

USTSA Freeskiing

JUDGES' HANDBOOK & GUIDELINES

These rules and guidelines have been adapted from the USTSA and IFSA guidelines, developed by Shane McConkey, Jim Jack, Jeff Clark, Ross Matlock, Nate Greenberg, and various others over the years. They represent the best interpretation of styles of judging available to both disciplines of the sport...

The goal of the USTSA Freeskiing judge is to isolate and identify the best overall skier, and not just the best skier in any discipline (extreme, mogul, air, carver etc.). The best skier in the field is able to put all pieces of the skiing puzzle together.

Keep in mind the big picture; the entire run, the aspects of the skier's strengths and weaknesses. Look for solid skiing fundamentals and skills, flair, style, energy. The best skier is usually fairly easy to identify, but keep in mind there may be 99 other skiers whom you must judge on the same criteria, and rank them. **It is a difficult task.**

It is our job to utilize the criteria on the following pages to effectively evaluate each skier on the same terms, regardless of what we know they may be capable of, meant to do, or anything else...

***Bottom Line:** We want to reward good, solid, and safe skiing that is fluid, creative, and fun to watch, and discourage skiing that is sketchy, uncontrolled, and frightening to watch. Skiers who stomp lines will be rewarded, while those who flounder in lines that are over his head will be penalized*

Our judging is based on a combination of the International Freeskiing Association of America (IFSA) rules, and the adaptation of those rules to the Telemark world. In all, there are five categories that we base our judging on, as described below:

JUDGING FORMAT

1 Head judge. 2 Scoring judges.

The Head Judge facilitates the flow & consistency of judging and the judges. It is the role of the head judge, with the assistance of the other judges to solidify the line score off of which all the other judges base his scores. The judging categories are:

1. Degree of Difficulty (Line)
2. Control
3. Fluidity
4. Form & Technique
5. Style & Aggression

Categories are scored on a scale of 1-10 (with 10 being the highest). Each category holds equal weight, however, the categories can have an effect on each other.

CATEGORY SPECIFICS & JUDGING CRITERIA

1. LINE / DIFFICULTY

Each skier chooses his/her line down the venue. Competitors are given higher scores for choosing more difficult lines. Difficulty is determined by steepness, exposure, snow conditions and obstacles or hazards, not how the athlete skis it. This category is scored first. Line scores are objective – they are the same for all competitors and are agreed upon prior to the competition, based on the venue, amount of snow, etc. Adjustments and tweaks to Line score are allowable, but are based on actualities, not subjective aspects such as performance, ability, etc.

This is the most significant category! All other categories maximum score is directly related to line score. The line score is discussed among the judges and certain areas of the venue are predetermined before the competition starts each day. The line score is determined by the difficulty of the terrain.

In addition to the three judges, there should be an assistant whose job is to accurately keep track of line scores as each skier goes. The purpose of this is to ensure that the same Line score award is given to every competitor who skis that line.

The other categories describe the “execution of the line”. For example: “He definitely skied the same 7 line as the last 5 competitors but he went faster, aired twice as far, and did cooler tricks. Should his line score be higher?” NO! Line score is line score...

Criteria:

This category is judged first and has the greatest influence on the other categories. Line score determines **the 2-point rule**. The 2-point rule means that the maximum score for ALL other categories is limited to two points above the line score. (There will be rare exceptions, maybe 1-2 per venue where you might allow 1 extra point in each category for an extraordinary run. A total of 3 points more, per category). ***Juniors will have a 3-point rule.***

Example: *If the line score is a 5, all other categories may not exceed 7 points. If the competitor REALLY ripped in aggressiveness then they could potentially get an 8 for aggressiveness (2 points + 1bonus).*

The different line score values are predetermined after the forerunners, and remain consistent throughout the entire venue day. Air does not increase this score, the terrain or obstacles do. Leave allowances for variations (1 point), as no two runs are totally identical. The judges will be free to discuss difficulty of line value ONLY, but are ultimately controlled by the Head Judge.

