FACTORS OF DIFFICULTY IN SYNCHRONIZED SKATING

Judges Handbook V, Synchronized Skating

Factors of Difficulty in Synchronized Skating

Synchronized Skating elements are divided into the following basic groups: Circles, Lines, Blocks, Wheels, Intersections and Movements in Isolation. Additionally new elements are required in the senior short program: Moves in the field and Spins. In the free skating more figure skating elements such as lifts, jumps, spins and pair elements are used and need to be evaluated. As a guideline for judging the following Difficulty Factors has been agreed upon. The SySTC and the SyS Coaches Development Commission has come to the consensus that is presented in this updated version of Chapter 3 of the Judges Handbook for Synchronized Skating from 1999.

To begin the evaluation, all formations / elements are considered done with the same difficulty factors, i.e. same hold, same step sequence, same speed, without traveling etc. Elements in each category, circles, lines, blocks, wheels, intersections, movements in isolation and additionally lifts, moves in the fields, pair elements and spins are divided in easier, more difficult and most difficult. Within these groups the order of difficulty is random.

In this chapter the elements are divided into three (3) levels.

Level 1: Lowest level of difficulty (Easiest)
Level 2: Medium level of difficulty
Level 3: Highest Level of difficulty (Most difficult)

Once the degree of difficulty of the basic formation is understood, the following adding factors are added to each basic group. There is no ranking or specific order to these difficulty factors and they are listed alphabetically.

· **Direction**
· **Free Skating Moves**
· **Holds**
· **Originality**
. **Pivoting**
· **Speed**
· **Step Sequences**
· **Transitions (see separate section)**
· **Traveling**

The descriptions and diagrams that follow include some of the elements being executed. This list is not meant to be all inclusive. New and unique formations and combinations are constantly being developed. The possibilities are endless.

Remember a well executed easier element is better than a poorly executed more difficult element. An easier element, in the right place or even used as a transition which emphasizes a musical phrase or used as a highlight, may be very effective.
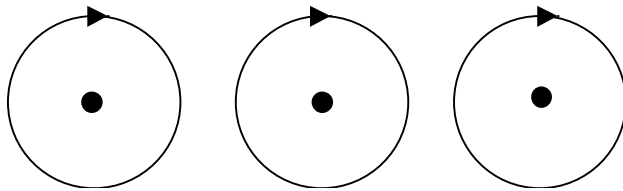
CIRCLES

The main purpose of the circle element is to show the ability to control the rotation of the circle and the use of difficult step sequences with high edge quality.

Level 1 - Lowest degree of difficulty (random ranking order):

The key to difficulty is the transition(s) into the circle(s) from the initiating or starting formation.
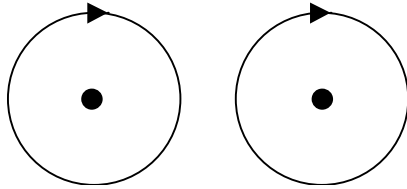
· <u>**Three (3) or more Side by Side circles rotating in the same direction:**</u>
Very easy to maintain shape as fewer skaters are in each circle. Difficult to perform quality step sequences in smaller circles with speed.
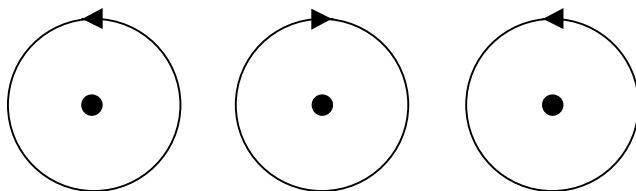
· <u>**Two (2) Side by Side Circles rotating in the same direction:**</u>
Circles are bigger thus harder to maintain round shape. Risk is higher if the two (2) circles are very close.
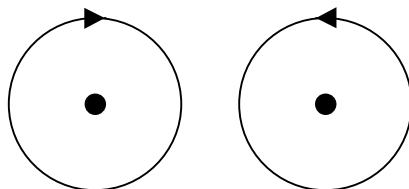
·<u>**Three (3) Side by Side circles rotating in opposing directions:**</u>
Increased risk and difficulty factor if the circles are close to each other.

· <u>**Two (2) Side by Side circles rotating in opposing directions:**</u>
Circles are bigger thus harder to maintain round shape.

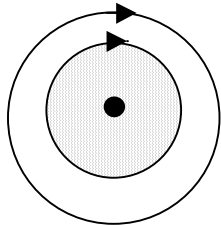## Level 2 -Medium degree of difficulty (random ranking order):

· Three (3) circles each rotating in the same direction:
Difficulty level will be increased if the three circles are comprised of equal number of skaters and rotating in close proximity to each other. Difficulty lies in maintaining equal distance between all the circles.
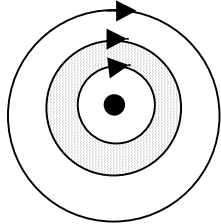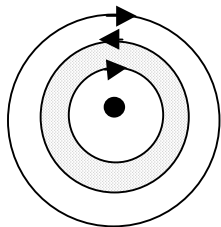
· Two (2) circles each rotating in the same direction:
Circles are bigger. Difficulty level will be increased if the two circles are comprised of equal number of skaters and skating in close proximity to each other. Difficulty lies in maintaining equal distance between the circles.

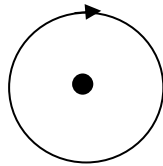**·Three (3) circles each rotating in opposing directions:**
Even though circles are smaller the transition into is more difficult. Difficulty lies in maintaining equal distance between all the circles.

## Level 3 - Highest degree of difficulty (random ranking order):

·One (1) circle:
 The larger the circle is, the more difficult it is to maintain the shape. The quicker the correct circle is established the more difficult it becomes to maintain.

· Two (2) circles each rotating in opposing directions:
Difficulty level will be increased if the two circles are comprised of equal number of skaters and skating in close proximity to each other. Transition into is more difficult. Difficulty lies in maintaining equal distance between the circles.
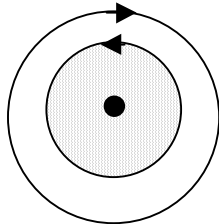
ADDING FACTORS - CIRCLES *(listed alphabetically)*

CIRCLE DIAMETER
·Circles that change in diameter are difficult. Changing the size of the circle from large to small has a higher degree of difficulty due to centrifugal force.

DIRECTION
· The change of direction means change of rotation (clockwise and counterclockwise).
· It is most difficult to perform steps with speed while changing direction. The difficulty of steps must be judged.
· The quicker and smoother the directions change without stopping, the more difficult.

FREE SKATING MOVES
· Adding free skating moves will increase the difficulty of maintaining the unison of the circle.
· Free skating moves that have a maintained and equal glide are more difficult.
· The centrifugal force exerted on the skaters when executing free skating moves and thus the difficulty factor, increases proportionally as the speed of the circle increases.

HOLDS
· The less stable the hold, the more difficult maintaining the circle shape becomes,   i.e. hand holds.
· A hold change that increases or decreases the diameter of the circle makes maintaining the circle shape more difficult, i.e. shoulder to hand hold.
· A shoulder hold in a circle is less difficult than a hand hold as the hand may slip off the shoulder without effecting the overall formation. There is no such leeway for a hand hold or an elbow hold and the circle will break if the forces acting on a skater are too great for him/her to control.
· A change of hold that occurs after a release turn increases the difficulty of the circle.
· A change of hold that makes a circle smaller from larger increases difficulty as the skaters are battling centrifugal force i.e. hand to   basket weave. Adding a turn as the circle changes from big to small increases the difficulty significantly.
· A change of hold that affects the spacing between the skaters increases the difficulty of the circle.
· Facing to the outside of the circle increases the difficulty.
· No hold has a high degree of difficulty - Level 3

ORIGINALITY
· Remember the basic rules and learn to analyze the element.
· Generally the larger the circle the more difficult. Side by side circles of   varying sizes are not as difficult as one large circle or circles within a circle.
· By adding the other factors of difficulty to a new circle formation it may be more difficult than the basic.

