



BRAZILIAN ZOUK DANCE COUNCIL

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BZDC RULES, POLICIES, AND GUIDELINES FOR COMPETITORS

Find everything you need to know about rules, policies and guidelines for competitors. Please email any questions to the Brazilian Dance Council at info@brazilianzoukcouncil.com.

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BZDC COMPETITIONS:

A GUIDE FOR COMPETITORS

This document is designed to give competitors information about Jack and Jill competitions.

Jack and Jills are based on social dancing. This means that you are improvising a dance with a random partner to a random song. This does not mean that Jack and Jill competitions are exactly like social dancing.

For example, in competition you will be judged on elements including how you present your dance. This means that your visual aesthetics are more important to competitions than in social dancing. You need to also be aware of things like facing the audience, in addition to the technique, timing, and connection that are staples of social dancing. This means that even great social dancers may need to adjust their dancing to do well in competitions.

Jack and Jill competitions are also a mix of luck and skill. Skill is how well you execute and fulfill the competition criteria. Luck is who you draw as your partner, when the judges are watching you vs. someone else, and what songs you dance to.

LIFTS AND DIPS

Dips (where at least one foot of each partner is on the floor) are permitted. Lifts (when both feet of one partner leave the floor and the partner's weight is supported) are not permitted in any division, and result in an immediate disqualification (non-finals) or last place (finals).

ARRIVING ON TIME AND COMPETITORS MEETINGS

Events may disqualify participants who do not arrive on time do check in for their competition for any region, or who do not attend any mandatory competitor's meetings. The flexibility of these policies is at the discretion of the event organizer and competition staff. Once a competitor is scratched (removed) from the competition, they will not be re-added.

BIB PLACEMENT

Followers should wear the bib on the lower back or over the butt. Leaders should wear it in the center of their upper back. It is important to place bibs in these locations to help judges quickly scan numbers, and help competition staff differentiate between leaders and followers on the competition floor.

Bibs should not be placed on the front or the side of the body.

You should keep your bib as you will need it if you advance to the next round.

JUDGING CRITERIA & SHOE REQUIREMENT

Five criteria are used to judge you in competitions. This is described on our Judging Criteria page. You should review this page prior to competing.

Please also ensure you wear shoes. Foot Undeez and socks are not shoes. If you do not wear shoes, you will be disqualified.

CLOTHING & SHOES

In addition to stage presence and dance presentation, the Presentation component also can deduct points for being dressed inappropriately. This is similar to the Costume or Presentation element of a routine division. While you should not wear a costume for Jack and Jill, here are some things that are important for the appearance category:

Shoes:

Shoes are required for all divisions. Not wearing shoes results in a disqualification.

While some dancers do social dance or teach in socks or bare feet, it is not accepted for competitions. Foot Undeez and socks are not shoes. This is both for an appearance reason (showing your intention and professionalism as a JnJ competitor), and hygiene/safety.

Followers are encouraged to wear high heels, and the added level of difficulty is reflected in the difficulty score. However, you will not be penalized for wearing flats. Leaders will not be given a point bonus for high heels, as we prefer leads to be more grounded and ready to stabilize the follow in complicated movements (which heels can make more difficult).

PROPS AND COSTUMES

Props are not permitted in BZDC competitions. Props include any item or detachable piece of clothing used intentionally as part of the dance. Props represent an automatic disqualification.

1. Hats, jackets, capes, sunglasses, and other reasonable dance clothing items are considered costumes and may be worn in all divisions. However, clothing or items may NOT be discarded, nor switched from one partner to another.
2. Throughout the duration from when the music commences until the completion of all songs in your heat or finals, it is strictly prohibited to remove or move any clothing or costume items (including hats, jackets, hair band and others).
3. Adjusting your clothes or costumes to prevent the exposure of private parts is not classified as the use of a prop.
4. If you are concerned if something might be considered a prop, you must ask prior to competing.
5. Microphones and/or headsets are not permitted during any routine.

Costumes generally should not be worn for BZDC competitions, unless wearing a costume has been sanctioned by the event itself as part of a theme (for example, Halloween themes at events).

Performance-style dance costumes used for routines or improvised shows should not be worn.

