



PARTICIPANT HANDBOOK

Overview

The National Qualifying Series (NQS) is the first stage of the U.S. Figure Skating Championship track singles, pairs, and ice dance qualifying pipelines. NQS is comprised of nonqualifying competitions between mid-July and early October. Athletes participating in the preliminary – senior levels can have the scores they earn at these designated competitions count toward the overall NQS standings. The final NQS standings will be used to determine which individual athletes/teams will advance to the NQS Finals and eventually the U.S. Figure Skating Championships and the National Development Team Championships.

[2026 – 2027 National Qualifying Series Calendar](#)

Key Dates

- May 6, 2026: Registration for competitions from July 9 – Aug. 8 opens*
- June 10, 2026: Registration for competitions from Aug. 12 – Sep. 6 opens*
- July 1, 2026: NQS registration opens at 12:00 p.m. ET
- July 8, 2026: Registration for competitions from Sep. 8 – Oct. 6 opens*

*See subsequent sections for information about the times each competition is opening for registration.

Eligibility

Events

The series is available for preliminary, pre-juvenile, juvenile, intermediate, novice, junior, and senior level athletes in the disciplines of singles, pairs, and ice dance.

Athletes may register for only one level per discipline.

If an athlete wishes to change their series level, they 1) will only be permitted to move to a higher level and 2) must request the change at least 10 business days prior to the NQS competition where they will be competing at the new level. If a level change is made, all previous standings and advancement opportunities made from the previous scores will be void.

Membership

Athletes must have a current membership prior to completing the Series Registration. Membership at the time of the series registration will determine an athlete's competitive region/section for inclusion in the standings.

For pairs/ice dance teams, the home club of the partner who registers the team will be used for establishing their competitive section.

Athletes/teams will not be permitted to change home club after they have completed their series registration.

As the start of NQS aligns with the new membership season, please verify that your membership for the new season has been fully processed with U.S. Figure Skating in your Members Only profile (www.usfsaonline.org) prior to starting your series registration.

Age Requirements

Athletes must meet the age requirement for their desired level as of July 1, 2026. Age requirements and minimum test levels can be found in Rules [6400](#) (Singles), [7400](#) (Pairs), and [8400](#) (Dance).

Test Requirements & Competitive Floor

Athletes must register at the level of their competitive floor or up to one level higher than their highest test level. The competitive floor is determined by their most recent paid registration for either the National Qualifying Series or the Excel Series. The NQS competitive floor may be one level lower than the level established by the Excel Series registration.

Example: If an athlete registered for the 2025-2026 NQS as a Juvenile, the lowest level they may register for 2026-2027 is Juvenile. The highest level they may register for is one level higher than their current test.

Example: If an athlete registered for the 2025 Excel Series as a Novice, the lowest level they may register for the 2026-2027 NQS is Intermediate. The highest level they may register for is one level higher than their current test.

If an athlete skates up to a level above their highest test on record, per Rule 2421 they must complete the required tests for their competitive level by the conclusion of the series to advance to the Final. All test paperwork must be fully processed with U.S. Figure Skating no later than November 1. Athletes can confirm if a test is on their official record by reviewing their Members Only profile under “Skate Test History”.

Citizenship & Residency Requirements

Athletes must meet the citizen and residency requirements for participation in U.S. Figure Skating qualifying competition as stated in Rules 2230 – 2243.

Registration

Series Registration

The series registration must be completed (including payment) prior to the start date of an athlete’s first NQS competition for their score to count towards their standings. No scores will be retroactively added to the standings if an athlete does not complete the series registration prior to the competition start date.

The series registration fee is non-refundable under any circumstances.

For pairs and ice dance teams, only one partner will need to register the team. The home club of the athlete registering the team will be used to determine their section representation. See the Eligibility – Membership section for additional details. Contact events@usfigureskating.org for assistance with team member changes.

To access the series registration, go to usfsaonline.org → [EMS](#) → Series Information → choose the series → Start Registration.

