



Athlete Handbook and Rules for Singles Skating

OVERVIEW

The U.S. Figure Skating National Qualifying Series (NQS) was approved by the 2018 Governing Council and will go into effect in the summer of 2019 to serve the following purposes:

1. An additional / alternative way for athletes to advance to the Sectional Singles Final (*formally known as Sectional Championships*).
2. An opportunity for athletes at the juvenile – senior levels to earn an official sectional and national ranking at their level and virtually compete against athletes from all parts of the country.

The NQS is a series of official U.S. Figure Skating approved competitions hosted individually by member clubs nationwide, during the summer months, that are held in a standard format and in which athletes earn official scores towards a national rank. The competitions will be held between May 31, 2019 and September 15, 2019.

All competitions accepted into the NQS must agree to the following U.S. Figure Skating requirements:

1. Use a panel of officials, of a minimum level, approved by the Domestic Selections Committee
2. Conduct the NQS events in accordance with U.S. Figure Skating rule 2460, so all events are standard and comparable across the country.
3. Utilize U.S. Figure Skating's Event Management System (EMS) for registration, officials' management and results transmission.
4. Utilize the International Judging System (IJS) and the official calculation software with the latest related version of the software and official judging system hardware.

For NQS competitions approved for singles, click [HERE](#).

ATHLETE ENTRIES, PARTICIPATION AND QUALIFYING PROCESS:

STEP 1: Enter the National Qualifying Series. Entry deadline is May 28, 2019, by logging onto Members Only, and selecting, **Event Management System (EMS)**. **Late entries are not accepted.** The overall entry fee to participate in the NQS is \$25.00 per event, (nonrefundable), paid at the time of entry. Athletes are not required to select their competitions at this point, only to register as an overall participant.

STEP 2: Determination of level. Athletes may skate at their current test level, or “skate up” one level. Athletes may also choose to complete two separate entries (and pay two entry fees of \$25) and compete in two levels, if they are age and test eligible for both.

HOWEVER: Athletes may not compete at two levels in the same competition. For example, a female skater that is 11 years old and has passed the juvenile FS tests may enter both juvenile girls and intermediate ladies. This skater may enter competition # 1 in juvenile and competition # 2 in intermediate, but not both juvenile and intermediate at competition # 1. In this case, the skater would receive two separate national rankings at the end of the NQS, in juvenile and intermediate.

STEP 3: Determination of section. Athletes are automatically entered in one of the three sections (Eastern, Midwestern, or Pacific Coast) for the NQS, based on the location of their home club, or if an individual member, their home address. Athletes will remain in this section, for their section ranking, for the duration of the NQS. Athletes will have an opportunity to change regions/sections prior to the next phase of the qualifying competition season (Regional Challenge and Sectional Final).

STEP 4: Entry to individual competitions. After officially entering the NQS, the athlete then individually selects competitions to enter. This can be as few or as many as desired, in any location around the country. Athletes must enter each competition directly, via U.S. Figure Skating’s EMS, in accordance with the entry deadline and entry fees set by that competition. It is the responsibility of the athlete to register for each competition and follow any entry rules set by that competition. Entering the NQS, does not enter the athlete into any competitions.

STEP 5: Standings and Results. After each NQS competition is completed, the combined Total Score earned by each competing athlete will be pulled by U.S. Figure Skating, and the running standings updated on Members Only / EMS. Standings will be posted for each category (i.e., juvenile girls) by section and for the entire country. Only each skater’s current highest Total Score will be counted. (For example, if a skater competes in competition #2, but had a higher Total Score in competition #1, their score from competition # 1 would remain). The placements of skaters at any NQS competition are not relevant, only the Total Score earned by each athlete. (See conduct of competition below for details).

Skaters that compete but have not yet advanced out of a qualifying round, are listed below the final standings, as competitors. Skaters that entered the NQS, but haven’t competed yet, will not appear until they skate a competition.

STEP 6: Results / The conclusion of the NQS. After the last event in the NQS, the scores become final, with only one Total Score (the highest) per athlete counting. The following will be the official results of the series:

1. There will be a National Ranking for each level, with **all** athletes the competed in at least one competition earning a certificate and a pin. Any athlete that did not earn a combined Total Score will receive the ranking of “competitor.”
2. Athletes earning a Total Score that is in the Top 6 of their assigned section, will be offered an automatic advancement (bye) to their Sectional Singles Final.
3. Athletes that register for the NQS but fail to skate in a competition will not receive a competitor certificate / pin.