SPEED
· Generally the faster a circle revolves the more difficult due to increase in centrifugal force exerted. As a skater gains speed, the circle will naturally spiral or grow larger. The hold prevents this natural occurring spiral to take place and skaters will be skating more forward on their blades (when skating backward) in order to compensate. The noise level will increase.

STEP SEQUENCES
Level 1: Simple steps including primarily cross-overs, chasses, three turns, mohawks.
Level 2: More varied steps including double threes, choctaws and changes of edge and level 1 steps.
Level 3: Complex step sequences including a combination of twizzles, brackets, rockers, counters, etc. and steps from level 1 and 2.

· The quality is affected by the depth of edges, flow, power, quickness and content of the step sequence.
· Step sequences that utilize edge control are more difficult than quick short steps as long as the revolving speed of the circle remains fast and controlled.
· Longer edges make it more difficult to conceal mistakes, correct spacing and circle shape.
· Separations, small hops and individual rotations (twizzles) increase the level of difficulty. Spacing must be maintained equally to facilitate the regrasp.
· Step sequences that are performed with little spacing between the skaters are more difficult especially if there are turns involved.
· Steps that make skaters step to the outside of the circle increase the difficulty, i.e. 3 turns, mohawks, brackets, etc.
· A series of turns that rotate both clockwise and counter clockwise direction increases difficulty.
· Turns performed when the skaters are close together increases difficulty.

TRAVELLING
Travelling has the greatest impact on the level of difficulty of a circle compared to the basic formations listed above. The main purpose of travelling is to cover as much ice as possible while rotating.
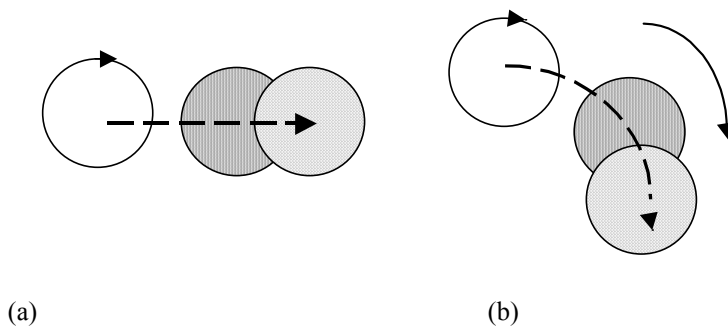
· Difficulty increases when the circle rotates as it travels. Rotating 360 degrees while travelling (b) is very difficult and more difficult than just moving the formation down the ice (a). The faster the skaters are rotating around the circle while travelling, the more difficult it is to maintain the shape as well as the hold. Circles that travel with equal and continuous rotation are the most difficult.
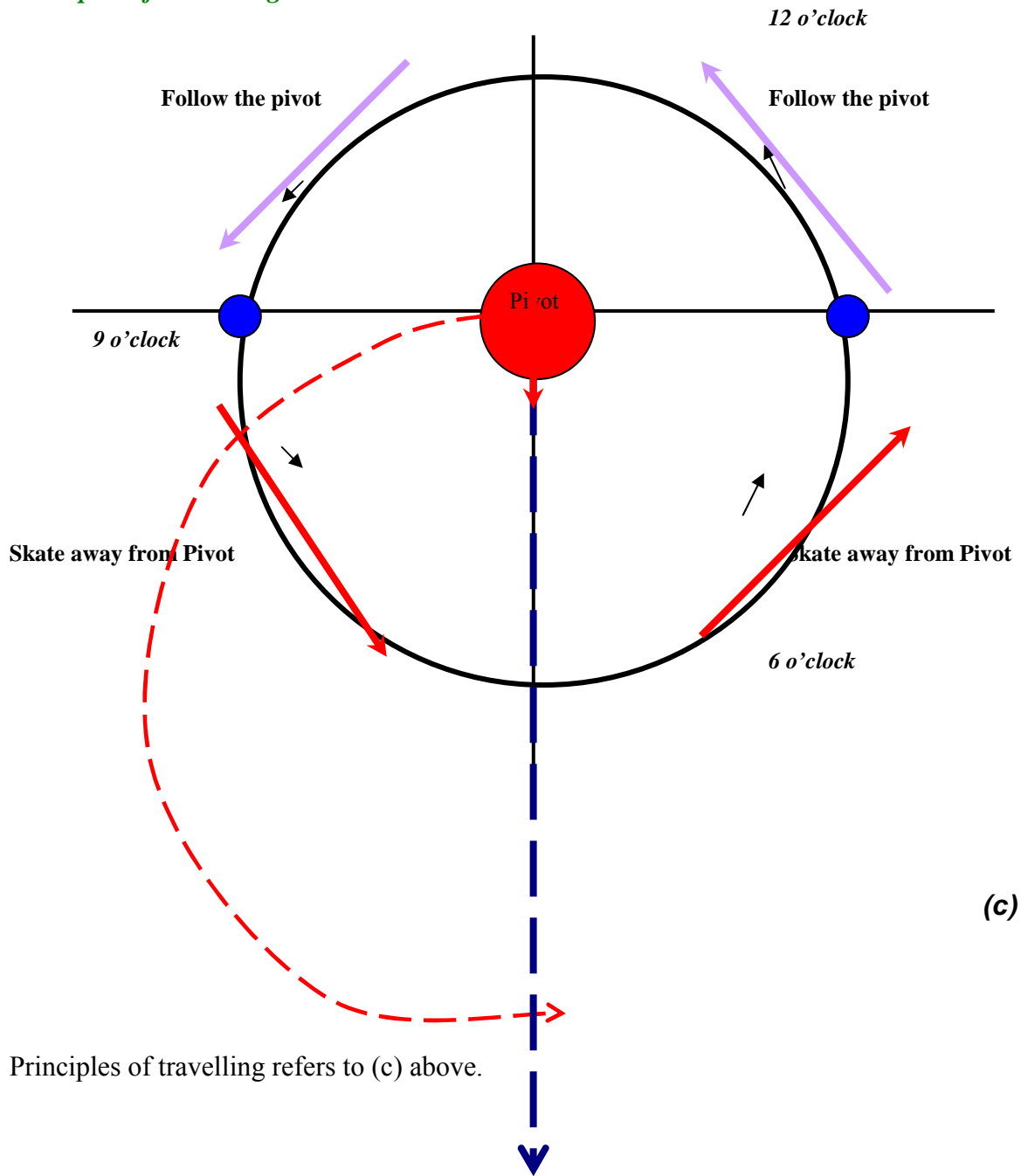
(a)

(b)
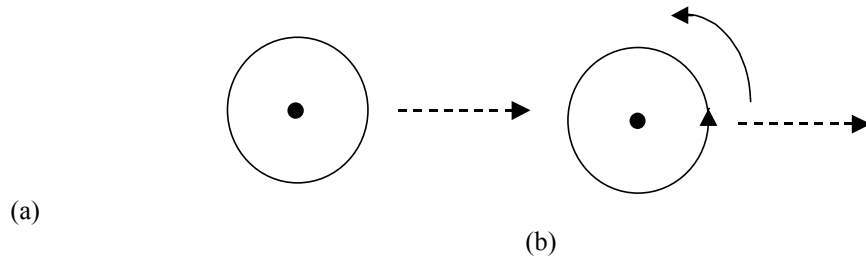
· Difficulty increases when the pivot point is in the center of the circle opposed to on the edge of the circle. Circle (a) rotates as it travels. Circle (b) just rotates around the pivot point.