Series Registration Open – July 1, 2026 at 12:00 p.m. ET

Series Registration Fee - \$75

Competition Registrations

To post a score in the NQS standings, athletes/teams must register for, compete in, and post a total score at one (1) NQS designated competition. Singles athletes are allowed to participate in a maximum of three (3) total NQS competitions. There are no limitations on the maximum number of competitions for pairs and ice dance teams.

Competition hosts (LOCs) reserve the right to set a maximum capacity and close registration at any time, even if it is earlier than the posted registration deadline. Capacities will not be published, and it is at the discretion of the LOC if they will maintain a waitlist for additional entries after closing.

Withdrawals from an NQS competition will be considered final once the registration deadline has passed or registration for the competition has closed. Refunds will not be offered for withdrawals after the registration deadline.

Registration for all competitions will take place in [EMS](#) → Competition Registration → click “Register” under your desired competition. NOTE: NQS competitions will appear under the “nonqualifying” section.

Competition registration will take place in three phases based on the competition’s date. The time that each competition opens their registration will be based on the section (Eastern, Midwestern, or Pacific Coast) the competition is taking place in. A detailed chart for the registration timeline is listed below.

Registration Opens	Sec	Competition Name
May 6	12 ET	E Lake Placid Ice Dance Championships
		E First Coast Classic
		E Cranberry Open
	12 CT/1 ET	M Dallas Classic
		M Scott Hamilton Invitational
	12 PT/3 ET	P Glacier Falls Summer Classic
		P Cactus Classic 2026
June 10	12 ET	E Potomac Memorial Open
		E Philadelphia Summer Championships
		E Peach Open
	12 CT/1 ET	M Skate Detroit
		M Skate the Lake
	12 PT/3 ET	P PNIC Championship
July 8	12 ET	E Challenge Cup
		E The 100 th Annual Middle Atlantic Figure Skating Championships
		E Boston Open
	12 CT/1 ET	M Broadmoor Fall Classic
		M Maplewood Fall Classic
		M Greater Chicagoland Fall Invitational
		M Austin Autumn Classic
	12 PT/3 ET	P Skate St. Moritz
		P Oktoberfest
		P LA Autumn Classic

Series Standings

As of 6/29/26

The NQS Standings will be available for viewing in [EMS](#) → Series Information → choose the series → Standings.

Athletes will not appear in the NQS standings until a total score has been achieved. Only an athlete's highest earned total score will appear in the standings. Scores are updated within approximately 72 hours of the conclusion of the competition.

If you have any questions regarding the standings, email events@usfigureskating.org.

Athlete Recognition

Digital Certificates

All participants who post a score in the series standings will receive a digital participation certificate via email after the series concludes.

Pins

Pins will be sent to the home club of each athlete or to the home address of individual members to recognize the following achievements:

- Top 25% nationally – gold pin
- Top 26-50% nationally – silver pin
- Remaining participants will receive a participant pin

Medals and Trophies

Medals and trophies will be awarded at the NQS Finals for top NQS series placements as follows:

Singles – medals will be awarded to the top four highest scoring athletes per level, per region; a trophy will be given to the highest scoring athlete per region

Pairs and Ice Dance – medals will be awarded to the top four highest scoring teams per level, per section; trophies will be given to the highest scoring team per section

Technical Conduct of Events

When there are more than 18 entries in an event, the referee will divide competitors into groups per the Rulebook. There will be no qualifying, consolation, or final rounds for NQS. Athletes will remain in the same groups for each applicable segment to obtain their total score.

For events with multiple segments, athletes must compete in the “combined” event (e.g. short program and free skate; pattern dances and free dance). Both segments must be skated to receive a total score. If an athlete/team withdraws after the first segment of an event, their score will not be posted to the NQS standings.

Feedback will be offered for all NQS events following the guidelines set forth by the Competitions Committee. These guidelines will be shared prior to the first NQS competition.

All NQS competitions and their participants are required to abide by all [SkateSafe®](#) policies and meet any applicable compliance requirements set forth by U.S. Figure Skating.