STEP 7: The Qualifying Season Starts

After the conclusion of the NQS, the regular qualifying season starts. All athletes, regardless of ranking, that wish to continue advancing through the qualifying season must enter the Qualifying Season (Regional Singles Challenge) by September 1, 2019, no exceptions. All current rules regarding the qualifying system come into play (this has not changed):

- a. Athletes must have passed the appropriate test for the level they wish to enter by September 1.
- b. All singles athletes, not also competing in pairs or dance, must enter the region of their home club, by Sept 1.
- c. How byes earned in the NQS are handled:
 - The top 6 athletes in each section, in each level, that have also entered the qualifying season (Regional Singles Challenge) by September 1, are contacted via email and offered a bye to their Sectional Singles Final. They may choose to accept the bye or compete at their regional. Regardless, they have secured their spot at their sectional final. If the athlete chooses to compete, and finishes lower than 4th, he or she still advances to the Sectional Final. (If they finish in the top 4, the next highest placing skater without a bye also advances.)
 - Byes may not cross levels and sections. If a skater competed in two levels in the NQS, for example, placing 5th in juvenile and 10th in intermediate, and wants to use the bye to advance to sectionals, they must compete in juvenile, and not pass the intermediate test. If the skater wants to compete intermediate, they must test intermediate, the juvenile bye would be forfeited, and be offered to the next skater. If a skater earned a bye, for example, through Pacific Coast, then wants to change home clubs to one in the Southwestern region, he or she would forfeit the bye, and be required to compete at the Southwestern Regional Singles Challenge.

NOTE: The NQS and official qualifying season, which consists of the Regional Singles Challenge, the Sectional Singles Final and the U.S. Figure Skating Championships or National High Performance Development Team, are considered two separate programs/events, with two separate results and rewards. Athletes may compete in either or both to be considered qualifying athletes. The only thing that applies to both programs is the “bye” to the Sectional Singles Challenge earned by the top six skaters in each level, per section. Athletes **ARE NOT** required to compete in the NQS to enter the Regional Singles Challenge, and can advance through the qualifying system, simply by entering only the Regional Singles Challenge by September 1.

**Illustration of the NQS and Qualifying Season –
They are two separate programs. Athletes may enter either or both:**

NQS.
Register by May 28th.

*Official qualifying season. **All** athletes must register for the qualifying season by Sept. 1st and be test / age eligible to continue. NQS registration does not carry over.*



Time	June - September	October	November	January
Event	NQS	Regional Singles Challenge	Sectional Singles Final	U.S. Champs. Or National HPTDC
Entry	Open entry	Open entry	6 from NQS + 12 from regional	Top 12 from sectional
Advancement	Top 6 per section are offered a bye to Sectional Singles Final	Top 4 per region advance to Sectional Singles Final	Top 4 per sectional advance to U.S. Championships/ NHPDT	Athletes selected for international competitions
Title / Result	National Ranking	Regional Champion	Sectional Champion	U.S. Champion / NHPDT participant

EVENTS TO BE SKATED and CONDUCT of COMPETITION:

The following events will be offered at all NQS singles competitions:

- Juvenile Girls and Boys / Rule 6450
- Intermediate Ladies and Men / Rule 6440
- Novice Ladies and Men / Rule 6430
- Junior Ladies and Men / Rule 6420
- Senior Ladies and Men / Rule 6410

Technical Information regarding short programs and well-balanced program free skates, is as of the latest information posted at this web site: <http://www.usfigureskating.org/story?id=84109>.

All NQS events will be conducted in accordance with Rule 2460, which is summarized by the following: Qualifying rounds will be held at any NQS competition where there are more than 24 entries in one event. Groups and numbers advancing to the championship round will be determined by the following chart, found in Rule 2466:

Entries	Qualifying Round (QR)			Championship Round (CR)
	Number of Groups	Number Advancing/Group	Additional Number Advancing by Score	Total Number Advancing
25-36	2	4	+4 next highest scores	12
37-54	3	4	+4 next highest scores	16
55-72	4	4	+4 next highest scores	20
73-90	5	4	+4 next highest scores	24
91-144	6	4	+4 next highest scores	28
145-196	7	4	+4 next highest scores	32

If held, the qualifying round will consist of a free skate only, with the appropriate number of athletes advancing to the championship round. The championship round will consist of a combined short program and free skate competition, resulting in a final Total Score (intermediate – senior) or a championship free skate only Total Score (juvenile). (In competitions where there are 24 or fewer entries, there is no qualifying round and all skaters are considered to be competing in the championship round).

The skater's Total Score (TS) from the competition will be the combined short program and free skate score in the championship round (intermediate – senior) or free skate score in the championship round (juvenile). Scores earned in the qualifying round of an NQS event are not considered in the current standings for the NQS.