2. CONTROL

This is the second category judged, and is a crucial category for many reasons. If a competitor falls, or displays a loss of control this category is severely affected. Make a note in the notes column and count every time a competitor falls. It is easy, after 93 competitors, in a 3-minute run to forget whether a skier fell at the beginning or somewhere in between. Come up with good systems to use; point deductions for different kinds of falls, or a mark at the top of your scorecard “notes box” for a fall early in the run etc. With a good system you will score falls with the same severity whether it is 8 am or 4:10pm.

Skiers MUST BE IN CONTROL at all times. Any loss of control will result in a lower score. A fall is the ultimate loss of control, though a hand down, butt/hip check, bobble, etc. all represent control loss.

Every time a skier loses control, be it a bobble, hand down, butt or hip check, or a fall, the competitor should be deducted.

Loss of Control / Falls:

Is the competitor skiing aggressively fast or do you get the impression that he/she is barely pulling it off? This becomes very important as the competitor continues through his run and the venue becomes more exposed or

technical. As judges, we need to keep in mind that only the best skiers who produce the cleanest runs should advance to the next venue. Is the athlete just letting his skis run a little after air, or are they unable to check his speed? Control, or out of control? Pay attention.

Any significant loss of control should be penalized. Significant is relative, but could mean some 'hand-downs', or a hip check. In general, 1-2 points should be deducted for every significant loss of control.

A fall is considered skis over the head. A skier could also stuff themselves into a mogul or wall of a chute and slide out in a legitimate fall. Use your judgment, but this is typically as least, or more significant than washing out. In general, deducting 2-3 points is appropriate for every fall.

Sometimes a fall or loss of control may only affect 1 or 2 categories, or may not be a fall at all. Example: Skier is picking his/her way through some rocks and loses a ski but shows no loss of control (prereleases). Puts the ski back on quickly and continues. Points are deducted in technique for not properly adjusting bindings and maybe fluidity for the time it took to replace the ski. Points would not be deducted from control or aggressiveness.

Sometimes a fall or loss of control will affect all 4 categories (control, fluidity, technique, and aggressiveness) Example: Competitor is skiing too fast, cannot control his speed, leans back and sets his hip down to slow down (Fluidity & Technique). He starts to tumble (control), and takes time to gather his equipment and get going again (fluidity). If the fall was in a No Fall Zone then aggressiveness is affected too.

Important to remember is that we do not want to get in the roll of judging falls. We are here to judge skiing. Some instances, a fall is a fall. It is as bad as missing a gate in racing. By avoiding this we keep the event rolling.

No Fall Zones:

A NFZ is a predetermined area of the venue where a competitor must not fall or lose control. Examples of a NFZ might be a very exposed cliff area, a tight finish area, or a steep treed couloir. Judges must make the competitors aware of these areas and take notes on his scorecard if a loss of control happens in a NFZ.

If a competitor falls in a predetermined **NO FALL ZONE** the "NFZ 3-point rule" (described in detail below) must be instituted. In this case, the control category affects the remaining 3 categories with a 3-point rule (like line choice).

NFZ Scoring:

A competitor loses control in a tight couloir (NFZ) and pinballs through some trees risking potential injury, loses a ski, and takes a while to regroup and ski to the bottom. Judges should note NFZ fall on scorecard and instate a **3-point rule**.

Line	=	8
Control	=	2

Fluidity , Form/Technique and Aggressiveness may not exceed 4 points (+ 1 point extraordinary). In the case of a fall in a NFZ, judges may talk about line score and agree that the fall was in an NFZ

Fluidity	=	2
Technique	=	3
Aggressiveness	=	5

3. FLUIDITY

Constant direction toward a goal (areas of the course, the finish, etc.) constitutes Fluidity. This category includes continuity, pace, and smooth transitions employed by the skier. In many ways, it is the hardest category to score highly in.

Stopping, unnecessary traverses, and most falls will result in a lower score. Fluidity is often relative to the line score: For example, a 10 for Fluidity on a 10 Line, in general, will be slower than a 10 for Fluidity on the 6 Line.