Clothing:

Your competition clothing should be able to catch a judge's attention, provide you with freedom of movement, and be something you feel confident in. You should also try to wear something that allows judges to see your lines and technique. However, there are some rules and guidelines regarding what is considered appropriate clothing for competitions.

Clothing is expected to cover private areas (butt, groin, and breasts) at all times. Men must wear shirts. Judges are allowed to lower the Presentation score if parts/all of these areas are shown, but it will not disqualify you.

Competitors are encouraged to "dress up" (for example, classic or trendy jeans/pants/shorts, skirts with booty shorts, dresses or tops that securely cover the chest for women). We suggest that you not wear bodysuits or other gym wear, cargo shorts, sweatpants, etc. While bodysuits are a popular clothing choice in some areas and can be very intricate or sexy, they are still considered gym wear. Please note that this is a guideline - not a rule; you will not be judged on this. We want competitions to reflect professionalism - which is what this guideline is aimed to achieve.

DIVISIONS

In BZDC Jack and Jill competitions, you may see the following divisions:

- Newcomer
- Novice
- Intermediate
- Advanced
- All-Star
- Champion
- Pro (for anyone who teaches for money)
- Invitational (by invitation of event organizer)
- Junior/Masters (age-based divisions)

The most common divisions are Novice, Intermediate, Advanced, and All Star/Champions or Invitational.

As a competitor, you can gain points and level up through Novice, Intermediate, Advanced, and All-Star divisions at BZDC Registered Jack and Jill competitions. Non-registered competitions or competitions that do not follow our event rules will not give you points in the database.

You can level through Newcomer, Novice, Intermediate, Advanced, and All-Star as follows:

Division	Requirement Minimum (when you may compete in	Requirement Maximum (when you must leave division)
Newcomer	Criteria determined by event. Usually new competitors or beginner dancers. Not all events offer this, in which case competitors start in Novice.	
Novice	No BZDC points	
Intermediat	20 Novice points	
Advanced	30 Intermediate points	
All-Star	40 points in Advanced	
Champions	120 poins in All Star	

BZDC also records points for other divisions, including Pro and Invitational divisions. However, these divisions are at the discretion of the event organizer in terms of what you need to qualify. Participating in these competitions also does not cause you to “level up” in other divisions. Therefore, we do not provide a guide for moving through these divisions.

Please note: competitors are no longer permitted to stay in a division once they have reached the point threshold to compete in the next division, whether or not they have a first place finish.

COMPETING AS A LEADER AND A FOLLOWER

You are permitted to compete as a lead or follow, regardless of your gender or sex. You are also allowed to change which role you do at different competitions.

Effective January 1, 2024, BZDC changed its rules regarding role levelling. These changes are:

- Reflect that skill in one role is not necessarily reflective of skill in the other role; and,
- To encourage dancers interested in competing in their secondary role to participate;

What’s Changing:

- Lead and follow roles will be tracked separately, with their own points
- Competitors who have a different level for their Lead and Follow roles will be able to compete in more than one competition at an event
- Competitors without any points in their secondary role will begin one level down from their primary (exception: teachers with more than 2 years of experience must start from Intermediate in both roles)

How it is being Implemented

- For competitors who have already levelled up with a combination of lead and follow points by December 31, 2023, they will keep their higher level in their primary role and start one level lower in their secondary role even if some points were received in the secondary role. They will also begin one level down in their secondary role with 0 points.
- For competitors with points in both roles at their current level, the points will be divided by role and they will compete in that level for both roles until they have enough in one role to move up
- Competitors who are the same level in both roles may only compete in one role in that competition; competitors with a different level in each role can compete in both divisions they are eligible for in their eligible role.

PETITIONS

BZDC allows competitors to petition to compete up or down in other divisions. For example, a competitor can request to be allowed to compete in Intermediate instead of Novice.

Petitions are designed to capture very large discrepancies in the level of a dancer versus the division they are permitted to dance in. A dancer should be clearly and obviously stronger than the majority of field of competition for a petition to be approved. Most petitions are for a single level up. In exceptional circumstances, petitions may be approved for a change of more than one level.

Petitions down are considered an outlier. A petition down will only be approved in exceptional circumstances, with terms and conditions established at the discretion of the BZDC.

