

Newcomer Tid Bits

- When the weekend begins, grab a schedule or check the online schedule for the Workshops and Competitions that you want to attend.
- Social Dancing: don't be afraid to ask anyone to dance! We were ALL Newcomers at one time.
- Other than the marked reserved tables, all seating is open.
- If you have questions, ask any Newcomer Teachers or Mentors we introduce at the meeting.
- WCS events are one of the best ways to improve your dance, so HAVE FUN!
- It's about the JOURNEY, not the destination. The WCS community becomes family for many of us!

Newcomer Competitors

Jack & Jill...your partner is selected randomly

Strictly Swing...you sign up with your partner

Pro-Am Strictly Swing...You ask a Pro if they will do a Strictly Swing dance with you (a private lesson is commonly required.) Check carefully for divisions, since some events combine Newcomer and Novice

Funtests... There are generally several other contests that are more casual and fun. Check the schedule and rules to see if these contests would be fitting for you.

- **Check the schedule...** Identify your competition times and plan accordingly, allowing extra time.
- **BIB Numbers...** Don't forget your BIB number and safety pins. Don't lose your bib number. If you do, go to registration. (*Contest start will not be held for lost bibs.*)
 - ♦ Location: Regardless of gender, Follower bibs on lower back; Leader bibs on upper back.
 - ♦ Jack & Jills: Both Leaders & Followers wear bibs.
 - ♦ Strictly Swings: Only Leads (& all Ams in Pro-Am) wear bibs.
- **Be Early ...**Go to the ballroom early to warm-up. This helps calm your nerves.
- **Partners...**If you are doing a Strictly Swing, arrange to meet your partner in the ballroom.
- **Plan ahead...**Get a drink and run to the restroom before the contest.
- **Check in...** Locate the competitor line-up area and with the Floor Coordinator 10 minutes ahead of your competition.
- **Dress attire...** Appearance influences the judges. Blue jeans should be avoided, even when acceptable. Dress nicely to impress the judges and your partner. Costumes are not allowed in Jack & Jill and Strictly Swing Contests. Matching attire in SS is encouraged, but not required.
- **Avoid Wardrobe Malfunctions...**pick your clothing carefully. Bring an extra shirt if not sure.
- **Shoes...**Different dance floors have different speeds. If it's too fast, use a shoe brush on suede shoes or wear a different pair.
- **Hair & Jewelry...**Best to pull hair back. Avoid hair distractions or jewelry that can fall off or get caught.
- **BE ON TIME!...** Tardy dancers that arrive late could be scratched, and the contest will start without them.
- **Awards ...** Check the schedule for Awards schedule. If you cannot attend awards, arrange for someone to pick up any awards for you.

When in doubt ask someone! Finding a Competition Mentor is invaluable.

Tips for Strictly Swing & Jack & Jill Competitions

When I first began competing, I had no idea how much I didn't know. Many of us did not have mentors, coaches or "sponsors" to explain the competition process or protocol. We had to learn as we danced, and sometimes learning the hard way. As I began coaching students for competition, I found myself repeating a lot of the same pieces of advice. In order to encourage new dancers to explore the challenge of competition without the fear of the unknown, I compiled my own very extensive list of "*Things Competitors Should Know or Consider*" for new and experienced competitors. Not everything will apply to everybody but lots of things will apply to lots of people. I hope you find some useful info for your own purposes. – Jeanne DeGeyter

Basic Comparison of Jack & Jills and Strictly Swing Contests

The "Jack & Jill" or "Strictly Swing" Contests offer dancers the opportunity to put their social dance skills on the floor—most often in a group, called a heat. The basic differences between the two are simple and straightforward.

In a **Jack & Jill Contest**, you select neither your partner nor your music. They are both selected for you "on the contest floor."

In a **Strictly Swing Contest**, you select your partner, but the music is selected for you "on the floor" (most often by the DJ).

Both of these contests promote "choreography on the fly," good social dancing skills and proper lead, follow & dance technique. Dancers are encouraged to dance to the character, timing and hits of the music, rather than execute lengthy patterns "practiced" for presentation. Patterns that look like a routine, and obviously don't fit the music, are generally scored lower than creative, impromptu patterns that emphasize the music or lyrics. Couples are also judged on their "teamwork"—the ability to dance together. Finalists are selected in a variety of ways, so the contest rules are usually the best source for these details.

THINGS COMPETITORS SHOULD KNOW OR CONSIDER

Selecting a Partner for a Strictly Swing

1. Select a partner with a similar dance style and skill level as yourself.
2. Partners should agree on degree of commitment (time, money, contest, etc)
3. Select someone with whom you have already danced and enjoy his or her company.
4. Agree on which competition and category.
5. Be aware of differences and similarities in communication styles.

Eligibility, Rules and Registration

1. Be sure to read the rules for the specific event, contest and category to determine your eligibility to

compete in the category. If you have any questions, always contact your coach, club rep, or the event coordinator.

2. Always read the rules for dance restrictions, such as: lifts, drops, apart dancing, looking at the judges, costumes, etc.
3. Determine the registration requirements: forms, cost, deadline, etc.

Practicing for a Strictly Swing or Jack & Jill

1. Work on the feel and connection of your partnership primarily by social dancing.
2. Practice time should focus on improving the lead and follow of your existing dance skills and patterns. Focus