Criteria:

As in the control category, create a system for yourself to maintain consistent evaluation of fluidity. Keep track of how many times the skier stopped, and for how long. It is helpful to count the seconds in your head every time the skier stops and accumulate a number of downtime for the run. If a skier was stopped for ¼ of his total time I know to deduct the same number of points for that all day long. 3 seconds, 5 seconds, 4 seconds, 11 seconds of down time out of a 2 minute run is significant.

Did the skier fall? Did he just roll over and keep going or hike back up to get gear. Probing or gaining courage? Often a competitor will stop because he is skiing a line out of his ability. His comfort with the exposure often dictates his fluidity. Bottom line, if you can see through your binoculars that the athlete is hesitating because of skill, NOW is the time to teach them the lesson that they should have skied the line that they could ski well. Slamming on the brakes or flowing over obstacles? Is the athlete over the Time Limit?

Over Time (OT) = DNF = 0 score in every category. Exception: The head judge may overrule an OT/DNF. The circumstances must be so overwhelming that the extra time actually increased the raddness of the run that they overlook the OT.

***Example:** Julie stopped a lot and caught her breath, got lost and back on track, pole probed the hell out of every air and generally had a lot of down time. OT = DNF. Tracey chose a tough line got into some cool areas of the venue, maybe went where no one else had gone and really pushed the envelope, her run was always moving towards the finish, without unnecessary traverses etc, but she ran over by 5 seconds. The head judge makes the ruling. In a case like this it is safe to say that the judge would score Tracey's run.*

4. TECHNIQUE

Competitors are judged on style and overall technical ability. There are no true standards in this category other than the fact that skiers must be making Telemark turns predominately. **Telemark turns** mean a visible separation of the fore and aft foot and the transition from one turn to the other.

This is a category where the athlete impresses the judges with his style and skiing beauty. Stay unbiased, and recognize that there are many different styles out there... Think about whether the skier is linking his Telemark turns, looks exhausted, is scary to watch in critical terrain/conditions, in the back seat, making mostly alpine turns, etc. This is also the category where air, or exceptional style can improve a competitor's score.

Criteria:

Keep in mind the competitor's skiing fundamentals. Allow for personal skiing style if cleanly executed. Is the athlete skiing with efficiency of motion? Is he/she exhausted? Is he sketchy or gut wrenching to watch in icy areas? This category really allows the judge to reward the excellent skiers.

Skiers must clearly be making Telemark turns during his entire run. For the purposes of this competition, a Telemark turn is defined by the clear separation of the fore and aft leg. There are many different styles of Telemark, so be cognoscente of individuality, while recognizing the better Telemark skiers from the less skilled.

Making Telemark turns in steep and committing terrain is difficult and can be scary. While it may be acceptable to throw a quick hop turn in an alpine stance to saddle up for an air or get positioned for entering a straight line, the use of a Telemark turn in these areas should be awarded. Landing airs in a parallel stance should be followed immediately by a Telemark turn.

***Example:** If Jack and Tim ski the 9 Line with an 8 for Control, at about the same fluid rate, THIS category allows the judges to reward a skier for his skiing ability. Perhaps Tim made the run look effortless and beautiful; where Jack's run was good but it just didn't have the finesse that Tim had.*

This category also allows the judges to reward skill. Remember air is not a category, so this is where a fancy trick increases the technical difficulty of an athlete's run. Keep in mind that a great skier has all the pieces of the skiing pie. They are not extreme skiers. They are excellent all around skiers. Flair, finesse, style, creativity separate excellent all around skiers from the rest of the pack.

5. **STYLE & AGGRESSION**

This category speaks to the energy with which the competitor attacks his or her chosen line and shows definitive style. Are they timid about the line or really focused and confident; skiing fast and strong with flashy technique?