(a)   (b)
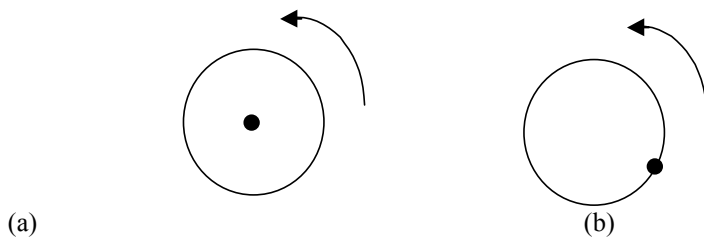
· Difficulty increases when the circle rotates and travels in a straight line (a) vs. on a curve (b). When a circle travels, you notice skaters leaning out of the circle.   To move the circle in a straight or diagonal line, this off center force must be applied equally by all skaters at exactly the same point, i.e. 3 o'clock (c). The circle will travel on a curve if the skaters do not apply the same force at the same point on the circle.

(a)   (b)

Principles of Travelling

Follow the pivot

Follow the pivot

Pivot

9 o'clock

Skate away from Pivot

Skate away from Pivot

6 o'clock

(c)

Principles of travelling refers to (c) above.

Factors of Difficulty of travelling circles

Skaters skating the same steps
Travelling in a straight line as opposed to a curved pattern.
Steps sequences during traveling
Maintaining the shape of the formation
Roundness of the Circle
Keeping a center Circle equal distance from the outer circle while travelling

· Difficulty increases when a circle, inside a circle rotating in opposing directions, travels. These circles are
  travelling on opposing paths, therefore if they do not go on a straight line they will collide.
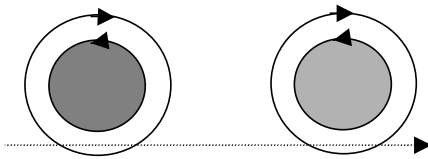
LINES

The main purpose of the line element is to show the ability of using difficult step sequences with high edge quality.

Level 1 - Lowest degree of difficulty (random ranking order):

· Multiple lines that do not have to maintain specific reference to each other:
 This is easy if the skaters just skate in this formation from one end of the ice surface to the other. Difficulty increases if there is an original interpretation, interesting transition etc.
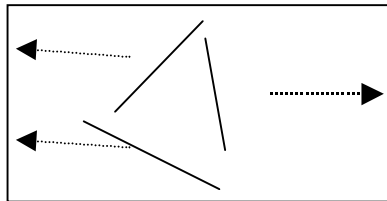
· Two separate lines that do not have to maintain specific reference to each other:
  This is easy if the skaters just skate in this formation from one end of the ice surface to the other. Difficulty increases if there is an original interpretation, interesting transition etc.
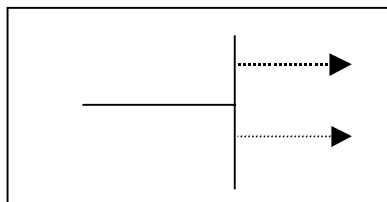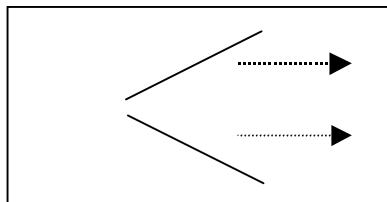
Level 2 - Medium degree of difficulty (random ranking order):

· Parallel lines that move parallel to the long axis:
  Parallel lines are shorter than single lines and easier to keep straight. Difficult to gage how straight the lines are but easier to see individual errors in step sequences and/or spacing.
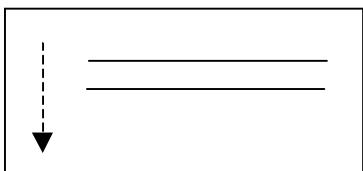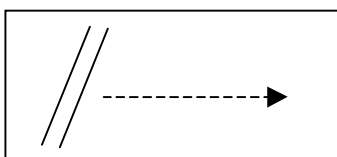
· Parallel lines that move parallel to the short axis. Easier to gage how straight the lines are but more difficult to see individual errors in step sequences and/or spacing.
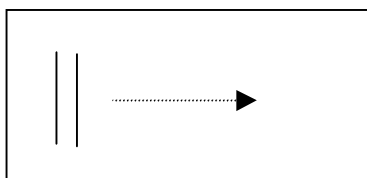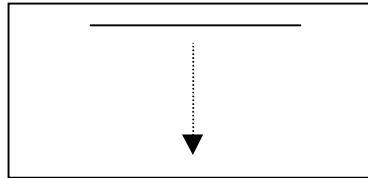
. Parallel lines that moves on a diagonal:
  No reference point for the skaters to assist with line up or accuracy of straightness and direction. Difficulty is maintaining a straight line as each skater in each line is skating on their own path. The lines are on a diagonal but moving straight down the ice. A follow the leader line that is skating on a diagonal pattern is not considered a diagonal line.
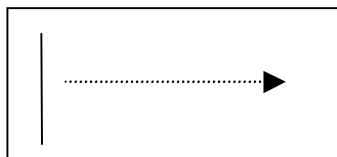
Level 3 - Highest degree of difficulty (random ranking order):

· One (1) line that moves parallel to the long axis: The longer the line the more difficult it is to keep it straight.

· One (1) line that moves parallel to the short axis:

· One (1) line that moves on a diagonal:
  No reference point for the skaters to assist with line up or accuracy of straightness and direction. Difficulty is maintaining a straight line as each skater is skating on their own path. The line is on a diagonal but moving straight down the ice. A follow the leader line that is skating on a diagonal pattern is not considered a diagonal line.
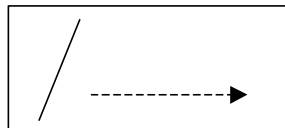
ADDING FACTOR - LINES (listed alphabetically):

DIRECTION
· Changing from forward to backward or vice versa increases the difficulty vs. maintaining the same direction.
· Forward /backward line increases difficulty especially if step sequences are included.
·The quicker and more controlled the direction change the more difficult.
· Difficulty increases when direction is changed with steps performed with speed.

FREE SKATING MOVES
· Adding free skating moves will increase the difficulty of maintaining the unison of the line.
· Free skating moves that have a sustained glide are more difficult.

HOLDS

· The less stable the hold, the more difficult the line is, i.e. hand hold. A hand hold increases the length of the line and the formation becomes even more difficult to maintain than for example a line with a shoulder hold.
· The longer the line, the more difficult it is to keep the line straight.
· A basket weave or catch hold increases difficulty in performing quality edge steps as all skaters must have the same edge depth.
· The less tension generated by the hold the more difficult it is to maintain the line.
· A change of hold during the formation increases the difficulty.
· A change of hold after a release turn increases the difficulty.
· A change of hold that affects the length of the line and spacing between the skaters increases the difficulty with the change from long to short the most difficult.
· No hold has the highest degree of difficulty

ORIGINALITY

· Originality may make the difficulty factors in a line more difficult to recognize.
· Remember the basic rules and learn to analyze the element.

