumes strongly encouraged. *Routines limited to 4.5 minutes including an entrance and an exit. *Music will be provided by team.

Team Challenge Competition

*Register as a team. *Team consists of 2 Pros and 2 Ams. *Contest consists of 4 Hustle dance heats: Am/Am, Pro/Am Leader, Pro/Am Follower, Pro/Pro. *Open to all ages, combination of genders. *DJ provides the music. *Danced in heats. *No routines. *All 4 dance heats are judged as a group. *Evaluation criteria: timing, technique, presentation, connection/partnering/ lead/follow, social dancing skill, and content difficulty.