NOTE: *If an athlete competes but does not advance to any championship rounds at any NQS competitions during the series, nor competes in a competition without qualifying rounds, they will not receive an official national ranking in the series. However, their name will be listed and recognized as a competitor and will receive a competitor certificate and pin.*

Consolation Rounds: It is highly recommended to host competitions, that if qualifying rounds are necessary for intermediate and higher, a consolation round is held for competitors that do not qualify for the championship round. Consolation rounds include the short program only and are under the jurisdiction of the host competition; scores from consolation rounds are not transmitted to U.S. Figure Skating. The purpose of the consolation round is so all competitors can compete their short program.

Please see the individual competition announcement for information and rules regarding the consolation round.

COMPETITION RESULTS, STANDINGS, TITLES and AWARDS

Results: Each NQS competition will post event results on-site and distribute awards, such as trophies, medals, ribbons, etc., as usual. These are specific to that competition (not the NQS overall) and are not under the jurisdiction of U.S. Figure Skating. Please see the individual competition announcements for awards on-site at each event.

Standings: At the end of the NQS competition, each skater's Total Score (combined SP + FS from the championship round), is transmitted to the final standings in EMS, which are updated continually, and as soon as possible following each event. Only a skater's current highest Total Score is officially recorded. If a skater finishes a competition and beats their previous high score, their score will be updated. If a skater competes, but does not beat their current high score, the previous score stands. If a skater competes in a qualifying round, but does not advance to a championship round, and this is their first competition, they will be listed at the bottom, as a competitor.

Athletes are welcome to compete as many or as few times as they wish, with only their highest Total Score officially counting towards the national ranking and advancing to the Sectional Singles Final. Earning a lower score, or not making championship round at a subsequent competition, will not negatively impact an athlete's standing.

Awards: At the end of the last NQS competition of the season, all scores will become "official" and athletes will receive the following:

1. A sectional ranking; with the Top 6 athletes per level, per section being offered a Bye to their respective Sectional Singles Final.
2. A national ranking; their ranking among skaters in the U.S.
3. A certificate with either their ranking number or "competitor" designated. *(Athletes ranking below the top 50% of all competitors, or not earning a Total Score, will receive a certificate that says "competitor" in lieu of their actual ranking number).*
4. Athletes finishing in the Top 25% nationally will receive a gold pin.
5. Athletes finishing in the Top 26-50% nationally will receive a silver pin.
6. All athletes below the Top 50%, including those not earning at Total Score, will receive a competitor pin.
7. Athletes that register for the NQS but don't skate in any competitions will not receive a competitor certificate or pin.

Titles: There are NO titles or championships awarded through the National Qualifying Series. Athletes earn a rank, a pin, a certificate and the opportunity to earn a bye to the next level of competition (Sectional Singles Final). The highest placing athletes in the NQS is **NOT** considered a national champion. That title is reserved for the U.S. Figure Skating Championships.

APPENDIX / FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

How involved will U.S. Figure Skating be in the running of the individual NQS competitions?

U.S. Figure Skating requires that NQS competitions follow a set of standards to provide a consistent, high quality competition for competitors to compare scores across the U.S. This includes using the Event Management System (EMS) for registration and transmittal of IJS scores, the approved standard of event conduct (with regards to qualifying and championship rounds), the newest IJS software and the approved level of officials.

U.S. Figure Skating only oversees the conduct of the official NQS events within the competition (Juvenile – Senior), and will not have any authority over the schedule, entry fees, practice ice, deadlines, etc. In addition, U.S. Figure Skating will have no authority over specialty or other events such as Excel, showcase, levels below juvenile, specialty events, etc.

I forgot to enter the NQS by May 28th. Can I still compete in competitions that are part of the series?

Yes! Any athlete can enter any competition, regardless of NQS status, in fact, there may be some non-U.S. competitors participating! If an athlete is not registered as part of the NQS, their Total Score will not be extracted from the competition scores transmitted to EMS and will simply be ignored in the NQS standings. So, while you will not receive a national ranking in the NQS, you can still compete as usual for participation and experience.

I forgot to enter the NQS by May 28th, can I still go to regionals?

Yes! You may still enter the qualifying system by September 1, compete at the Regional Singles Challenge and have an opportunity to advance to the Sectional Singles Final, and thus the National High-Performance Development Team Camp or U.S. Figure Skating Championships.

I entered the NQS by May 28th, but I forgot to send in my entry to the competition I wanted to enter and missed their entry deadline. What should I do?

Each NQS competition entry is handled by the host competition. Read the competition announcement for their policy on late entries. If late entries are not accepted, you will not be allowed to enter that competition. However, there are no limits or restrictions which event you can enter, so enter a different competition that has a later entry deadline.

