



# CUO Ability Level Rules - 2026

## Competition Levels

These rules apply across CUO events and should also take into account results and experience from other competitions.

CUO reserves the right to move dancers, freestyle duo/duets, set duets or teams if we feel they have been entered into an unsuitable ability level.

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## Teams

### Intro

Intro is for teams who are brand new to the style, with no previous competition experience or very limited dance experience.

A team may only enter Intro once. Once a team has performed in Intro at a CUO event, they must enter Beginner at their next competition.

Teams may only enter Intro if **50% or more of the dancers in the team are entered into Intro for solos and/or duo/duets.**

If dancers are not entered in solos or duo/duets, teachers must use the dancers' competition experience and training level to place the team appropriately. Intro should only be used for dancers who are brand new to that style.

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### Beginner

Beginner is for teams with limited competition experience.

A Beginner team must move up to Intermediate if they:

- Place **1st out of 3 or more teams in total**; or
- Place **2nd or 3rd three times accumulatively**, where there were **5 or more teams in the section.**

This includes results from CUO and other competitions.

Teams may only enter Beginner if **50% or more of the dancers in the team are entered into Beginner or Intro for solos and/or duo/duets.**



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If dancers are not entered in solos or duo/duets, teachers must use the dancers' competition experience and training level to place the team appropriately.

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## Intermediate

Intermediate is for teams who have entered numerous competitions, have placed or won at Beginner level, or are ready for a higher competitive standard.

Student teachers and trainers must dance in Intermediate or higher.

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## Advanced

Advanced is for teams who have won or placed at Intermediate level.

Advanced, qualified, professional dancers and teachers must dance in Advanced.

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## SEN

The SEN section is offered to dancers with a mental, physical, or learning disability.

To qualify for this section, dancers must be in receipt of an EHCP, which stands for Educational Health and Care Plan, and/or attend an SEN school.

For teams, all dancers must either have SEN or be directly supporting those dancers.

Scoring will only take SEN dancers into consideration.

Please contact CUO for more information if you are unsure whether this section is suitable.

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## Team Progression Rules

Teams who enter Intro may only do so once.

A team must move up to the next ability level if they:

- Place **1st out of 3 or more teams in total**; or



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- Place **2nd or 3rd three times accumulatively**, where there were **5 or more teams in the section**.

This applies to CUO events and other competitions.

CUO reserves the right to merge sections to ensure the smooth running of any event.

Examples of ability merges may include:

- Intro and Beginner
  - Intermediate and Advanced
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## Solos

Set Solos and Freestyle Solos are treated as separate abilities. This means a dancer may be entered into a different ability level for Set Solos and Freestyle Solos.

A soloist must move up to the next ability level if they:

- Place **1st out of 5 or more dancers in total**; or
- Place **2nd–5th three times accumulatively**, where there were **5 or more dancers in the section**.

If a soloist places 1st in a section with fewer than 5 dancers, this may count towards their accumulated placements, but it does not automatically require them to move up unless the section had 5 or more dancers in total.

This includes results from CUO and other competitions.

For example, if a dancer places 1st in Beginner Solos out of 5 or more dancers, they should move up to Intermediate and remain in Intermediate for future events.

For Set Solos, routines may be adapted as the dancer progresses through the levels.

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## Freestyle Duo/Duets and Set Duets

### Freestyle Duo/Duets

Freestyle Duo/Duets apply to partner sections where dancers perform freestyle or improvised routines. This usually includes Streetdance duos and may also apply to any Acro or Contemporary freestyle/improv partner sections where offered.



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Freestyle Duo/Duets must be entered at the **highest ability level of the dancers in the partnership.**

For example:

If Dancer A is entered in Beginner Solos and Dancer B is entered in Intermediate Solos, the Freestyle Duo/Duet must be entered into Intermediate.

This ensures that the partnership is entered fairly based on the highest ability level within the pair.

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## Set Duets

Set Duets apply to partner sections where dancers perform a set or pre-choreographed routine. This is most commonly used for Acro and Contemporary.

Set Duets must be entered at either:

- The highest ability level of the dancers in the duet; or
- One ability level lower than the highest ability dancer.

For example:

If Dancer A is Advanced and Dancer B is Beginner, the Set Duet must be entered into either Intermediate or Advanced. They may not enter Beginner.

If Dancer A is Intermediate and Dancer B is Beginner, the Set Duet may be entered into either Beginner or Intermediate.

CUO reserves the right to move a Set Duet if the level entered is not appropriate for the dancers' ability, experience or choreography.

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## Changing Ability Status

This applies to all sections, including:

- Teams
- Solos
- Freestyle Duo/Duets
- Set Duets
- Any other competitive section



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Once a dancer, team, freestyle duo/duet or set duet has entered an ability level, they may not move down, even if they do not place at that level, unless they are using the age-up rule.

No dancer, team, freestyle duo/duet or set duet may move back down to Intro once they have moved up.

