



National Governing Body of DanceSport, Member
Organization of the US Olympic Committee, and the
World DanceSport Federation



Gender Neutral FAQs

USA Dance Gender Neutral mission statement:

USA Dance is committed to the full inclusion of all dance athletes regardless of race, color, religion (creed), age, national origin (ancestry), marital status, gender, gender expression, or sexual orientation. To this end the Gender Neutral Committee (GNC) was formed as a subcommittee of the Dance Sport Council (DSC) to address the necessary changes in the rulebook, competition structure, costuming, language, etc., to support fully-integrated participation of couples of any gender configuration at USA Dance sanctioned competitions.

Why do this in the first place?

Ballroom dancers have always prided themselves on being a friendly, welcoming group. People of all ages, backgrounds, political affiliations and economic levels enjoy social and competitive partner dancing. It shouldn't be any different based on gender. It is clearly discriminatory that a married couple, who happen to be the same gender, currently aren't able to compete as partners in a mainstream ballroom dance competition. And given how many more women than men are drawn to ballroom dancing, single women's opportunities to compete are also being limited by requiring them to dance with a male leader. Integrating gender neutral competitive dancing creates more opportunities for everyone and helps USA Dance grow!

What language to use now?

Going forward, USA Dance competitions will be gender neutral, meaning lead and follow roles will not be dependent on either sex or gender identification. A couple will be defined as a pair of two athletes, with no gender specified. The GNC has removed gendered language from the USA Dance rulebook. Male, female, and non-binary athletes will no longer be confined by the rulebook to a particular role based on (perceived) gender.

Given there are multiple gender configurations that may make up a couple, the term "same-sex" is no longer applicable. Likewise, reference to one or the other member of the couple won't be by gender but by role, i.e., referring to "the leader" rather than "the gentleman" and "the follower" rather than "the lady".

Increased inclusivity will mean that more dancers who are transgender, identify as non-binary, or have a different relationship to gender will be present in the organization. Some of these dancers may have specific pronoun preferences, such as "they/them" instead of "he/his or she/hers." It is appropriate to ask someone for their preferred pronouns, as long as it's done respectfully.



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Will everyone be integrated or will gender neutral couples compete in separate events?

Gender neutral couples will compete in the same divisions alongside traditional couples and be judged on the same criteria. 1) It isn't feasible for competition organizers to add separate gender neutral categories in each division to an already packed event schedule. 2) Gender neutral couples, like any competitor, want to measure their dance skills and abilities against the best couples at their age and experience levels, no matter the gender configuration. At a fully integrated gender neutral competition, all leaders (and/or followers) in a category will be judged by the same criteria against all other leaders (and/or followers), regardless of gender.

Will there be a designated lead and follow?

For syllabus proficiency levels, the lead and follow are required to be consistent for the entirety of a song, and through all subsequent rounds if the couple is recalled. Partners may switch roles from one event/division to another, however. For example, one partner may lead in Bronze Rumba but follow in Bronze Swing or Silver Rumba. The designated leader will always wear a number affixed to their back.

What will costumes look like?

It has been common practice at "same-sex" ballroom dance events that two men dancing together typically both wear traditional male competition attire appropriate to the event in which they are dancing. Two women dancing together sometimes both wear dresses or the leader may wear pants and a shirt similar to the traditional male competitive costume.

As always, competitors will be required to wear numbers to identify themselves to the judges. Consistent with costuming rules in the DanceSport Rulebook, the competitor in a partnership who identifies as the lead will affix a number to their back between their shoulders and their waist. The exact placement will depend on the construction of the competitor's costume but the goal is for competitors to maintain visibility of their number at all times on the floor.

The GNC is in the process of revising the DanceSport Rulebook. We are working to develop a consistent policy that is both sensitive to the needs of all competitors and maintains appropriate coverage of intimate areas of the body. We hope that once these rulebook changes are implemented, competitors will feel encouraged to wear a costume that celebrates their identity and is in good taste.

How will dressing rooms be handled?

Organizers will provide a gender neutral dressing room, in addition to a men's and women's dressing room. Athletes who are more comfortable changing only in front of others of their same gender can use the traditional dressing rooms and a third will be available for all to use.