PIVOTING

· Lines that pivot increase the level of difficulty. The longer the line the more difficult it is to keep the line straight as it pivots. In the short program the lines may not pivot more than 90¤ at any one time.
. A line which is pivoting may also travel, which increases the level of difficulty even more.

SPEED

· The faster and more powerful a line moves up the ice, the more difficult.

STEP SEQUENCES

Level 1: Simple steps including primarily cross-overs, chasses, three turns, mohawks.
Level 2: More varied steps including double threes, choctaws and changes of edge and level 1 steps.
Level 3: Complex step sequences including a combination of twizzles, brackets, rockers, counters, etc. and steps from level 1 and 2.

· The quality is affected by the depth of edges, flow, power, quickness and content of the step sequence.
· Step sequences that utilize deep edges are more difficult.
· Longer edges make it more difficult to conceal mistakes, correct spacing and line shape.
· Separations, small hops and individual rotation (twizzles) increase the level of difficulty.
· Step sequences performed with little spacing between the skaters are more difficult especially if there are turns.
· Series of turns that rotate both clockwise and counter clockwise direction.

TRAVELLING

· See under PIVOTING

BLOCK

The main purpose of the block element is to show the teams ability of using difficult step sequences with high edge quality.

Level 1- Lowest degree of difficulty:

· The longer the lines of the block, the more difficult it is to keep the lines straight (a).
· The more lines in a block, the more difficult it becomes to maintain the configuration, the line up and equal spacing of lines and skaters (b).
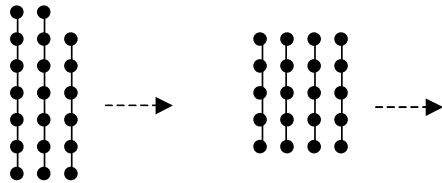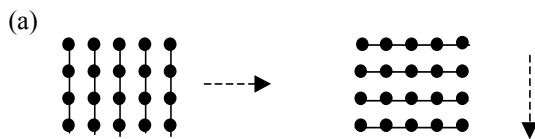
(a)   (b)

Level 2 & 3 - Medium / Highest degree of difficulty:

· The more configuration and axis changes the more difficult the block. Illustration (a) shows a change in arrangement and form. Illustration (b) shows a change in arrangement only. Both a) and (b) are correct for a configuration change for the senior short program per the 2002 ISU Synchronized Skating Regulations.

(a)

  (5 lines of 4 skaters changes to 4 lines of 5 skaters)

(b)

  (4 lines of 4 skaters changes to 4 lines of 4 skaters)

The block in (c) travels across the ice and the block (d) travels down the ice as a "follow the leader" line. There is no change in arrangement and as such would not fulfill the requirement of a configuration change for the senior short program as per the 2002 ISU Synchronized Skating Regulations.

(c)   (d)
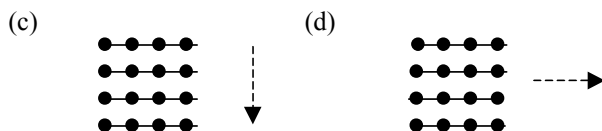
# ADDING DIFFICULTY FACTORS - BLOCKS *(listed alphabetically)*

DIRECTION / PATTERN
· Changing from forward to backward or vice versa increases the difficulty vs. maintaining the same direction.
· Difficulty increases if every other skater in a line of a block faces a different direction (forward/backward line).

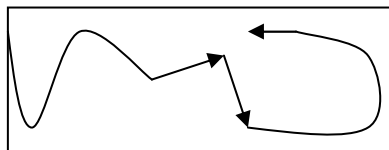The block pattern could be divided in three levels.

Level 1: Square pattern - skating along short and long barrier only
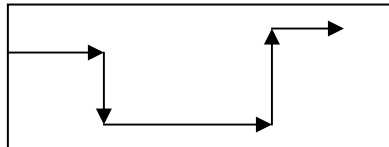
Level 2: Diagonal directions are also use.
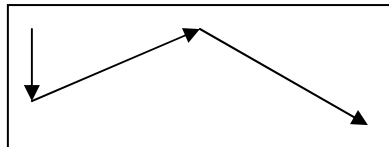
Level 3. A more complex pattern - a curved pattern is incorporated to diagonal and square directions. (a)

FREE SKATING MOVES
· Adding free skating moves will increase the difficulty of maintaining the unison of the block.
· Free skating moves that have a sustained glide are more difficult.

HOLDS
· Difficulty increases if a hold has less tension/stability because of difficulty of keeping lines within the block straight, i.e. hand hold vs. shoulder hold.
· Difficulty increases when changing from one (1) hold then regrasping with a different hold, especially if the axes/configuration changes are at the same time.
· Difficulty increases if the lines of the block change from longer to shorter due to hold change.
· Difficulty increases if a hold change decreases spacing between skaters and lines while executing step sequences.
· Difficulty increases if a change of hold occurs after an individual release turn especially if the configuration changes at the same time.
· Change of holds during steps.
· No hold step sequence.

ORIGINALITY
· Difficulty is created with more interesting and varied ice patterns.
· Remember the basic rules and learn to analyze the maneuver.

PIVOTING

· Pivot blocks with a tight pivot point (a) are less difficult than blocks with the skaters further removed from the pivot point and which appear to travel on more of a circular path (b,c).

(a)   (b)

(c)
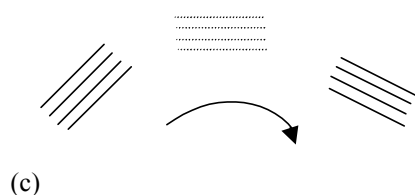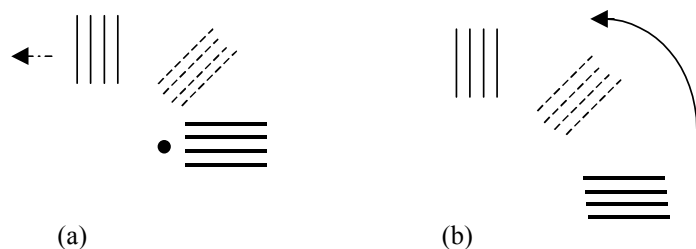
SPEED

· The faster and more powerfully the block moves the greater the difficulty.

STEP SEQUENCES

Level 1: Simple steps including primarily cross-overs, chasses, three turns, mohawks.
Level 2: More varied steps including double threes, choctaws and changes of edge and level 1 steps.
Level 3: Complex step sequences including a combination of twizzles, brackets, rockers, counters, etc. and steps from level 1 and 2.

· The quality is affected by the depth of edges, flow, power, quickness and content of the step sequence.
· Step sequences that utilize deep edges are more difficult.
· Longer edges make it more difficult to conceal mistakes, correct spacing and shape.
· Separations, small hops and individual rotation (twizzles) increase the level of difficulty.
· Step sequences performed with little spacing between the skaters are more difficult especially if there are turns.
· A series of turns that rotate both clockwise & counter clockwise directions.
· Changing configuration while performing steps.
· Step sequences performed on one foot.

WHEEL

The main purpose of the wheel element is to show the ability of control of rotation with high speed. The speed should not be sacrificed when in favor of steps or traveling.