Criteria:

Pretty self-explanatory. However, do not forget that competitors must always be in control. You will quickly see that competitors will aggressively bite off a bit more than they can ski. This category allows judges to check the competitor's limits. **Do not reward an aggressive athlete if they are ignorant of his limits, skiing out of his ability, or getting into trouble. Aggressiveness can work for and against a competitor.**

This category also allows the judges to reward extra skill. Air or other maneuvers should be considered in this category. Remember that Air is not a category, however, in this category, we look at how successful the competitor executed it. It added an element of aggression and skill to his skiing.

GENERAL EVENT RULES

1. **TIME LIMIT**

The time limit for the venue is determined by the forerunners. After the forerunners have completed his runs the judges determine a generous time limit and radio it to the start gate. There is one time limit for men and women. Any competitor who exceeds the time limit, DNF and does not receive a score (zeros in all categories). Stand firm on your time limit. (Very) occasionally the time limit will need to be adjusted after the first couple of competitors (be careful if this happens, it will open you up to protests from the initial competitors). The Head judge may only determine exceptions to the time limit. See 3 - Fluidity.

2. **FINISH LINE**

Competitors who do not cross the finish line within the Time Limit will receive 0's in every category. Competitors who do not cross the finish line with both skis will receive 0's in every category. (Poles, goggles, etc. are extraneous equipment). Competitors should make some effort to finish with all of his equipment. If a competitor leaves easily retrieved equipment in the venue, it is up to the judges to decide if the equipment was easy to get and whether it will result in any score deduction.

THE JUDGING PROCESS

1. Evaluation

Be careful to evaluate each category separately. Try not to get an overall impression of the run and then score the categories. Even though the categories are related, they describe something different about the competitors last run. **When the athlete picks up the judge's cards after his run, they want to know exactly what to improve for the next run.**

2. Scale

Use the whole scale from 1-10. Zero is not a score, it only exists in the case of a time deduction. Our job as judges is to separate a lot of skiers. Do not be afraid to use the range. If there were 6 ties for 2nd place, you aren't doing your jobs. Use the scale, reward excellence and criticize mistakes. Half points are not the solution to your scores.

Tip: Use caution how you start scoring the day. Leave room for higher and lower scores. You do not want to be stuck giving 9's and 10's all day because you were too generous (or vice versa) in the morning.

3. Consistency

Each judge will develop a scale and routine. This is good as long as you remain consistent. If judges scores vary widely that is fine, AS LONG AS you keep to your scale. Do not be afraid to have different scores, just make sure that you always score the same. There is often a high judge or a low judge, a judge who gets really excited about great skiing and rips apart mistakes. This is good as long as he/she doesn't change his judging style part way through a day or a contest. If you change your system throughout a contest expect angry competitors and protests.

In order to make the task of judging easier, judges should go over the criteria categories in his mind during the competitor's run. They should do this over and over until the competitor crosses the finish line. When this technique is learned, judging becomes much easier and scores will be written down immediately, within seconds following the competitor's run. Before this technique is learned judges sit for minutes trying to remember everything that happened during the run. This develops poor judging habits as well as holds up the contest. Remember the categories, and think about them as they relate to the competitor that you are watching.

4. Quiet please!

The last thing the judges want is for athletes to protest because they think the judging is unfair. A very simple way to do this is by doing your own work. It is cold and exhausting to judge. You're antsy, sometimes you feel like blurting, "Rad! That was sick!" or "This guy, sucks!" Athletes watch judges, CLOSELY, and for some reason they think that talking judges means they "don't like me", "didn't see me", "Shane really likes the way Brant skis and he's influencing the other judges", or "those judges aren't paying attention". Whatever... The easiest way to avoid this is to keep communication amongst the judges specific to the run and the process. Talk about line choice, no falls zones, time limits, and pee breaks.

5. Shit Happens!

We are all human, not machines, and this is a Judged sport, not a race against a clock. Sometimes situations arise and you lose a skier in the binoculars, you sneeze, or for whatever reason missed something. Ask the other judges what you missed. It is always better to confirm if there was a fall than to bluff and risk a bigger mistake or protest.

