

# **Competition Handbook**

**Your guide to expectations, conventions, and the inner workings of  
UVA's away competitions.**

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## Explanation of the Competition

I thought the best way for you to feel comfortable with the idea of competing is to be fully aware of what competing entails. This booklet is meant to provide information about the competition and hopefully answer any questions you might have. I thought it would be best to start off with a description of how the competition is run. Most begin with a social dance on Friday night where you can practice your skills, warm up, get used to the room, bond with your fellow teammates, and get to know some of the dancers from other schools. At some competitions, however, like Harvard, the social dance is on Saturday. This provides a good way to unwind after a long day of competing.

The actual competition usually begins on Saturday morning. It is important for our team to arrive early so we can fix any registration problems, secure a table, get dressed, finish makeup and hair for the girls, and get in the proper competition mindset. We will be waking up EARLY on Saturday. The Presidents and Competition Captain will be making sure everyone is up and ready to leave on time. It is important for the girls to have their hair and makeup mostly done before we leave. We will all leave as a group and arrive at the competition as a group. We want to promote the team and foster team spirit, which I will discuss more later on.

The competition events will be divided into sections. There will be a break for lunch. Generally, we try to send only a few people to get lunch for everyone so that our gear is accounted for and we are aware of any announcements that are made. Also, we all compete at different times (in different events) so we will all be free for meals at different times. Dinner is generally the same kind of deal. Meals are really not a big

deal. They will make more sense when you are actually at the competition. Make sure that you bring money for meals and snacks.

When your event is announced, you will line up with your partner in the on-deck area. We will discuss in practices how to enter the floor and will also go over proper dance hold. Generally 12-20 couples will take the floor at the same time. Try to get a spot near the center of the floor, on the outside, with plenty of space, and near the judges. The beginning of your performance is generally better than the end, so it is good to start near the judges where they will watch you at your best. Make sure for the traveling dances (Standard and smooth) you move in the line of dance. We will go over all of this during the competition practices. We will have four couples take the floor together, have you practice dancing in front of an audience, and give positive feedback so that we will all be comfortable and confident competing. It is really not a scary situation. The important thing is to have fun and enjoy yourself. As long as you are smiling, you are more likely to do well, and the judges are less likely to notice your mistakes. When you are done with your event, you will leave the floor and return to your loving team. Another event will begin after yours ends. After a few more events, the MC will announce the numbers of those couples who have made callbacks. Make sure you know your number and are listening for it. If you get called back, the process will repeat. Eventually, you will either not get called back, or you will get a ribbon. Let's hope it's the latter. ☺ Either way, it is a fun challenge, and your fellow teammates will be there to cheer you on the whole time. By the end, you won't believe how close the team has become.

## Syllabi, Rules, and Description of Events

Below is the ISTD Syllabus which I found on the Princeton Website:

[http://www.ee.princeton.edu/~aria/syllabus\\_ISTD.html](http://www.ee.princeton.edu/~aria/syllabus_ISTD.html) Please consult their website for more information.

Here are some rules that usually apply to every competition we attend.

**Level eligibility is in accordance to the YCN/USABDA Proficiency points system.**

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**You may only compete in one level for a particular dance/style.**

This means that you cannot do both Bronze and Silver American Style Foxtrot, but you can do Bronze American Style Foxtrot and Silver International Style Foxtrot.

**There is one exception: If you are dancing in Gold or Championship, you may also dance in Novice. There are also a few "Open" events that are open to all and not subject to this restriction.**

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**The levels are defined as follows:**

**Newcomer** = Started dancing no earlier than August of that school year. (for the school year 2003-2004, this means August 2003.)

**Bronze** = Only Bronze steps may be danced.

**Silver** = Only Bronze and Silver steps may be danced.

**Gold** = Bronze, Silver, and Gold steps may be danced. No open work.

**Novice** = Open work permitted.

**Pre-Champ/Champ** = Open work permitted and encouraged :)

**Open and Fun events** = No syllabus restriction

We will be using the ISTD syllabus for international style and the NDCA syllabus for American style. All participants must use these syllabi and rules.

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Costumes:

**Newcomer/Bronze: no costumes allowed**

**Silver/Gold/Novice/Pre-Champ/Champ/Open/Fun: costumes allowed.**

*Women may wear pants, but are not encouraged to do so.*

## Transportation, Accommodation, and Registration

The Competition Captain is in charge of Registration. Competitors will choose their own partners and let me know by the designated date who they are dancing with and what dances they will be competing in. They will also pay me the registration fee at this time. For some of our competitions the club will pay the registration fee. For those competitions, you will either receive a refund of your registration fee (if you have already paid) or you will not have to pay me. For those that the club is not funding, you will have to pay me when you sign up to go, or you will not be going. This is to avoid late fees and ensure that all of our competitors are registered by the registration date. I will then go ahead and register everybody through the competition website. Please do not register yourself unless you are competing independently from the club.