Eligibility and Advancement to the NQS Finals

Advancement Notification and Registering for the NQS Finals

Advancement information will be sent out via email to advancing athletes in the week following the last NQS competition. Each qualifier will be required to complete registration and pay the entry fee in EMS within 72 hours of receiving their advancement email. Failure to respond will result in forfeiture of advancement and an alternate will be invited. All withdrawals and declined advancements must be submitted via email by the athlete or, if the athlete is a minor, the athlete's parent to events@usfigureskating.org (phone calls will not be accepted).

The dates and locations of the 2027 NQS Finals are below and subject to change.

2027 Eastern Sectional Singles and U.S. Pairs Final

Nov. 2 – 8, 2026 | Norwood, MA

2027 Midwestern Sectional Singles and U.S. Ice Dance Final

Nov. 9 – 15, 2026 | Bloomfield Township, MI

2027 Pacific Coast Sectional Singles Final

Nov. 16 – 22, 2026 | San Jose, CA

Once available, additional details for these competitions will be posted [HERE](#).

Per Rule 2477, skaters competing in senior singles events (men and women) must meet a minimum combined total element score (CTES) in order to advance to the Finals. Scores must be achieved at an NQS or ISU competition in the current season. The required CTES for the 2026-27 season will be posted as a technical notification prior to the start date of the first NQS competition.

Advancement Numbers

- Singles
 - Preliminary – Novice: 18 athletes per level
 - Top 4 overall from each region + next best 6 overall scores from the section
 - Junior – Senior: 18 athletes per level + byes
 - Top 4 overall scores from each region + next best 6 overall scores from the section + byes
- Pairs
 - Juvenile – Novice: 18 teams per level
 - Top 4 overall scores from each section + next best 6 overall scores nationally
 - Junior – Senior: 18 teams per level plus byes
 - Top 4 overall scores per section + next best 6 overall scores nationally + byes
- Ice Dance
 - Juvenile – Novice: 18 teams per level

- Top 4 overall scores from each section + next best 6 overall scores nationally
- Junior – Senior: 18 teams per level plus byes
 - Top 4 overall scores per section + next best 6 overall scores nationally + byes

Alternates

Per U.S. Figure Skating rules 2471 C, 2473 C, and 2475 C, alternates will be the next best ranked competitors in the nation.

Advancement to the National Development Team, National Development Team Championships & U.S. Figure Skating Championships

Information about athletes/teams advancing to the National Development Team, the National Development Team Championships and U.S. Championships will be released prior to the NQS Finals.

National Development Team Championships

- Singles: Top 4 athletes from each section at the NQS Final
- Pairs: Top 8 scoring teams at the NQS Final
- Dance: Top 10 scoring teams at the NQS Final

U.S. Figure Skating Championships

Information about athletes advancing to the U.S. Figure Skating Championships will be included in the bye and advancement criteria document which will be released in July 2026.

Per Rule 2505, competitors who advance to the U.S. Championships in the senior events must meet a minimum combined total element score (CTES) at one of the following competitions in the same season: NQS competitions, the NQS Finals, or any ISU competition. The CTES may use a short program TES and a free skate TES from separate competitions.

- Senior Women CTES = 45.00
- Senior Men CTES = 49.00

More information regarding the Technical Notification for the CTES can be found here [TN 326 Minimum TES for Sectional Finals \(PDF\) - U.S. Figure Skating](#)

National Development Team and Training Opportunities

Information will be released in Fall 2026.

SkateSafe® Policies and Compliance

All Participants should be aware of and familiar with the policies within the U.S. Figure Skating SkateSafe® Handbook. All Participants are required to adhere to these policies for the duration of any NQS competition they attend. In addition, Adult Participants are required to adhere to the SkateSafe® Travel Policy.

All Coaches and Mandatory Athletes must be fully compliant, in accordance with current requirements, prior to checking in to any NQS competition.