Requesting a Petition

From January 1st, 2024 - To petition, a dancer must have a minimum of 5 points on the competitors petitioning role's current level, a nominator and a seconder that are qualified to judge the division they are hoping to petition to and complete an online form. For example, a Novice competitor hoping to petition to Intermediate must have a minimum of 5 points on Novice level and two BZDC judges qualified to judge Intermediate support their petition. The judges must not be a life or dance partner or ex-partner or family member.

Once the petition is submitted, the Head Judge for the competition or the Board of the BZDC will decide whether to accept the petition. The Head Judge or BZDC Board retains the right to refuse the petition for any reason. Additional documentation that shows the dancer's level (for example, a video) may be requested.

All petitions must be submitted within 7 days to the close of the competition registration. Dance events will have petition forms available for competitors to fill out and send it to the event organizer. It is highly suggested to submit petitions in advance of the event, to ensure adequate time is available to review the petition. Petitions submitted at the event may be declined due to administrative time constraints.

If you have not followed the petition process, you will not be allowed to compete in the petition division. If you compete without an authorised petition, you may not be permitted to dance in finals (if coordinators become aware that you are in the wrong level), and in all cases will not be awarded points for any results you obtain and will forfeit any prizes obtained. You may also be banned from competing in the future, at the discretion of BZDC.

It is your sole responsibility to ensure you register in the correct division.

Number of Petitions

A person may only petition a maximum of twice per division. For example, a Novice dancer may petition twice for Intermediate, and then twice again once they reach Intermediate for Advanced.

A person who has successfully petitioned up must wait at least six (6) months before petitioning up to the next level. For example, a Novice dancer that successfully petitions into Intermediate must wait at least 6 months before petitioning for Advanced.

Successful or Unsuccessful Petitions

In order for a petition to be successful, the dancer must obtain at least one (1) BZDC point in the competition they petitioned in. The exception is competitions that are run as straight to finals. If a competition is run as straight to finals, a petitioning dancer must place in the top three.

If a petitioner does not meet these requirements, they must compete in their original division at the next event, regardless of whether they show digitally as having competed in the higher division. Violating this policy may result in disqualification from future competitions.

Permanent Level Changes

A dancer may request a permanent level change up to another division if they believe they clearly are exceptionally strong for their current BZDC division, or if their reputation or contributions to the Brazilian Zouk community necessitate a change of division (for example, nominations of All-Stars for the Champions division).

Exceptionally strong dancers will generally be performing at the top of their division with great regularity. When compared to others in their division, they should be obtaining near-unanimous “yes”

ratings in preliminary rounds, and should be a strong contender for placements in their division nearly every time. Their participation in the lower division should be notable enough that they appear as a significant outlier with regards to their dance ability compared to the others in their division. This is most frequently applied to high-level instructors who have not had enough access to competitions at their level to “point out” of Advanced to All-Star. As higher-level competitions grow and become more common, this provision is expected to be retired.

In order for a dancer to be considered for a permanent level change, the dancer must fill out an online form and pass the examination process via dance videos uploaded on Youtube. When such a request is received, 7 members of the Board of Directors will analyse the dancers’ dance videos using the Jack and Jill judging criteria (3 T’s + Difficulty and appearance). The dancer must pass the exam with a minimum of 280 score out of 350 to be granted a permanent level change from Advanced to All Star.

Requests for permanent level changes must be submitted in advance and will only be analysed on March and September months of each year.

AUGUST 2018 NOVICE POINTS CHANGE - GRANDFATHERED COMPETITORS

Prior to August 2018, BZDC required competitors to have 15 Novice points to move to Intermediate.

BZDC allows anyone who gained 15 Novice points in or before August 2018 and does not have any Intermediate points to choose whether they prefer to compete as a Novice or Intermediate competitor.

TEACHER EXEMPTION FOR NOVICE DIVISION

Any teacher who has been regularly teaching **Brazilian Zouk** for a minimum of 2 years is eligible to compete starting in Intermediate division. This means they do not need to compete as Novice dancers. The primary purpose of this provision is to prevent teachers from competing against their more junior students. BZDC reserves the right to determine if a teacher has been teaching regularly enough to meet this requirement.

HYBRID DIVISIONS

Sometimes, you may see competitions that are a hybrid between two divisions. This is typically done when there are not enough dancers to have their own divisions.

In All-Star/Champion hybrids, dancers will be given points according to their current level. For example, an All-Star will gain All-Star points, whereas their Champion partner will get Champion points.