GENERAL ITEMS

1. **Responsibility**

Judges are expected to act responsibly and respectfully. Athletes take competitions very seriously so please respect their careers. Your job here is a commitment to quality.

2. **Meetings**

All judges must be present at all mandatory meetings unless physically impossible.

3. **Protests**

Competitor protests cost \$50.00 immediately following the run. The competitor must alert and pay the (TD) Technical Delegate (IFSA or Race Department) who may grant a provisional rerun on a case-by-case basis. The TD will only consult the judges if and when the TD deems it appropriate. Competitor will run at the end of the field. **NO COMPETITOR MAY SPEAK TO THE JUDGES ABOUT HIS/HER PROTEST.**

4. **Scoring/Tallying**

A scorekeeper and assistant will be with the judges to add and total the score and record totals after every run. The scorekeeper is in charge of re-totaling the judge's cards and putting them in order. The assistant should help the judges keep track of the line score as it is skied, then enter it, as well as the scores into the computer.

Scores will be posted as the scores are confirmed at the end of each day. Actual judges' cards will be made available to the athletes as his scores are posted to review and turn back in at the end of each day. All judges should be present during this time period, as it is the time that competitors will have questions. It is important for competitors to be able to see their cards at the end of each day so that they know how they are doing and can make adjustments. We want this to be transparent...

Each day's run shall be totaled between the judges for a total score. Advancements/cuts should be made based on these scores. Runs should be averaged together, rather than totaled.

5. **Inspection**

Judges will inspect every run. On the way to the venue, judges will ski and discuss the difficulty of each possible line and the snow conditions of the day. The forerunner's descents will be discussed and time limit will be set. After that, there will be very little discussion amongst the judges.

Inspection runs for competitors are pre-determined by the judges based on the conditions of the venue, weather, or other criteria. The conditions of inspection (or lack thereof), should be clearly described to the competitors at each morning/evening meeting.

6. **Start Orders**

Judges will have a copy of the start order to keep track of what bib # they are watching, and to note if a competitor is out of order. It is up to the competitors to run in his start order. A missed start will result in disqualification.

HEAD JUDGE'S RESPONSIBILITIES

1. **Forerunners**

The Head Judge decides who foreruns the course. Select carefully. No competitors from that day's competition may forerun. It is acceptable to choose competitors who were JUST (just below the cutoff line) cut from the previous day or run.

2. **Binoculars**

If judges have binoculars they can use them. They can aid in seeing finite aspects of a person's skiing crucial in making decisions. If the organizers provide the judges with binoculars it is up to the Head Judge to return all of the binoculars to the organizer, forfeit monetary compensation, or be charged for missing equipment.

3. **Scorecards**

Ensure all judges have ample amount of scorecards before they leave for the venue.

4. **Quiet**

Head Judge is responsible to maintain conversation to a minimum. Try to check that the other judges are working separately and NOT comparing scores.

5. **Fluidity of event**

Head Judge should keep the contest rolling. Speed up the slow judges and keep the event going. Who wants to sit/stand in the cold until dark?

EVENT CONTINGENCIES

WEATHER

If weather and visibility become an issue there are options for trying to get the event off.

- **On slope judge.** Place a judge on slope to relay the action in that particular part of the venue.
- **Splitting judges onto the venue.** Placing the judges either separately or in pairs through out the venue.
- **Window shopping.** Try to allow for the best visibility as possible for the athletes and the judges. Losing a skier part way through his run is very deflating for both athletes and judges.

We must remember as the Head Judge that we need to work together with the organizers to get the event off but if weather, visibility or snow conditions begin to affect the skiers(and Operations) safety then it is our job to address this. If we as judges are having a difficult time seeing the skier and the features of the venue then we should assume that it is not much better for the athlete and his ability to ski a safe and impressive run.

SNOW CONDITIONS

Evaluate snow conditions prior to the day's event to determine areas that may begin to deteriorate throughout the day. If there are areas where the snow conditions begin to jeopardize the skiers safety then it is possible for us to close certain areas of the venue.