Different wheel elements can be divided in Wheels (pivot point in the middle), Pivot Wheels (pivot point at the end of line /s) and Interlocking Wheels (more than one pivot)

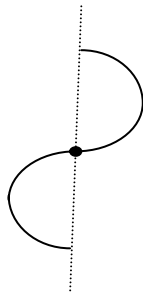## Level 1 - Lowest degree of difficulty (random ranking order):

WHEELS

· 5 Spoke Wheel (with or without center hold):
   Shorter lines thus easier to maintain speed and control.
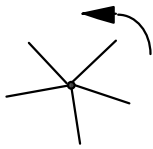
· "S" Wheel:
   Difficult to maintain symmetry of opposite curving spokes.

PIVOTING WHEELS

· Multiple pivot wheels:
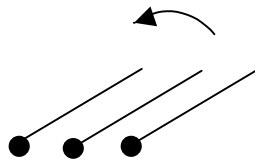
INTERLOCKING WHEELS

. "Egg beater" – two 3-spoke interlocking wheels:
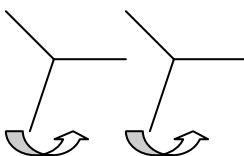
Leve1 2 - Medium Degree of Difficulty (random ranking order):

WHEELS

· 4 Spoke Wheel (with or without center hold):
  Longer lines require higher speed for the end skaters.
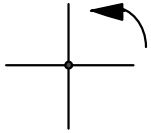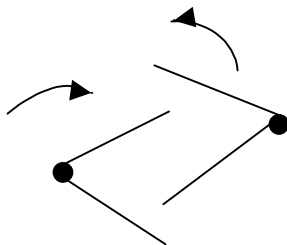

PIVOTING WHEELS

· 2 lines pivoting wheel
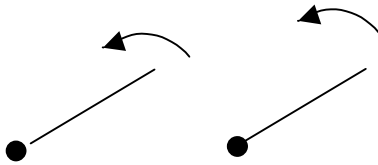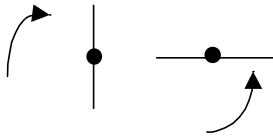

· V pivoting wheel
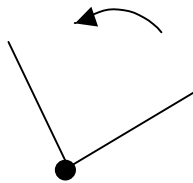
INTERLOCKING WHEELS

· Two V interlocking wheels:

· Two 2 spoke interlocking wheels

## Level 3 - Highest degree of difficulty (random ranking order):

WHEELS

· 2 Spoke Wheel:

Longer lines thus more difficult to keep straight. The skaters at the ends of the spokes have a greater amount of speed. Difficult for all skaters to maintain their own speed. Speed of all skaters should remain the same throughout the entire maneuver.
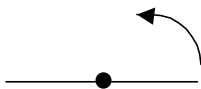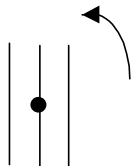

· 2 Line Parallel Wheel:

  Difficult to keep the lines parallel and lined up.
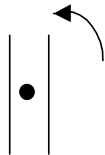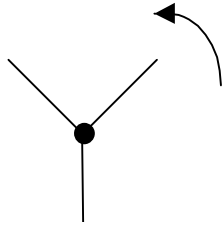

· Three line parallel wheel:

Difficulty is maintaining equal distance between each line and maintaining the line up of each line and the skaters in each line.

This wheel is required in senior short program in the season of 2002-2003

· 3 Spoke Wheel (with or without center hold):
  Longer spokes and difficult to keep angles between spokes equal.

PIVOTING WHEELS

· 1 Spoke Pivot Wheel:
  The pivot point at the end of the line will make the line longer and therefore more difficult to keep straight although there is no other spoke to line up with.
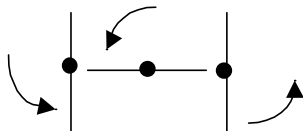
· Parallel 2 Spoke pivoting wheel
  More difficult to keep spacing between the lines equal.

INTERLOCKING WHEELS

· Three 2-spoke interlocking wheels:

ADDING FACTORS - WHEELS *(listed alphabetically):*

DIRECTION
· Changing direction of rotation with a turn is more difficult.
· Difficulty is increased if the change in direction is executed without stopping.

FREE SKATING MOVES
· Adding free skating moves increases the difficulty of maintaining the unison of the wheel.
· Free skating moves which are performed with a sustained glide are of higher quality. The difficulty level is increased as equal speed must be maintained to keep the spokes straight.

HOLDS
· Difficulty increases if a hold has less tension/stability because of difficulty of keeping spokes straight with equal distance between skaters, i.e. hand hold vs. shoulder hold. Variation of holds and positions (closeness of skaters) increases difficulty.
· A shoulder hold in a wheel is less difficult than a hand hold as the hand may slip off the shoulder without affecting the overall formation. There is no such leeway for a hand hold or an elbow hold for example. The spoke will break if the forces acting on a skater are too great to control.
· Difficulty increases if a hold decreases spacing between skaters, especially changing the spoke from longer to shorter as the skaters are fighting centrifugal force.
· Difficulty increases if a change of hold occurs after an individual turn (release turn) and affects the spacing between skaters.
· No hold

ORIGINALITY
· An easily recognizable shape is important in an original formation. If it is not easily recognizable it is not well done.
· Remember the basic rules and learn to analyze the maneuver.

SPEED
· The faster and more powerful a wheel rotates the more difficult as more centrifugal force is exerted.
· Skaters on the ends should have as much speed and power as possible but the rotation must be controlled at all times.
·The faster the wheel rotates the greater the centrifugal force as long as the center skaters stay close to pivot point. As a skater gains speed, the spoke will naturally spiral away from the pivot point. A center hold prevents this natural occurring spiral to take place and skaters will be skating more forward on their blades (when skating backward) in order to compensate. The noise level will increase.

STEP SEQUENCES
Level 1: Simple steps including primarily cross-overs, chasses, three turns, mohawks.
Level 2: More varied steps including double threes, choctaws and changes of edge and level 1 steps.
Level 3: Complex step sequences including a combination of twizzles, brackets, rockers, counters, etc. and steps from level 1 and 2.

· The quality is affected by the depth of edges, flow, power, quickness and content of the step sequence.
· Step sequences that utilize deep edges are more difficult as long as the rotational speed of the wheel remains fast.
· Separations, small hops and individual rotation (twizzles) increase the level of difficulty. The end skaters of a spoke must join back onto their spoke with little or no reaching to receive full credit for difficulty.
· Step sequences performed with little spacing between the skaters are more difficult especially if there are turns.
· A series of turns that rotate both clockwise and counter clockwise directions.
· Steps that require a release increase the difficulty
· Steps that turn to the outside of the wheel are more difficult.

TRAVELLING

· Travelling has the greatest impact on the level of difficulty of a wheel, providing the wheel is rotating.
· The speed of rotation should not be sacrificed when in favor of travelling. (Considering that the time used and amount of steps are the same, a wheel that rotates 360 degrees and travel ¼ of the length of the ice rink is more difficult that a wheel that rotates 180 degrees and travels ½ of the length of the ice rink)

· Quality increases when the wheel rotates and travels in a straight line or on a diagonal (a) vs. on a curve (b).
· Same principles are employed when travelling a wheel as when travelling a circle (see diagram (c) on page 8)

(a)

(b)
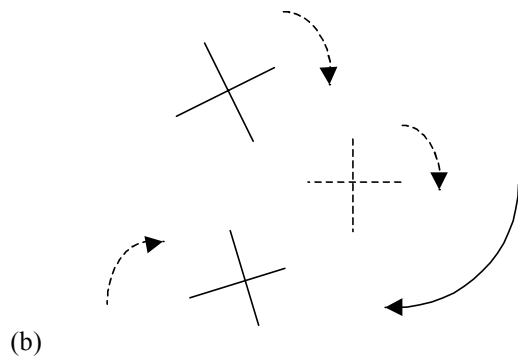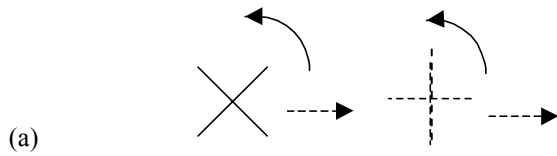
INTERSECTIONS

The main purpose of the intersection element is to show the ability of high speed at the point of intersection.

