

Quick reference guide for judging wheelchair dancing

Mobility impairment

Mobility impairment means that a person has a reduced physical ability to move, which can be due to injury, illness or congenital disability. It can affect one or more parts of the body and may involve limited movement in the arms, legs, torso, hands, etc. Mobility impairment varies from person to person, with some having more mobility than others. An important factor to consider is that many people with mobility impairments have limited energy. Poor accessibility at the competition venue can increase energy consumption and impair performance.

Classification

Classification in wheelchair dance determines which class a dancer competes in based on the degree of disability, this is to focus on skill and performance. The division is called functional class and is based on the dancer's physical conditions. Consequently, the dancer's age or gender is not considered in the functional classes. Classification is a requirement for competition and is carried out by a classifier, usually a physiotherapist, doctor or occupational therapist. The classifier assesses whether the dancer has met the minimum criteria for the dance and places the dancer in one of the functional classes 1 or 2. The higher the classification score, the more mobility the dancer has in the upper body.

Approved disabilities

- Reduced muscle strength
- Reduced mobility
- Amputation and/or limb length difference
- Coordination impairment (hypertension, ataxia, athetosis)

There are two classes of functions:

Functional classes

- **Functional class 1:** This class is for dancers with major disability. Here, the ability to move is more limited, with for example poorer balance, grip and muscle weakness, which is reflected in how the dances are performed. This means that the dancer has less function in both the upper and lower body. In functional class 1, the dancer has a classification score between 0–24.
- **Functional class 2:** This class is for dancers with a minor disability. Here, the dancers have greater mobility and can perform movements almost like standing dancers. This means that the dancer may have little or no impact on the function of the upper body. In functional class 2, the dancer has a classification score between 25-50.

Wheelchair dancer

In wheelchair dancing, there are different ways to dance. Here are a few different shapes:

- Single – Dance Alone
- Duo – Two seated dancers
- Combi – A seated and a standing dancer

Competition dances include Bugg, Freestyle, Standard, and Latin.



When assessing wheelchair dancing, there are several external factors that can affect the dancer's performance. These factors should be considered in order to ensure the fairness of the assessment:

- **Surface:** The surface of the floor affects how easy or difficult it is to maneuver the wheelchair. Hard surfaces such as wooden floors are preferred, while soft surfaces such as rubber mats make it more difficult to both drive and steer the wheelchair. The dancer can also not influence the effect of the surface in the same way that a standing dancer can choose suitable shoes for the surface.
- **Assistive devices:** Some dancers, especially those with poor balance, may need extra support such as belts or other stabilization aids. This affects the dancer's freedom of movement and indicates that the person's score in the classification is in the lower scale of the classification assessment.
- **Accidents:** If a seated dancer falls but can get up immediately, the music continues. If help is needed, the music is stopped, and if they can continue, the music is restarted from where the fall happened.
- **Collision during the dance:** If the fall is caused by a clash between different dance couples, the judge should determine which pair is responsible for the fall and give this pair a lower score.
- **Condition of the wheelchair:** It is the dancer's responsibility to ensure that the wheelchair and its accessories work during the competition. If a wheel is punctured or a belt is loosened and affects the dance, the judge shall assess it as equivalent to how trips or other minor mistakes of standing dancers are assessed.

As a judge, it is important to consider how these factors affect the dancer's performance when assessing movement ability and technical skill.

- When assessing wheelchair dancing, it is important to keep the purpose of the dance in mind.
- When assessing technical skill and mobility, the judge should always consider the dancer's functional class.
- In Duo and Combi, interaction is central, no one should dominate. Both dancers are equal, both dancers must be judged.
- The wheelchair is an extension of the dancer's body and should be used as a tool to enhance the expression of the dance. The dancer's upper body movements should be transferred to the wheelchair so that the dance is fluid.



SUMMARY

Assess wheelchair dancing with openness and commitment! Focus on how the dancers perform their movements according to their ability (functional class) and use the wheelchair as a tool in the expression. Keep in mind that all the elements you already judge in standing dance are still there, but with unique adaptations for wheelchair dancing. Pay attention to interplay (in Duo and Combi), neither dancer should dominate at the expense of the other and both should be judged equally.