

Updated: July 17, 2023

Whether or not to offer virtual testing is at each club's discretion, but virtual testing can be used to allow skaters to test in circumstances where it may prove burdensome or impossible to hold in-person test sessions. A club can offer virtual testing across the board, or it can offer a combination of in-person and virtual testing. For example, a club may find that holding in-person test sessions for Singles and Skating Skills tests is relatively easy but may need to hold a separate virtual test session for high level dance and pair tests.

The following are guidelines to ensure the successful conduct of virtual test sessions. The guidelines are divided into sections by type of participant, but all participants are encouraged to read all guidelines.

General Guidelines

Virtual test sessions are organized and conducted by U.S. Figure Skating member clubs. No virtual tests can be submitted directly to U.S. Figure Skating.

A performance may only be used **once** for test credit. If a video has been submitted for a virtual test session, it may not be submitted again. Videos of a performance at an in-person test session, if judged at an in-person test session, are not eligible to be submitted to a virtual test session. Tests may be recorded at an in-person test session for the purpose of being judged virtually if the video is not judged while being recorded.

There may not be more than eight other skaters on the ice during a skater's test. Even if eight or fewer skaters are on the ice, the video must not be submitted if any skater disrupts the testing skater or prevents the testing skater from being the focus of the video. Judges must contact the test chair with any video concerns, and this may result in the video not being acceptable for virtual testing. If the video is questionable, it is best to not submit it.

It is the responsibility of the Test Chair to determine if the quality of the video is sufficient to submit to the judging panel. If a Test Chair deems the video to be of insufficient quality, then the video will be rejected. If a judge does not feel the video is of sufficient quality, the judge must contact the test chair with their concern and withdraw from judging the test. This applies only to the quality of the video recording, and not to the quality of the skating. Once a judge has submitted a completed test form to the test chair, the judge cannot reject the video.

Once confirming receipt of the Signed Performance Affidavit and "Release and Consent" document, test chairs should provide the following to judges:

- Correct test form with skater name and membership number
- Link to performance video
- Appropriate judging forms for each test that is being judged.

Skater Guidelines

There is a mandatory deduction of one point (-1) for not executing the correct introductory steps (Rule 5036). “Each element (in Skating Skills tests) must be commenced from a standing, stationary position with a maximum of seven introductory steps unless specified otherwise in (the) rules (U.S. Figure Skating Rulebook, 5021)”. In virtual testing, while the video must be a continuous recording, skaters do not need to be continuously skating (short breaks between elements are allowed). It is important that one element in a Skating Skills test does not run into another.

Skaters may stop briefly between elements in a Skating Skills test, but the stop must be brief (10 seconds or less). The video must continue recording the entire time. If stops between Skills become too long, a new video may be required.

There is to be no coaching of the skater during the performance of their test, except for brief breaks between elements in Skating Skills tests (but not while changing direction or feet during an element) and breaks between partnered and solo portions of a pattern dance test (Rule 4302). Violation of this rule may disqualify the video.

Because there are no reskates in virtual testing, it is in the skater’s best interest to not submit videos with missing elements or other major errors (e.g., elements out of order, fewer than the required number of patterns in a pattern dance, etc.).

Video Guidelines

Videos must be recorded in landscape mode and must be of the highest quality possible (at least 720p). It is important that the skater is framed from head to toe during the entire test. The video must be of a high enough quality that the judges can clearly make out the skater’s expression and feet while the skater is testing. The video must be as stable as possible with minimal “jittering” of the camera. Please refer to the “Virtual Testing Video Requirements” document for more details. If a judge does not feel the video is of sufficient quality to evaluate the skater, they must inform the test chair of their concern and withdraw from judging the test.

The video must be taken from the position of the judges stand (as if an in-person test session). Videos may not be taken while following the athlete around the ice during the test.

Note: As of July 1, 2023, videos from a competition, exhibition, or ice show may NOT be submitted to a virtual test session (Rule 4104).

Test Chair Guidelines

Test chairs must make sure expectations are clear when inviting judges (such as number of tests to be assigned, when the tests will be sent, due dates, etc). This will help the judges plan their time and know what to expect. **Judges should not be assigned to more than 10 virtual tests unless they have agreed to do more in advance.**

Judges who are available to judge virtual tests are identified in the Officials Directory. When doing your search for Officials, under the “Level” dropdown menu, select “Virtual.” Please be sure to also check each test judge’s appointment levels for singles, dance and skating skills to determine which tests they can judge.