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## Ageing Up

### Teams

If a team ages up and moves into a higher age category, they are not automatically permitted to drop an ability level.

If the team has placed 1st, 2nd, or 3rd in their current ability level, they must remain in that ability level or move up if the progression rules require it.

Ageing up does not automatically allow a team to move down an ability level or remain in the same ability level if they are required to move up.

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### Soloists

If a soloist ages up and moves into a higher age category, they may be permitted to drop down one ability level, provided they have never placed in the ability category they were previously entered in.

Soloists may not move down to Intro.

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## Team Changes

We understand that team members change and move around. For this reason, CUO uses a 50:50 rule for team progression.

If **50% or more of a winning team is made up of new members** at the next event, and those new dancers are of the same ability level or below, the team may remain in the ability level they were previously in.

If less than 50% of the team has changed, the team must follow the normal progression rules and move up if required.



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Example:

If a team of 10 dancers places 1st in Beginner, but by the next event the team has lost 5 dancers and gained 5 new Beginner-level dancers, they may remain in Beginner at the next event.

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## Annual Championships

### Soloists

Soloists must qualify for the Annual Championships by placing **1st–6th** in their section at a CUO regional event.

Soloists must enter the Championships at the ability level they qualified in.

If a soloist attends another CUO regional event before the Championships and has met the progression rules, they must move up for that regional event.

If they place **1st–6th** at the higher ability level, they will then qualify for the Championships at the higher level and must enter the Championships at that higher ability.

If they do not place **1st–6th** at the higher ability level, they must still enter the Championships at the original ability level they qualified in.

Example:

A dancer qualifies for Championships by placing 3rd in Beginner Solos.

They later attend another regional event and, if they have met the move-up rule, they must enter Intermediate.

If they place 1st–6th in Intermediate, they must enter Intermediate at Championships.

If they do not place 1st–6th in Intermediate, they must enter Beginner at Championships because that is the level they qualified in.

Once the Championships have taken place, or once the next season begins, soloists must follow the normal progression rules for future regional events.

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### Teams, Freestyle Duo/Duets and Set Duets

Teams, Freestyle Duo/Duets and Set Duets do not need to qualify for the Championships in the same way as soloists.



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Teams, Freestyle Duo/Duets and Set Duets must enter the Championships using the normal CUO ability progression rules, as if they were entering a regular competition.

This means they should enter their current correct ability level based on:

- Their previous results
- Their competition experience
- Their dancer ability levels
- CUO's progression rules

If a team, Freestyle Duo/Duet or Set Duet has met the criteria to move up, they must enter the Championships at the higher level.

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## Championships Questions

### Soloists

**Q: If I qualify for the Championships, can I attend another regional event before the Championships and try to qualify in a higher ability section?**

Yes. However, if you have met the progression rules, you must move up for that regional event.

If you place 1st–6th in the higher ability level, you must enter the Championships at the higher level.

If you do not place 1st–6th in the higher ability level, you must enter the Championships at the original level you qualified in.

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**Q: Do I have to move up in ability if I enter another regional event before the Championships and I have met the progression rules?**

Yes. For regional events, normal progression rules still apply.

However, for the Championships, soloists must enter the ability level they qualified in.

This means that if a dancer qualifies in Beginner but then moves up to Intermediate at a later regional event, they only enter Intermediate at Championships if they also qualify by placing 1st–5th in Intermediate.

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**Q: Can I choose to enter the Championships at a higher level if I did not qualify at that higher level?**

No. Soloists must enter the Championships at the ability level they qualified in.

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**Q: Can I move back down after moving up?**

No, unless the age-up rule applies.

Dancers, teams, Freestyle Duo/Duets and Set Duets cannot move back down to Intro once they have moved up.

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## Teams, Freestyle Duo/Duets and Set Duets

**Q: Do teams, Freestyle Duo/Duets and Set Duets have to qualify for the Championships?**

No. Teams, Freestyle Duo/Duets and Set Duets follow the normal CUO ability progression rules and enter the Championships at their current correct ability level.

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**Q: If my team places 1st at a regional event, do they move up for the Championships?**

Yes, if they have met the normal progression rule.

For teams, this means placing 1st out of **3 or more teams in total**, or placing 2nd or 3rd three times cumulatively where there were 5 or more teams in the section.

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**Q: If my Freestyle Duo/Duet or Set Duet places 1st at a regional event, do they move up for the Championships?**

Yes, if they have met the normal progression rule for that section.

Teams, Freestyle Duo/Duets and Set Duets should enter the Championships as though they are entering a regular CUO event, using their current correct ability level.

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# **CUO Ability Level Rules - 2026**

## **Final Notes**

CUO reserves the right to merge, split or adjust sections where needed to ensure the smooth running of the event.

CUO also reserves the right to move dancers, teams, Freestyle Duo/Duets or Set Duets into a different ability level if their entry does not reflect their experience, results or ability level.

It is the responsibility of teachers and schools to enter dancers honestly and fairly, taking into account both CUO results and results from other competitions.