The intersections can be divided into three types: Intersections, Passes and Splicing.

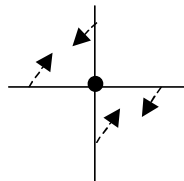## Level 1 Lowest degree of difficulty (random ranking order):
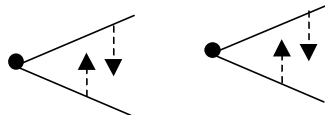
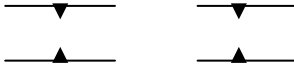### INTERSECTIONS

· Asymmetrical:
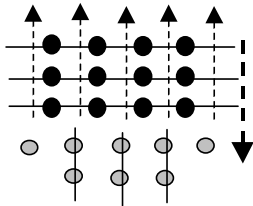
· 4 Spoke Intersection:
   Intersections with short lines and a center point are easier to correct and keep under control.
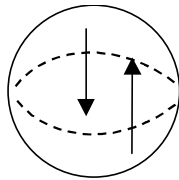
· 2 Line intersection pivot at the same end (2 pivot points):
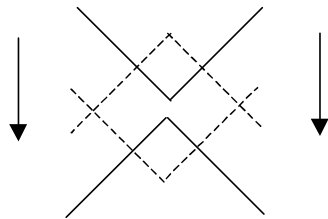
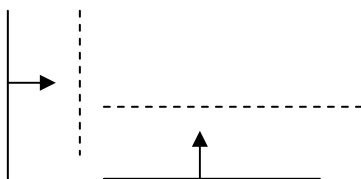· 4 Line intersection from same direction

· "Collapsing Circle":
  Sides of a circle fold in towards the axis of the circle and intersect at the "center".   There is no pivot
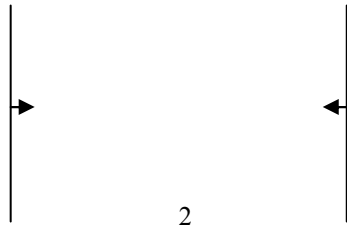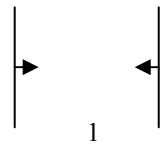 point.

· Inverted "V" Intersection:
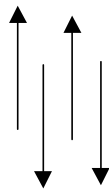
· "L" Intersection:

· Sequential (lines intersecting at different times)
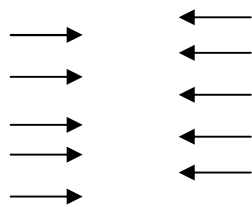
1

2

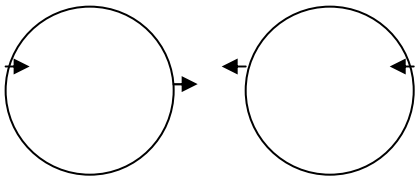# **PASSES**
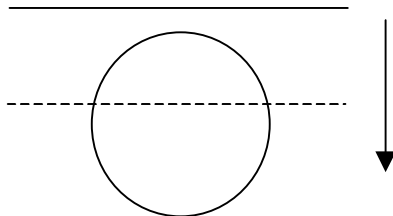
· 4 Line Pass:

· Pair Pass

SPLICING

· Multiple line Splicing

· Two circle intersection (no rotating)

· Circle (no rotation) / Line intersection:

Level 2 Medium degree of difficulty (random ranking order):

INTERSECTIONS

· "V" Intersection (one pivot point):
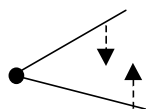
· 2 Parallel intersection pivot at the same end (one pivot point):
 Difficulty is maintaining equal spacing of the 2 lines.
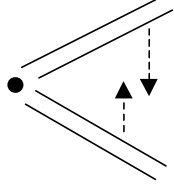
· 2 Parallel line intersections without a pivot point:
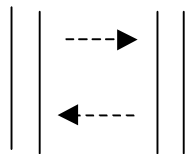
· 4 Line intersection – pivot at opposite ends
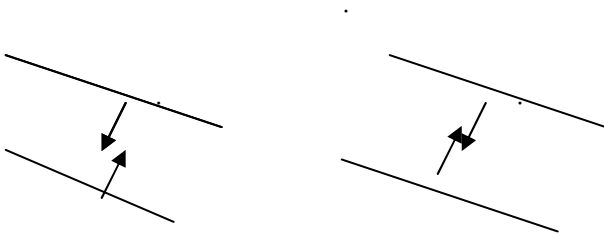
· 2 Parallel line intersection pivot at opposite ends
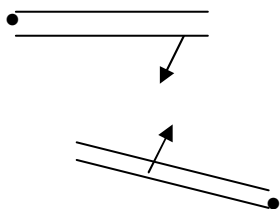
· Parallel "L" Intersection
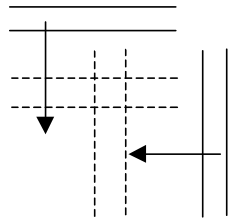
· Block Intersection (3 lines or more)
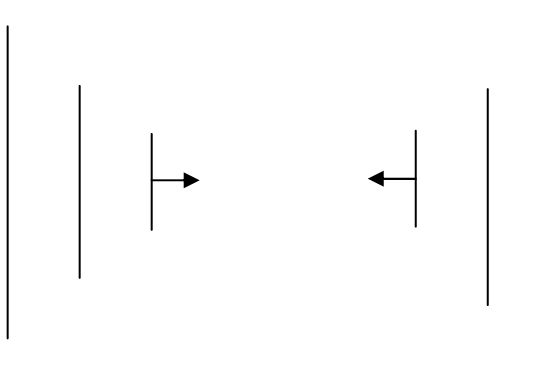
· Two rotating Circles Intersection
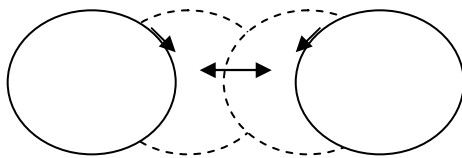
· 4 Line intersection from opposite direction
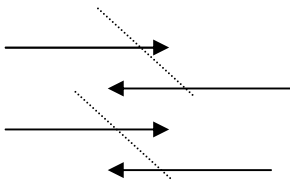
· 2 Parallel line intersection from opposite direction
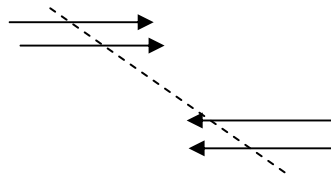
· 2 Parallel line intersection from same direction
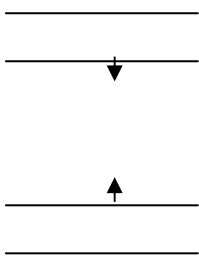
· Combination of Intersections (Rotating Circle & Line and Wheel & Line)
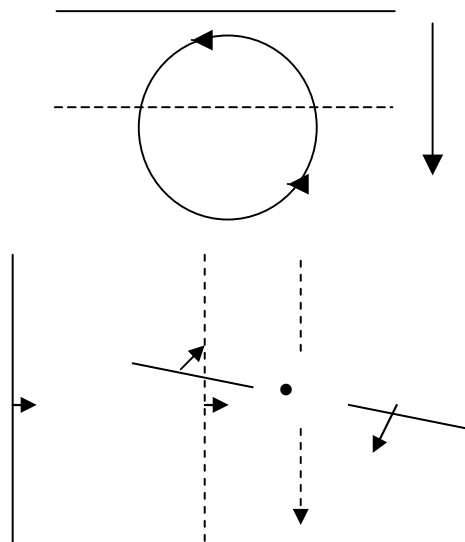
SPLICING