The host schools for the competitions we attend offer free housing with their members. We take advantage of this to cut down on costs. This is one reason it is imperative that I know who is going early, as this housing is often first come, first serve. Once the school has let me know with whom we are rooming, I divide the housing up, usually by car pools. This cuts down on the driving that our drivers have to do. We use car pools to get to our competitions. These are generally decided based upon when competitors can leave for the competition (i.e. when classes end.) I provide car pool packets for every competition we attend. These include housing information, competition information, cell phone numbers of those going, directions, and other pertinent information. Please do not lose these packets as they contain very important information. Until we leave, these packets are the drivers' responsibilities. Make sure, especially, that

you have the list of cell phone numbers as this is our main means of communication while we are on the road.

## Attire and Partnering

For all of our competitions, partnering will be the competitors' responsibility. Competitors must decide who they want to dance with and what dances they wish to do. If you are new to the club, and it is your first competition, we will have a TBA list from which we will try to partner people. This is not a guaranteed thing, however, as we often get more girls than guys on this list. Also, if you agree to be on this list, you must understand that it is your responsibility to make it work. The club is not responsible for partnering problems. You can also have me register you as TBA. At the competition, they often have a list of people who are TBA, and you can find a partner this way. Please remember, though, that it is your responsibility to find those people from other schools. Also, be advised that you will not get sufficient practice time together.

As for costumes, the club has a large collection of dresses that girls can borrow. Please see the costume chair or assistant about borrowing costumes. Generally, they will bring some to a practice for girls to try on. You can also use your own clothes. Dresses with fuller skirts that allow for maximum movement are best. Latin attire can be any clubbing top and a black skirt. Go wild. If you have questions, you can always ask the costume chair or past competitors. We are always happy to talk about costumes. The club also has several ballgowns for our silver competitors. Please see our costume chair and assistant about these gowns.

For the men, black pants and tight black shirts are recommended for Latin. For standard, slacks, dress shirts and ties are required. For the silver level, tuxes are allowed. Look nice, and remember black socks.

## Competition Behavior

Competitions are a lot of fun and are an excellent way to show school spirit. We are always one of the loudest, most spirited schools in attendance. UVA has built up a solid reputation, partly because of our dancing, but mostly because of our attitude. We always cheer on the other competitors, both from our school, and from the other schools in attendance. We frequently choose our favorite couples in the events and cheer for them. We are positive, fun, cheerful competitors, and other schools like that about us. We are often personally invited to attend competitions and events hosted by the other schools we compete against. They love us, and we love them. We have worked hard to establish these good relations, so we expect that all of our competitors will also try to keep the good will. We ask that you remember that you are a representative of this school and of the UVA Ballroom Dance Club and that you act accordingly. People are watching us and taking note. Let's show them why UVA is the best school around! 😊

## Big Siblings and the Fun Aspects of the Comp

Competitions are supposed to be fun, but we recognize that they can be a little scary and nerve racking. Therefore, we have established some fun traditions to ease the competition stress. New couples are paired with couples who have competed before. They are there as a resource, and they are happy to answer any questions you might still have about the competition process. Often, I am extremely busy during the competition season, planning and organizing our travel plans and registration. While I am always happy to answer questions and advice, I am sometimes not available. Big siblings allow us to compensate for this. Also, I realize that sometimes new couples are intimidated by the officers and might not be comfortable approaching us. With big siblings, these new couples have someone they know well who they can turn to if they have problems. And, it establishes closer bonds within the club. Always a plus!

This leads me to my next point: Partner/Ballroom Love! Your partner is the most important person in the club. Without them, you would not be able to compete. You are a team, and we want our couples to love and appreciate each other. To help foster partner love, we try to come up with fun activities you can do for your partner. One year we did an obstacle course, where the guys had to lead their blindfolded partners. For another competition, we had each competitor make a card for their partner. I also think that Club Ballroom Love is important, so I have been known to do such things as award paper plate awards at the end of the year, and write notes to all of the competitors, wishing them luck. We understand that competitions can be stressful and scary, but they should also be fun, and we try hard to think of things that will make them more fun. If you have any ideas for ballroom or partner love, feel free to tell me, and we'll see what we can do!

## Pack List

- A snack or lunch for Friday so you don't have to make lots of stops on the way
- Sleeping bag, pillow, towel
- Pajamas
- Smooth costume (black socks, boys!)
- Latin costume
- Tights or hose for girls
- Dance shoes
- Comfy shoes and lounging clothes for the ride up and down
- UVA Ballroom T-shirt, jacket, and something for the bottom half
- Clothes for the social dance
- Camera and film
- Makeup and hair accessories
- Big jewelry
- Toiletries
- Snacks and water
- Money for food and gas
- Something good to read in the downtime (can anyone say homework?)
- The words to the Good Old Song if you don't know it. ☺
- Your happy, cheerful, confident selves. You are going to dance beautifully, I know!