As a reminder, all Adult Participants of U.S. Figure Skating are mandatory reporters and must report suspected sexual misconduct or child abuse to the U.S. Center for SafeSport (<https://uscenterforsafesport.org/report-a-concern/>) and to local law enforcement. All other violations, such as emotional and physical misconduct, bullying, harassment, or violations of the U.S. Figure Skating SkateSafe® Handbook, must be reported to U.S. Figure Skating (<https://usfigureskating.i-sight.com/portal>). Please contact skatesafe@usfigureskating.org for more information.

Liability

U.S. Figure Skating, the host club(s) and/or interclub associations, the organizing committee, and the ice arenas utilized for any NQS competition undertake no responsibility for damages or injuries sustained to any Participant in these NQS events (U.S. Figure Skating Rule 1600).

Contacts

U.S. Figure Skating Events Department

Email: events@usfigureskating.org

Phone: (719) 635-5200

U.S. Figure Skating Member Services (EMS support)

Email: memberservices@usfigureskating.org

Phone: (719) 635-5200

2026-27 NQS Competitions

The following provides an overview of NQS competitions. All provided information is subject to change. Athletes should refer to the respective event websites, competition announcements, and EMS for the most up-to-date information.

Registrations Opening May 6

Dallas Classic | July 9 – 12 | Plano, TX | Dance

- Competition Website: www.dallasfsc.org
- Registration Opening Time: 12pm CT/1pm ET
- Registration Deadline: *see competition announcement*
- Contact: jreyskating@gmail.com

Cactus Classic | July 23 – 26 | Scottsdale, AZ | Singles

- Competition Website: www.coyotesscofaz.org
- Registration Opening Time: 12pm CT/1pm ET
- Registration Deadline: June 6
- Contact: president@coyotesscofaz.org

Lake Placid Ice Dance Championships | July 27 – 30 | Lake Placid, NY | Dance

- Competition Website: www.lakeplacidolympiccenter.com
- Registration Opening Time: 12pm ET
- Registration Deadline: June 27
 - Late Registration: June 27 - 30
- Contact: marye@orda.org

Glacier Falls Summer Classic | July 30 – Aug 2 | Anaheim, CA | Singles; Pairs

- Competition Website: www.glacierfalls.com
- Registration Opening Time: 12pm PT/3pm ET
- Registration Deadline: July 5
- Contact: russcscott@gmail.com

Scott Hamilton Invitational | July 30 – Aug 1 | Nashville, TN | Singles

- Competition Website: <https://scotthamiltonskatingclub.org/>
- Registration Opening Time: 12pm CT/1pm ET
- Registration Deadline: June 28
 - Late Registration: June 29 – July 10
- Contact: president@scotthamiltonskatingclub.org

Cranberry Open | Aug 4-8 | Norwood, MA | Singles

- Competition Website: <https://scboston.org/cranberry-open/>

- Registration Opening Time: 12pm ET
- Registration Deadline: June 30
 - Late Registration: July 1 - July 5
- Contact: events@scboston.org

First Coast Classic | Aug 6– 9 | Jacksonville, FL | Singles

- Competition Website: <https://jaxskateclub.org/>
- Registration Opening Time: 12pm ET
- Registration Deadline: July 6
 - Late Registration: July 7 - July 12
- Contact: fcfscjax@gmail.com

Registrations Opening June 10

Philadelphia Summer Championships | Aug 12 – 15 | Aston Township, PA | Singles; Pairs

- Competition Website: www.iceworksssc.org
- Registration Opening Time: 12pm ET
- Registration Deadline: August 1
 - Late Registration: August 2 – August 6
- Contact: lshaw@iceworks.net

Skate the Lake | Aug 12 – 16 | Pleasant Prairie, WI | Singles

- Competition Website: cuttingedgefsc.org
- Registration Opening Time: 12pm CT/1pm ET
- Registration Deadline: July 10
- Contact: stephanie@cuttingedgefsc.org

PNIC Championship | Aug 13 – 16 | Wenatchee, WA | Singles

- Competition Website: <https://towntoyotacenter.com/>
- Registration Opening Time: 12pm CT/1pm ET
- Registration Deadline: July 8
- Contact: info@towntoyotacenter.com