In cases where there is a hybrid between Novice/Intermediate or Intermediate/Advanced, points will be given to all competitors at the LOWER of the levels. For example, all competitors in a Novice/Intermediate hybrid will gain Novice points.

Tiers and Getting Points

Tiers are how BZDC determines how many points the finalists should get in a competition. It is designed to reflect the difficulty level based on the size of the competition. For example, it is more difficult to get 1st in a competition with 40 couples than with 10 couples.

Tiers are calculated by role - not by couple. For example, a competition with 15 leads and 20 follows would be a Tier 1 competition for leads and Tier 2 for follows.

The BZDC recognizes three tiers with the following associated points:

Tier	# Competitors	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	Additional Points
1	5-15	5	4	3	2	1	None
2	16-39	10	8	6	4	2	6th to 10th get 1 point
3	40+	15	12	10	8	6	1 point for all finalists

No points are ever awarded for non-final rounds. Scratched (no-show) competitors are not counted towards the total number of competitors. For example, a competition with 16 registered follows where only 15 attend preliminaries would still be a Tier 1 competition.

DIVISIONS WHERE SOME DANCERS DANCE TWICE

In some cases, a competition final may have an imbalance between leads and follows. In these cases, some dancers will be required to dance twice. If a dancer gets more than one placement that should result in points, only the higher placement will get the points. For example, if a competitor gets both 1st and 3rd place, they will only get points for the 1st place finish.

Minimum Number of Couples

Competitions are required to have a minimum of 5 couples prior to being recorded by BZDC as an official competition.

PRELIMINARY, QUARTER-FINAL, SEMI-FINAL, AND FINAL ROUNDS

If there are more than 15 competitors in either role, there must be at least a preliminary round. BZDC recommends (but does not require) the following:

- Tier 1: Straight to final, or optional preliminary round
 - (if spotlight final, prelim if more than 10 couples)
- Tier 2: Must have prelim; semi-final optional
- Tier 3: Must have prelim; semi-final strongly recommended

In addition, if there is a discrepancy between the roles of >3 in a Tier 1 competition with more, there must be a preliminary round. If there are only 5 competitors in one of the roles for the division, the maximum discrepancy in the roles is 2 (for example, 5 followers 7 leaders, or vice versa).

JUDGING CONFLICTS

BZDC does not permit judges to judge their dance or life partner or ex-partner, or immediate family member. While most judges attempt to remain impartial regardless of who is competing, we do this to ensure that competitions are as fair as possible.

In addition, judges are expected to note possible conflicts of interest for mitigation where possible. For example, judging close friends, team members, or teachers from their school.

In those cases, where possible, it is preferable to have an individual without a conflict judge that role.

EXPLAINING DIFFERENCES IN SCORES

If you have looked at scores, you may sometimes see a very large range of scores. One judge may have placed a couple first, and one may place that same couple 10th. This is especially common in heated divisions.

Often, really big ranges indicate that a competition was very close. Since relative placement doesn't use raw scores, the difference between 1st and 10th can be very big or very small. For example, in some cases, it may be less than 2 raw score points of difference!

So, extreme consistency often means that a competition's result was very clear, and there was a wider gap between that placement and others.

In non-spotlight divisions (where more than one couple dance at a time), it can also be the result of when the judges saw particular people. So, if a judge sees only part of your dance, whether you are 1st or 10th could depend on what part of that dance they saw.

PRIZES

Prizes are distributed at the discretion of the event. Most events will give a physical trophy, medal or ribbon for 1st, 2nd, and 3rd placements. Prize money, gift certificates, and event passes are prizes that various events may give competitors. Prizes are provided at the sole discretion of the event.

FEEDBACK

Some judges are willing to give feedback. Some can't remember, and others sell their feedback as part of a private lesson. You can also hire a pro to watch your competition (live or video) to give you feedback on it. This is between you and the judge or pro.

Generally, judges will not provide feedback until the results of a competition are announced.

It is rare that there are many notes on judging sheets because of the speed judges need to make decisions - and the fact that taking notes means they can't watch the competition properly.

Both preliminary and final scores are posted on the BZDC website after the event. However, these show ranking and Yes/No/Alt only, and do not include feedback or notes.