Can I compete out of my section?

Yes! Skaters can enter any NQS competition, in any location they wish. Their Total Score counts towards the NQS ranking, and towards earning a bye to their sectional, regardless of the location of the competition.

Is there an advantage to competing at one NQS competition vs. a different one based on how “competitive” I think it will be?

No. A skater’s placement in a competition doesn’t matter, only their Total Score. The Top 10 scores in the U.S. may come from the same competition or may be scattered all over the country. Each competition, you are trying to earn your “personal best,” to see if you can top a previous score.

The only consideration might be the expected number of participants in a level. If a skater is concerned about not earning a Total Score because they don’t qualify for a championship round, they might consider competing at least one competition that historically has had fewer than 24 entries in their level to ensure they earn at least one combined Total Score. (Remember, that ALL skaters that compete at least once will receive status as a competitor and receive a certificate and a pin, regardless of whether they make a championship round).

When I entered the NQS in May, my home club was in the Northwest Pacific region / Pacific Coast section. I moved to Colorado, and I’m now in the Southwestern region / Midwestern Section. I finished 5th in the Pacific Coast section in Intermediate! Can I take my bye to Midwesterns, instead?

No. While, it is fine to compete out of a different region for the rest of the qualifying system than you did at the NQS, byes do not carry over. You have two choices in this case: 1) Remain a member of your old home club, accept your bye and compete at the Pacific Coast Singles Final. 2) Change home clubs, forfeit your bye and start over at the Southwestern Regional Singles Challenge. If you place in the top 4, you advance to the Midwest Singles Final.

I’m not sure whether I want to stay Juvenile or move up to Intermediate? Can I do both?

Yes! Skaters may complete two separate entries for the NQS, in two different levels, if they choose, and are test-eligible for both. (I.e., a skater that has passed Juvenile FS may enter both Juvenile and Intermediate). **However, they may not enter two levels at the same competition.** (i.e., they could enter Juvenile at competition 1, and have their score count towards the juvenile NQS standings, and enter Intermediate at competition 2, with that score counting towards the intermediate NQS standings.)

However, at the end of the NQS, to continue in the qualifying season, the skater must enter the Regional Singles Challenge, by September 1st, in only one level, which they are test eligible for. Further, byes do not cross levels. For example, if a skater that has passed Juvenile FS, finishes 5th in Midwestern NQS in Juvenile, and 10th in the Intermediate NQS, she may elect to **either** a) enter the qualifying system as a juvenile and accept a bye to compete juvenile girls at the Midwestern Singles Final **or** b) pass the Intermediate FS test, decline her bye, and enter the qualifying system in intermediate ladies, entering the Regional Singles Challenge. In the event she elected option b, the 7th place finisher in juvenile would earn the bye to the Midwestern Singles Final.

I competed in Intermediate Ladies all summer at the NQS, but I didn't finish in the Top 6 and haven't passed my Intermediate FS test yet. I want to compete at regionals. Can I do that? How?

Yes! You must enter the qualifying system (i.e., Regionals) via Members Only by September 1, just as in past years and have passed your Intermediate FS test as of September 1. You can either take the test at a stand-alone test session, or if you achieved the [minimum IJS scores](#) to earn test credit at any of your summer competitions, and obtained the appropriate documentation while you were there, you may submit it to your test chair to receive credit.

I competed in Novice Ladies at the NQS and finished 4th – so I earned a bye! But, my Regional Singles Challenge is really close to home, and I'd like to compete there. Can I do that? What happens if I finish lower than 4th?

Yes! Your 4th place ranking in your section in the NQS has reserved you a spot at your Sectional Singles Final, if you enter the qualifying system, regardless of whether you compete at regionals. You may choose to compete at your Regional Singles Challenge, but your placement there won't be considered in advancement. If you finish in the top 4, you'll advance to onto sectionals, and so will the 5th place skater in your event. If you finish below 4th, you will also advance onto sectionals, along with those who placed 1st – 4th. No matter what, 18 athletes (6 from the NQS + the top 4 from each region who don't already have a bye) in each level, in each section, will get to compete at the Sectional Singles Final.

What happens if a skater ranked in the top 6 at in the NQS forgets to enter the qualifying system by September 1st?

All skaters must enter the qualifying system by September 1st (just like now), to compete, regardless of whether they earned a bye to the next event. There are no exceptions this rule; if a skater fails to enter the qualifying system by September 1st, they may not advance, their bye is forfeited, and the next athlete is offered their bye. Byes earned in the NQS will be treated the same way international byes are treated currently. Athletes progress automatically, as long as they enter the qualifying system by the entry deadline.