· 2 line Splicing
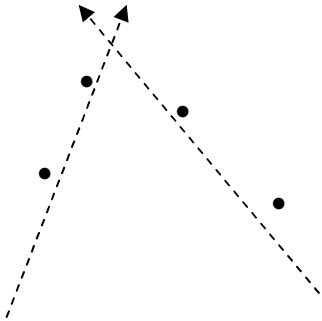
Level 3 Highest degree of difficulty (random ranking order):

INTERSECTIONS

· Triangle Intersection:
  Intersections of all lines must be simultaneous.
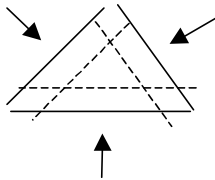
· Box Intersection:
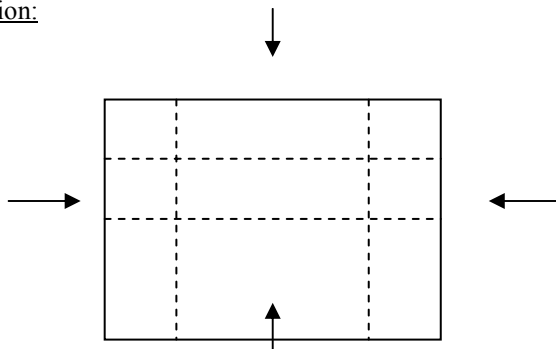
ADDING FACTORS OF DIFFICULTY FOR BOX INTERSECTION
- the required intersection in the senior short program during the season 2004 –2005

· the speed that the team has as the skaters pass through the intersection will increase difficulty.
· the closer the skaters are to each other within their lines increases difficulty.
· the lines should form a + at the centre point of the intersection.
· maintaining the speed and flow **into** and out of the intersection.
. skating backward through the intersection
Lines that are close together as they approach the intersection have a lower level of difficulty.
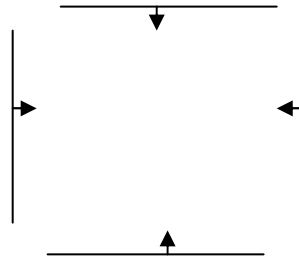
Lines that are further apart as they approach the intersection have a high level of difficulty
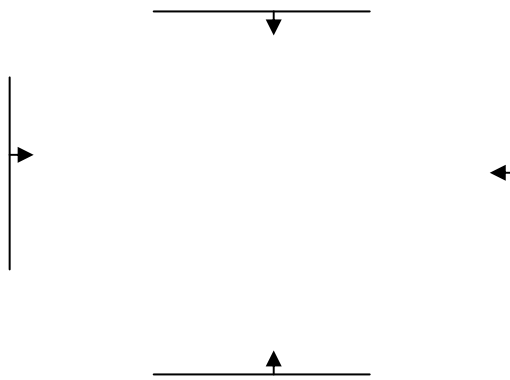
· Whip Intersection (2 separate pivot points):
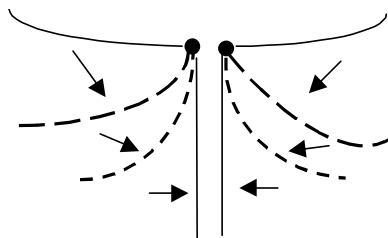
· 2 Line Intersections with pivot point at opposite ends:
Long lines without contact or reference point to assist with distance increases level of difficulty.
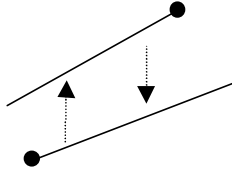
· Line intersection without a center point:
Longer lines with no contact with the other line before the intersection, increases the difficulty factor.
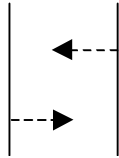
Line Intersection without center point (lines coming from opposite directions):
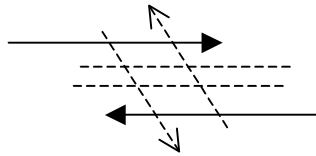
ADDING FACTORS OF DIFFICULTY FOR LINE INTERSECTION WITHOUT A CENTER-POINT (LINES COMING FROM DIFFERENT DIRECTIONS
- The required intersection in the senior short program during the season 2003 -2004

·speed at the point of intersection. The greater the angle of entry the higher the degree of difficulty
·the LESS overlapped the line increases difficulty
·the closer the lines are to each other as they approach from opposing direction increases the difficulty
·interruption of direction before intersection will incur deductions

A)   Low difficulty Level The lines are far apart and the overlap is greater.
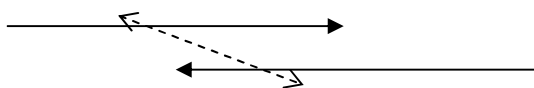
*The skaters should maintain an angle as they approach the intersection. If skaters neutralizes the angle then the degree of difficulty is low **and not according to the senior short program requirement 2002***
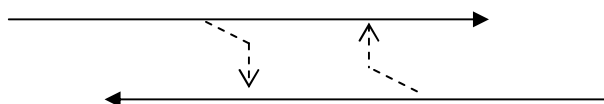
ADDING FACTORS - INTERSECTIONS *(alphabetical order)*

DIRECTION
· Intersections with both lines skating forward is less difficult than one line skating forward and one backward or both lines skating backward toward each other.
· Combinations of intersections incorporating different directions increases difficulty.
· If an intersection is performed forward, it would move down into an easier category.
· Turns before intersections are more difficult than turns at the point of intersections.
· A back three turn or twizzle is more difficult before point of intersection than a forward three turn or twizzle.
· Turns performed after the intersection is easier than turns performed just prior to <u>or</u> at the point of intersection.
· The team must maintain the angle of entry before the point intersection. Skaters who neutralize the angle prior to intersecting decrease the level of difficulty.
· Maintaining the speed and flow **into** and out of the intersection.
· Adding steps on the approach and exit of the intersection increases difficulty factors.
· Skating backwards when approaching the intersection.
· The closer the skaters are to each other within their lines increases the difficulty.

FREE SKATING MOVES
· Free skating moves increases difficulty as there can be no adjustment. Skaters cannot change their path once the glide has begun.
· The longer the glide of a free skating move before the point of intersection, the more difficult.
· Unison maintained when entering and exiting from a free skating move increases the difficulty.