Test chairs must create a schedule of virtual tests (much like a schedule at an in-person test session) with judge assignments. This schedule must be sent to all judges on the panel. This will help each judge know who the other judges are that are assigned to judge a test and ensure that the properly qualified judge is judging the appropriate test.

It is important for it to be clearly communicated to the judges, and indicated on the test schedule, what tests are contingent. Contingent tests must only be sent to the judges **AFTER** all judging is complete on the prerequisite tests and the tests have passed. Test chairs are asked to share their cell phone number with judges, so judges can reach out with any questions that may arise while videos are being viewed and judged.

Judges must return the completed test form to the test chair only and not share with anyone else. It must not be uploaded to the shared Google Drive, Dropbox, etc.

Test chairs must review the submitted videos (if only a portion) to screen for quality and other issues. Videos that do not meet the “Virtual Testing Video Requirements” should be rejected by the test chair. Test chairs must also verify that the skater’s name and test in the video match what is provided to the judges.

Once all judge sheets are received and scores have been recorded, test chairs should be sure to send electronic copies of the completed test forms to both the skater and their coach of record, so that they are aware of the outcome of the test. **Results must be returned to the athlete and coach within one week of the test date (Rule 4104).**

It is strongly suggested that clubs provide judges a gift card with a value of at least \$15 for 1-5 tests, \$20 for 6-10 tests, etc. This not only shows the judges they are

appreciated but can help offset costs incurred while judging (such as electricity, Internet service charge, paper, printing, etc.). It is advised to include this information in the invitation to judge so they know what to expect. If a judge has expenses beyond what is offset by the gift card, they should submit for reimbursement in accordance with U.S. Figure Skating rules and guidelines.

It is strongly recommended that a test session results report be sent to the virtual judges since they do not have the opportunity to debrief at the conclusion of a test session as they can at in-person test sessions. To create this report, log into Members Only. Under the Testing menu, select Skate Test Session Reports. Select the test date, then click on Print Judges Report. There is the option to Export to PDF or to Excel.

Judge Guidelines

Before accepting an invitation to judge virtually, judges should make sure expectations are clear (such as number of tests to be assigned, when the tests will be sent, due dates, etc.). Any uncertainties must be addressed with the test chair. A judge's appointment levels for singles, pairs, dance, and skating skills determine which tests they can judge for virtual tests.

Judges must behave as though they were at an in-person test session. Rule 4524 regarding use of electronic communicative devices applies to virtual tests. Judges should attempt to watch the entire test in one sitting without break. The test must be viewed at normal speed. The video may be paused between elements in Skatin Skills tests, and between partnered and solo patterns in dance, to write comments. Judges may rewatch the video to check for missing elements.

Timing of singles, free dance, and pairs tests are the responsibility of each judge. Use of time stamps on the video are not acceptable as they are not precise enough; a physical stopwatch or stopwatch on a cellular phone may be used.

For pattern dance tests, it is the responsibility of each judge to determine if the music meets the requirements listed in the rules (8223) because there is no "judge-in-charge" in a virtual testing environment.

Judges must refrain from discussing the test until the other judges have submitted their completed testing sheet to the test chair. Concerns with video quality must be addressed with the test chair and not discussed by the panel. Once a judge has submitted a completed test form to the test chair, the judge cannot reject the video.

Judges must return the completed test form to the test chair only (via email) and not share with anyone else. It must not be uploaded to the shared Google Drive, Dropbox, etc.

When judging virtual tests, the standard is the same as during in-person test sessions. The skater must not be given any special considerations. Remember that the skater and coach are responsible for the video submitted. If there is an issue with the video, or the skating within it, the skater can choose to not submit the video.

Once a judge has submitted their completed test form to the test chair, changes to comments and scores cannot be made (except for correcting sum errors in the total, circling the test result, and signing their name). The judge cannot reject the video after their completed test form has been submitted to the test chair.

Note: It is not appropriate for a judge to review or critique any aspect of a virtual test video unless they are assigned as a judge for that test.