

Proficiency Competition

Proficiency competitions are a great way to practice for a real competition, or just have fun experiencing something similar to an actual competition without having to be judged against other dancers. We will be holding our next proficiency competition on March 13, 2021, at the Spring Ballroom Challenge. Most of your questions are answered below!

1) What is a proficiency competition, and how does it differ from a regular competition?

A proficiency “competition” is set up very similarly to a regular competition – similar music, similar dress codes, a real judge. However, it is more of an evaluation of your dancing rather than a competition against other dancers. There are two major differences. First, there is a judge whose focus is entirely on you, not looking at several couples on the floor. Second, you will not be ranked 1st, 2nd, 3rd place, etc., but instead you will receive written comments from the judge about your dancing. As a result, it is both more informative than a regular competition, and there is no pressure to be better than other dancers. You just need to do your own personal best.

2) It sounds like a large event. How will you address COVID safety concerns?

This will be our first in-person event since the start of the pandemic. Be assured that all health department and CDC precautions will be taken, including social distancing, wearing masks, hand washing, air filtering, cleaning the studio, and so on. Very importantly, we will be scheduling dancers so that there will never be more people present than allowed by the regulations in place at that time. However, that also means **we will have to limit the number of registrations**. Please register early to avoid disappointment.

3) How do I register for the next proficiency competition and what are the fees?

On AlbanyUSISTD.org/events, follow the appropriate links for fee information (youth and adult forms) and registration materials.

4) What are the deadlines for registration and payment?

All registrations with full payment are due by Saturday, February 27, 2021. After that date, there will be late fees of \$25 per individual, and \$40 per couple. Late registrations will only be accepted if there is space still available.

5) Are there ways to get discounts?

For youth, discounts are available when combining events. For adults, discounts are available for USISTD members. These discounts are fully described on the Youth Fee Sheet, and Adult Fee Sheet, both available on AlbanyUSISTG.org/Events. Membership information for adults is available on AlbanyUSISTD.org/Membership.

6) Where will this take place?

Dance Fire Studio, 2341 Nott St. East, Suite104, Niskayuna, NY, 12309

7) What is the tentative schedule?

- Youth proficiency competition, beginning at 11 AM
- Youth testing and individual coaching with Michael Choi
- Break for lunch and disinfecting of the studio
- Adult proficiency competition
- Adult testing and individual coaching with Michael Choi

The amount of time for each segment will depend on the number of dancers registered.

8) Do I need a partner for the proficiency competition?

- You may dance with your own partner and be judged as a couple.
- You may dance with your own partner, but be judged as an individual, with the judge watching and commenting on only your dancing.
- You may dance with one of the Dance Fire Dance Masters for an additional fee.
- You may dance solo.
- Same sex couples will be allowed, with one dancing as leader and one as follower.

9) Is a proficiency competition only for couples dancing?

While the competition is primarily for couples, there are opportunities for solo dancers, showcase dances, and formation teams (see questions 20, 21 and 22 below).

10) What dances may I choose to dance in the proficiency competition?

You may choose any dances usually danced with a leader and follower. You may choose from one to eight different dances. Unlike typical competitions, you may choose any combination of dances, at any level. There will be a schedule to inform

each dancer when they will dance. If you are dancing multiple dances, they may or may not be sequential; you may or may not have a break between them.

11) How long does a dance last during the proficiency competition?

Each dance is approximately 1 ½ minutes, but may be between 1-2 minutes.

12) During the proficiency competition, how many couples will be on the floor at once?

Although there may be 2 or 3 couples dancing at any given time, the judge will be focused on and evaluating just one couple or solo dancer. The others will be warming up for their upcoming heats, and will make the competition feel more like a typical competition. (The first participants will have an unjudged heat in which to warm up.)

13) What sorts of things do judges look for in the proficiency competition?

Some elements are crucial to judging any form of dance:

- posture
- correct musical timing
- musicality and expression
- appropriate characterization
- overall performance

There are also elements related specifically to dancing in partnership:

- how the couple holds each other
- how connected they look
- how grounded they look
- how well they navigate the floor with other couples

14) Will I know what song I will be dancing to for the proficiency comp?

You will know what style of dance you are about to dance, but you do not choose the music.

15) What do I receive after dancing in the proficiency competition? When do I get it?

Before leaving the studio on the day of the competition, you will receive a written evaluation from the judge, indicating certain things that went well and / or areas where you might focus on improving.

16) Will I have a chance to ask questions or get clarification from the judge after the proficiency comp?

You will not, but the evaluations are useful for working with your regular dance teacher down the road. Your instructor will be able to interpret the comments and help you to focus on the right areas to improve your dancing.

17) How are the age groups determined for the proficiency competition? [NOTE: age groups are different for testing.]

A competitor's age is defined as the age they will turn in 2021. For Juvenile through Adult, a couple is classified based on the younger of the two dancers.