HOLDS
· Difficulty is increased if a variety of holds are used during and between the intersections.
· The less space a skater has to pass through, the more difficult the intersection becomes.
· Difficulty is increased if the hold does not permit any error on regrasp, i.e. hand hold. A hand hold leaves enough space for the skaters to intersect but there is no room for error on regrasp. Shoulder hold permits some adjustment at regrasp thus easier. A hand to elbow hold on regrasp is more difficult as only one hand available to regrasp.
· A change in hold that reduces line size after intersection is more difficult, i.e. shoulder to basket weave.
· No hold on approach to intersection is a level 3 in difficulty.

ORIGINALITY
· Generally, the longer the lines the greater the difficulty.
· Remember the basic rules and learn to analyze the maneuver.

SPEED
· Difficulty increases proportionally with speed of the intersection.

STEP SEQUENCES

Level 1: Simple steps consisting primarily of cross overs, chasses, three turns, mohawks.

Level 2: More varied steps incorporating double threes, choctaws and changes of edge.

Level 3: Complex step sequences incorporating a combination of twizzles, brackets, rockers, counters, etc.

· The degree of difficulty of an intersection depends on the speed, power, quickness and difficulty of step sequences and whether executed before, during or after the intersection.

· Degree of difficulty increases proportionally the closer to the intersection the step sequences are executed.

· Separations and individual rotation (twizzles) when performed at the point of intersection increases difficulty. Each skater must regrasp without reaching.

· A turn which increases the chance of skaters colliding or linking arms at the point of intersection increases difficulty, i.e. forward inside 3's, waltz 3's, clapping hands over the head.

· Gliding on two (2) feet at the point of intersection decreases the difficulty.

TRAVELLING

· Multiple intersections that move up the ice are more difficult than those that stay in the same place.

· Intersections that have lines moving up the ice in a parallel fashion are more difficult since the entry angle is decreased.

· Lines travelling in opposing directions prior to the intersection are very difficult.

MOVES IN THE FIELD

This is a new required element for the senior short program where the ability of good use of free skating moves should be demonstrated. Connecting steps may be used in between the free skating moves, but the emphasis should be on the free skating moves.

Changing formations. The more formations completed increases the difficulty.

Level 1:   Two (2) formations or less
Level 2:   Three (3) formations
Level 3:   Four (4) formations or more

Varied free skating moves. The more variety of free skating moves increases difficulty. A Free Skating Move on an inside edge (forward or backwards) is considered as a different Free Skating Move that the same move on an outside edge.
Level 1:   One (1) free skating move (forward and/or backward)
Level 2:   Two (2) different free skating moves / one (1) free skating move on inside and outside edge
Level 3:   Three (3) or more free skating moves

Varied holds. The more variety of holds increases the factor of difficulty.
Level 1:   No change of hold
Level 2:   One (1) change of hold
Level 3:   Two (2) or more changes of holds

ADDING FACTORS - MOVES IN THE FIELD (random ranking order):

· Using both outside and inside edges in the free skating moves
· Change and/or combination of skating direction (forward or backward)
· Keep body position while changing formations

SPINS

Solo spins are required in the senior short program where the ability of synchronization is of biggest importance. Spins are also used in the senior and junior free skating and may be solo or pair spins.

Unison and Synchronization
Level 1:   No unison in spinning or in body position
Level 2:   Varied spinning unison but vertical body alignment, arms and free legs in unison
Level 3:   Unison of all parts of spin

Exit of spin
Level 1:   Exit with a toe pick stop
Level 2:   Exit on an edge and a stop after
Level 3:   Exit on an edge with continuation into the next element

Formation in which the spin is executed
The more skaters that are lines up in all directions the more difficult it is to be synchronized. The closer the skaters are to each other in each direction the higher the level of difficulty

Level 1   Circle or formation not defined
Level 2   One or two lines
Level 3   Block (three (3) or more lines that are lined up)

ADDING FACTORS - SPIN (random ranking order):

· Change of foot
· Height of free foot – the higher the free leg the more difficult.
· Speed of spin
· Varied arm positions
· Varied free leg positions
· Spin elements where all skaters are spinning in the same direction (clockwise or counter-clockwise) or half in one direction (clockwise) and the other half in the opposite direction (counter-clockwise) are considered more difficult compared to spin elements where some skaters are spinning in the opposite direction than the rest.

LIFTS

Since the season 2002-2003 lifts are allowed in the free skating.
The lift is defined as "an action in which skater(s) is elevated to any height and set down. During the action, the lifting skater(s) must not raise both hands higher than their head. Any rotations and/or positions and changes of positions during the lift are permitted except sitting or lying on lifting skater(s) shoulder or back. The lifting skaters may rotate but not more than one and half (1 ½) revolution. Lifts should enhance the music chosen and express it's character, but not be a display of acrobatics. Those lifts are permitted in senior free skating only.

Acrobatic lifts are defined as moves in which the skater is held only by the blade(s), foot (feet), leg (s) or arm(s) and swung around. These or other such actions which display sheer feats of strength are not permitted. When evaluating lifts the following should be considered:

ADDING FACTORS OF DIFFICULTY - LIFTS (random ranking order):

· Speed and flow during the lift increases the difficulty
· Effortless look increases the difficulty (a sign of good quality)
· Lifts that are not telegraphed are considered more difficult.

STEPS / STEP SEQUENCES

The basis of all Figure Skating disciplines, Synchronized Skating included, is the skaters' ability to performed steps and turns as defined in the Special Regulations for Ice Dancing and additionally being able to perform those steps and turns on deep edges. Step sequences are required in both short program and free skating. Those required step sequences are defines as "A combination / series of different turns and steps such as three turns, brackets, counters, rockers, mohawks, choctaws, twizzles, change of edges, etc." and must be long enough to be clearly recognizable. Except for the required step sequences the overall use of steps in a program must be considered and evaluated. When evaluating the quality of steps the quality of edges and correct placement of skating foot and free legs must be considered.

Required Step Sequences:
Junior and Senior Short Program and Free Skating
Level 1:   Simple steps including primarily chasses, three turns, Mohawks
Level 2:   More varied steps including double threes, choctaws and changes of edge and some level 1 steps.
Level 3:   Complex step sequences including combination of twizzles, brackets, rockers, counters, etc. and steps from level 1 and 2.

Steps in General:
Level 1:   Simple steps including primarily cross-overs, chasses, three turns, mohawks.
Level 2:   More varied steps including double threes, choctaws and changes of edge and level 1 steps.
Level 3:   Complex step sequences including a combination of twizzles, brackets, rockers, counters, etc. and steps from level 1 and 2.

Teams performing steps on good strong and deep edges would appear to have less speed than teams that skates with short quick edges on flats.

Edge Quality:
Edge quality can generally be divided in three levels.
Level 1:   Generally shallow edges
Level 2:   Variable edge quality
Level 3:   Strong, deep, effortless edges

TRANSITIONS

· Transitions should make the flow from one element to another seamless.
· The less time it takes to execute a transition the more difficult the transition becomes.
· Transitions that contain step sequences are more difficult.
· Transitions that contain a change of hold increases the difficulty.
· Transitions are more difficult if all skaters move at the same velocity vs. a transition with some skaters moving slowly and waiting for the new formation to take shape.
· Transitions that include a change of direction are very difficult, i.e. moving from one circle to a circle inside of a circle which are rotating in opposing directions or visa versa.
· Transitions that contain a release in hold are more difficult.
· Transitions that are skated on edges are more difficult.
· Transitions that do not telegraph the next element are more difficult. An example of telegraphing is a circle to a straight line with the circle breaking at one point and the skaters following the leader out into a line. An additional example is moving from a block into a circle when the front line leads around into a circle and subsequent lines join until the circle is formed.