Skate Detroit | Aug 19 – 22 | Bloomfield Hills, MI | Singles; Pairs; Dance

- Competition Website: <https://dscclub.com/events/skate-detroit>
- Registration Opening Time: 12pm ET
- Registration Deadline: July 8
 - Late Registration: July 9 - 12
- Contact: skate.detroit@dscclub.com

Potomac Memorial Open | Aug 21 – 23 | Ashburn, VA | Singles

- Competition Website: <https://www.washingtonfsc.org/competitions/>

- Registration Opening Time: 12pm ET
- Registration Deadline: July 23
 - Late Registration: July 24 - 31
- Contact: potomacopen@gmail.com

Peach Open | Sept 4 – 6 | Duluth, GA | Singles

- Competition Website: gafsc.org
- Registration Opening Time: 12pm ET
- Registration Deadline: July 18
 - Late Registration: July 19 - 25
- Contact: annette.florence@gmail.com

Registrations Opening July 8

100th Annual Middle Atlantic Figure Skating Championships | Sept 8 – 11 | New York, NY | Singles; Pairs

- Competition Website: <http://www.thescny.org>
- Registration Opening Time: 12pm ET
- Registration Deadline: August 7
- Contact: mail@thescny.org

Greater Chicagoland Fall Invitational | Sept 10 – 13 | Evanston, IL | Singles; Pairs

- Competition Website: www.wwfsc.com
- Registration Opening Time: 12pm CT/1pm ET
- Registration Deadline: August 8
- Contact: lanny.nelson1942@gmail.com

Skate St. Moritz | Sept 11-13 | Oakland, CA | Singles

- Competition Website: stmoritzisc.org
- Registration Opening Time: 12pm PT/3pm ET
- Registration Deadline: August 6
 - Late Registration: August 7 - 12
- Contact: lnrle68@aol.com

Maplewood Fall Classic | Sept 17-20 | Vadnais Heights, MN | Singles

- Competition Website: sites.google.com/view/maplewoodfallclassic
- Registration Opening Time: 12pm CT/1pm ET
- Registration Deadline: August 12
 - Late Registration: August 13 - 16
- Contact: mfsc.fallclassic@gmail.com

Oktoberfest | Sept 17-20 | Cottonwood Heights, UT | Singles

- Competition Website: www.chfsc.com
- Registration Opening Time: 12pm CT/1pm ET
- Registration Deadline: August 10
- Contact: emj.icegirl@gmail.com

Challenge Cup | Sept 24 – 27 | Ardmore, PA | Dance

- Competition Website: www.pschs.org
- Registration Opening Time: 12pm ET
- Registration Deadline: August 28
- Contact: pschs@pschs.org

Austin Autumn Classic | Sept 24 – 27 | Leander, TX | Singles

- Competition Website: afsctx.org
- Registration Opening Time: 12pm CT/1pm ET
- Registration Deadline: August 17
 - Late Registration: August 18 – 20
- Contact: lynngoldman1@att.net

Boston Open | Oct 1 – 4 | Norwood, MA | Singles; Pairs

- Competition Website: <https://scboston.org/boston-open/>
- Registration Opening Time: 12pm ET
- Registration Deadline: August 15
 - Late Registration: August 17 - 20
- Contact: events@scboston.org

Broadmoor Fall Classic | Oct 1 – 4 | Colorado Springs, CO | Singles; Dance

- Competition Website: www.broadmoorskatingclub.com
- Registration Opening Time: 12pm CT/1pm ET
- Registration Deadline: August 16
 - Late Registration: August 17 – September 1
- Contact: jblanter@yahoo.com

LA Autumn Classic | Oct 2 – 4 | El Segundo, CA | Singles

- Competition Website: www.lafsc.org
- Registration Opening Time: 12pm PT/3pm ET
- Registration Deadline: September 1
- Contact: kborzi@comcast.net