- Juvenile: 5 or under
- Pre-Teen: 6-9
- Pre-teen II: 10-11
- Junior I: 12-13
- Junior II: 14-15
- Youth: 16-18
- Adult: 19 or higher
- Senior I: One dancer must be at least 35, the other must be at least 30.
- Senior II: One dancer must be at least 45, the other must be at least 40.
- Senior III: One dancer must be at least 55, the other must be at least 50.
- Senior IV: One dancer must be at least 65, the other must be at least 60.
- Senior V: One dancer must be at least 75, the other must be at least 70.

18) For the proficiency competition, what do the “levels” mean? [NOTE: This is slightly different for the medal tests.]

Each dance has a list of recognized figures associated with it, known as the syllabus. The syllabus for each dance is broken into three levels –bronze, silver, and gold figures. The level of difficulty generally increases with each level. At any level, the dancer is not expected to perform all of the figures at that level, but in syllabus they are restricted from dancing any higher-level figures.

Syllabus Levels:

PB: pre-bronze – An option for beginners or newcomers. Includes only the most basic bronze figures.

B: Bronze – The competitor may only dance figures in the bronze syllabus.

S: Silver -The competitor may dance figures in the bronze and silver syllabus.

G: Gold - The competitor may dance any syllabus figures – bronze, silver and gold.

Open Levels (no fixed figures, increasing difficulty):

Nov: Novice – The first level allowing figures that are not in the syllabus.

PC: Pre-Champ – Dancers are expected to dance more difficult open figures with better technique.

Champ: Championship – The highest level of competition.

19) How should participants dress for the proficiency competition?

If you've competed before, or have the proper competition attire, you should wear that. However, there are other options for those who have never competed. What's described below is ideal, but don't feel like you have to buy anything new. If you have any questions or concerns about what to wear, check with your instructor.

- Male Youth, up to age 18 –
 - Standard or Smooth – Black pants, white button-down shirt, and black tie / bow tie. If you don't have a black tie, wear the darkest solid tie you own.
 - Latin or rhythm – Black pants, white shirt, black tie. Ages 12 and older may wear a black shirt with no tie needed.
 - All dances – A long-sleeve shirt is preferable, but if you only have short sleeves, wear that. Shirt must be tucked in. Hair should be neatly combed. Long hair should be in a ponytail. Wear black socks and shoes, which should be clean. No jewelry.
- Female Youth, up to age 18 –
 - Standard, Smooth, Latin or Rhythm – A solid colored dress, or leotard and skirt of the same color, or a white top with black skirt. In any case, skirt should be knee-length. A full skirt is preferred. Matching colored "dance pants" may be worn. Dresses for girls ages 16 and up should cover the knees for Standard or Smooth. From sleeveless to long sleeves.
 - All dances – Hair should be neatly combed or pulled into a bun or ponytail. Shoes should be clean. For girls under 12, low heels on the shoes, and short white socks with lace trim, or flesh-colored tights. No make-up for anyone under age 12. No jewelry for anyone under 16.
- Men age 19 and up –

- Standard or Smooth – Black or midnight blue pants, white button-down shirt, and tie. Long-sleeved shirt is preferable. Black vest, jacket, or tux optional.
- Latin or rhythm – Black pants, black shirt. A turtleneck or mock turtleneck shirt is fine. Long sleeves are preferable.
- All dances – Hair should be neatly combed. Long hair should be in a ponytail. Wear dark socks and shoes, which should be clean.
- Women age 19 and up –
 - Standard or Smooth – Typical competition dress, or long gown with a full skirt.
 - Latin or rhythm – Competition dress, practice wear, or other outfit. Few restrictions, but should meet standards of generally accepted good taste.
 - All dances – Hair should be neatly combed. Shoes should be clean. Make-up is often more theatrical.

Please note, due to COVID-19 restrictions, facilities for changing clothes may be limited or non-existent. You may need to wear one outfit for all events, including the competition, testing, and/or private coaching. (You may change shoes between different styles of dance if you choose.) So relax, choose one outfit and go with it!

20) For the proficiency competition, what is solo proficiency?

Solo Proficiency heats are danced without a partner, and the dancer is judged on a solo execution of their syllabus (Bronze/Silver/Gold) figures. Not allowed at open levels. Any dancer may dance either as Leader or Follower.

21) For the proficiency competition, what is a showcase?

A showcase is usually one couple performing a choreographed routine to specific music. The dancers provide the music. A showcase may last up to 3 1/2 minutes.

22) For the proficiency competition, what is a formation team?

A formation team consists of up to 8 couples performing a choreographed routine simultaneously to specific music in either Standard/Smooth or Latin/Rhythm. The dancers provide the music. The allowed length of a formation performance varies by the age of the participants.

23) Who may I contact if I have further questions?

Email: AlbanyNYComp@gmail.com or call Dance Fire Studio at 518-557-2052.

Additionally, there will be a Zoom meeting on Sunday, January 24 at 1 PM to discuss this event and allow dancers to ask questions. Please contact us at the email address above to request a Zoom link to the meeting.