



Explanatory notes to the amendments to the ESSDA Showdance rules approved at the ESSDA Board meeting on 11th June 2023

Background to the proposal

The following revised showdance rules have been prepared by the ESSDA Competition Rules Working Group (WG) comprising Tom Dance (WG Chair), Mark Hebell, Thorsten Reulen and Kerstin Kallmann.

The WG held an in-person meeting in Berlin on 1 May 2023 as well as working on the rules via email and online discussions. The WG members also consulted with existing showdance teams and couples and drew on the rules of the WDSF and DVET.

The revised rules seek to strike a balance between developing an inclusive same-sex dance community and ensuring a fair competition for competitors with different backgrounds and objectives. The rules also seek to align the rules for couples and team showdance and tighten up the requirements for, and the objectives of, rehearsals.

The WG discussed in detail whether it was necessary to have separate rules for formation and showdance teams. In the end, it was felt that while both of these genres had their own strengths and weaknesses, there were not enough teams in either category to require separate categories. Furthermore, it was felt that by combining best of both worlds, we could create a category that is unique to same-sex dancing by encouraging inclusion, entertainment and innovation while also recognising technical merit. The WG therefore focused on producing a single set of rules that would encourage participation from all dancers whether they wanted to focus on technical merit or on just having fun and presenting a crowd-pleasing entertainment. These elements are of course not mutually exclusive, and the best routines are likely to exhibit both aspects.

In line with the above, the WG has worked to create rules that set out a minimum, but readily achievable standard, and to allow greater flexibility than is shown by the formation rules of organisations such as the WDSF.

The amendments were approved by the ESSDA Board on 11th June 2023.

Any questions or comments about the rules should be addressed to Tom Dane as the Chair of the ESSDA Competition Rules Working Group via membership@essda.eu



Summary of significant changes

- The team rules are renamed the “ESSDA Team Competition Rules” to help recognise the inclusion of both “formation” and “show” elements.
- The rules for rehearsals for teams and couples have been tightened to ensure greater certainty, clarity and consistency. As new rules are being introduced and existing rules changed, it is critical that rehearsals allow adherence to the rules to be assessed.
- It was felt that the duration of couple and team routines was too wide to allow for fair adjudication. The couple showdance duration has been changed to between 3 mins and 5 mins (previously 2 mins 15s to 5 mins 30s). Similarly, team routines are a maximum 7 mins with between 5 mins and 5 mins 30s judged (previously 4 to 7 minutes in total). In addition to this, teams and couples have 30 seconds or 15 seconds respectively for entry on to and exit from the floor.
- The rules introduced in the previous version as to how many teams people can compete in, and on the proportion of non-same-sex/equality choreography have been retained but reworded. The aim has been to develop rules that are workable and clear, but which don’t make it too difficult for teams and adjudicators in practice.
- To create a fairer playing field and a better balance between “formation” and “show” elements and to ensure that technical merit is rewarded appropriately, the following changes have been made:
 - The **majority** of the choreography in a team routine must exhibit one or more recognised syllabus partner dances rather than simply being based on a partner dance. This is intended to increase the dance content of some of the routines.
 - Caption C for entertainment is given half the weight of Captions A and B. This is due to some overlap with Caption B (artistic merit) and to place more focus on technical merit while still rewarding those routines that create the most audience engagement.
 - For teams, the description of Caption A (technical merit) has been amended to explicitly assess how dancers in teams move in formation. Even teams that do not consider themselves to be “formation” teams will move in formation at some point – for example when individuals move into a circle.
- Given the range of choreographies and technical abilities that might be expected, and the permitted variations in terms of routine lengths, it was felt necessary to have a general look where no preliminary rounds will be danced. As the teams perform consecutively rather than at the same time, the adjudicators cannot compare teams or couples against each other as they would in other categories. It is therefore important for them to obtain an overview of the overall standard so they know the range of the performances. Where there are sufficient teams for a semi-final, the general look was felt to be unnecessary as in the semi-final adjudicators are required



only to mark competitors through to the next round and not to score them in detail. To retain some element of surprise for the audience, and for practical purposes, the general look may be danced without costume or make up though all props and any practical costume elements must be used.

- It is recognised that for one day events there may not be sufficient time for rehearsals, general look and finals, and therefore flexibility is permitted in rule 9. \
- The new rules will apply from 1 July 2024 for events licensed by ESSDA as qualifying for European Championship titles. Organisers of other events may choose to adopt these earlier, but they should give competitors reasonable notice.