CONFLICT BETWEEN COMPETITORS

If a potential competitor is aware of an issue that may make another competitor uncomfortable dancing directly with them in the division (including allegations of harassment or assault), it is the responsibility of the competitor to declare the issue to the event organizer in advance of the event. This allows the event organizer enough time to plan for an approach prior to the competition.

If an individual does not report such behaviour and a complaint is later brought forward that, in the event organisers opinion, the individual ought to have known about, the event organizer reserves the right to ask the individual not to compete and to refund their registration.

For preliminary and semi-final rounds, organisers and event staff have the discretion to ensure that the affected individuals are not paired with each other where they feel it is warranted by using more than one heat to separate the affected individuals.

For final rounds, partner assignments will continue to be the luck of the draw unless the behaviour alleged would be criminal in nature if proven in court (for example, allegations of assault, abuse, or stalking). If the alleged behaviour may rise to criminal in nature if proven in court and the individuals have a chance of being paired, the event organizer has the discretion instruct the event staff to ensure those dancers are not paired in finals.

The event organizer is empowered to use their discretion in applying this section, and BZDC will not be involved in making determinations of this nature because the Board is not well positioned to properly adjudicate and assess these issues.

Note: This section is specifically to address significant and extraordinary behaviour that may be perceived as threatening or induce a trauma response in an individual based on prior experiences between them and another dancer. Organizers should not contemplate discomfort arising from discrimination on the basis of gender, sex, ethnicity, race, age, sexual orientation, or any other protected ground as a rationale for ensuring dancers are not paired. This section is not meant to apply to a standard range of hurt feelings or heartbreak after regular and mundane break ups or disagreements. In addition, complaints about general dance level or connection are not sufficient to warrant ensuring dancers are not paired.

MINDSET AND PREPARATION

HEALTHY COMPETITION MINDSET

While competitions generally reward dancers who have strong technique, not making finals or not placing should not be seen as a measure of your social dance value or potential. It does mean that

based on the criteria, your dancing was not as strong as other competitors while the judges were watching you.

Further, making finals or placing in one competition is not a reflection that you have nothing left to learn. It is entirely possible to come 1st in one competition, and then to not make finals in a different one.

It can be useful to use the videos and any feedback to target your training to address deficiencies that prevented you from having better competition results. Even if you did well, you can still get this feedback to help you continue to do well in the future.

PREPARING FOR COMPETITION

You should make sure you are adequately warmed up through stretching and movement before a competition. We strongly advise not dancing cold. Feel free to stretch, jump, or otherwise get your blood moving while you are waiting in line. You should also think about eating something light, using the washroom, and getting a water bottle before you line up. Bring a sweater to keep warm in case you are standing or sitting for a while.

Props are not allowed in any division and shoes are compulsory.

RESPECT IN BZDC COMPETITIONS

BZDC expects all competitors to be respectful of fellow competitors, organisers, judges and competition staff at all times. This means that competitors may be banned from some or all future BZDC competitions if they engage in inappropriate behaviour related to a BZDC competition.

Some examples of inappropriate behaviour surrounding competitions include:

- Yelling or swearing at someone
- Sending harassing or threatening messages about results to a coordinator or judge
- Engaging in discriminatory or demeaning behaviour
- Making harassing, threatening, or defamatory posts on social media about someone involved in the competitions (note: criticism is not the same as defamation)

RISING AN ISSUE

We understand that some competitors may have concerns, questions, or complaints about something that happened (or is happening) around a Jack and Jill competition. We are committed to providing a pathway to manage those issues.

Your first point of contact for all concerns should be the event organizer, competition coordinator, or head judge of the competition in question. If you do not receive an answer or need additional help, you can email BZDC at info@brazilianzoukcouncil.com and we will respond within a week.

BZDC will examine any issues raised via email, and where necessary, speak directly with the organizer or competition coordinator. In some cases, we may determine that an issue was related to a misunderstanding or was relatively minor. In these cases, we may not take a specific action, but will do our best to resolve such issues in the future.

If there is a larger issue, for example, a Conflict of Interest, rule, scoring, or other issue, we may take additional actions to both minimise the damage from the issue and to ensure it does not happen again. This can include adjusting to the appropriate outcome, providing a warning to the judge or event, placing an event on probation, or removing BZDC status from an event. We will do our best to minimise the impact on competitors wherever possible.