



Dakota Aerial Championship Official Competitor Packet

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2026 Updates:

4.0: 2026 dates, fees, and rules updated. Scoring changed to a 100-point scale—plagiarism and rigging requirements updated. Advanced time requirements updated, stage testing times edited. In-person judging changed to live judging. View packet for full updates.

4.1: Studio early registration dates updated and new studio registration and music submission forms linked.

4.2: Fixed minor grammatical errors, added live judge information, added tentative live schedule. Code of conduct expanded and definitions of specific rules were outlined in greater detail. Specific deduction values outlined.

This packet outlines all of the information you will need to know to compete in the Dakota Aerial Championship hosted by South Dakota Aerial & Arts. Have questions about the packet or the event? Email info@sdaerialarts.com. Please include “DAC” in the email headline so we can answer your questions appropriately.

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About Us:

About South Dakota Aerial & Arts:

South Dakota Aerial & Arts was founded in January 2023 by Ashley Premer and Katie Critzer in Sioux Falls, South Dakota. Together, they envisioned a dedicated space for aerial and alternative fitness — one that celebrates students of all backgrounds, skill levels, and genders. Their mission is to provide safe, inclusive, and empowering fitness opportunities for everyone.

In addition to offering a wide range of aerial and bungee fitness classes, Ashley and Katie also established Sioux Falls' first circus performance group. This talented collective brings the wonder of circus arts to the community through public performances, private events, ambient entertainment, and interactive try-it sessions.

At South Dakota Aerial & Arts, our goal is to foster a welcoming community where everyone can feel empowered, motivated, and supported. We believe fitness should be fun, challenging, and accessible to all. Through dynamic classes, open gym sessions, private parties, competitions, and specialty workshops, we aim to create a space where everyone can thrive — both as athletes and as individuals.

Whether you're here to explore a new hobby, advance your skills, or simply have fun, we want you to love aerial arts and bungee fitness as much as we do. This is your space to learn, grow, and be unapologetically yourself.

Our Why:

The Dakota Aerial Championship was established in 2023 alongside the opening of South Dakota Aerial & Arts, an aerial fitness and performance studio based in Sioux Falls, South Dakota.

After participating in various aerial competitions across the region and country, our founders saw the need for a local event that prioritized community, camaraderie, and meaningful opportunities for growth. The Dakota Aerial Championship was created to offer an inclusive, welcoming competition experience where aerialists of all ages, levels, and backgrounds can showcase their skills, connect with others, and receive expert coaching and constructive feedback.

From its inception, the Dakota Aerial Championship has been committed to accessibility and inclusivity. We believe aerial arts are for everyone, and every ability should be recognized and celebrated. To extend this mission beyond our local community, we introduced virtual competition options that allow aerialists from anywhere to participate, share their artistry, and benefit from professional evaluations that support their continued growth.

Whether performing in person or virtually, every competitor is an important part of our growing aerial family. We are proud to provide a platform that uplifts, inspires, and connects aerialists across the region and beyond.

General Competition Information:

2026 Competition Dates:

Live: November 12-15, 2026 | **Virtual:** October 1-24, 2026

Registration Timeframe:

- Early Bird Registration: June 1 - August 16, 2026 - CLOSED
- Standard Registration: August 17 - October 11, 2026

In-Person Schedule Overview:

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 12

- 3:30 - 4:30 PM - Registration and competitor arrival
- 3:30 - 9:00 PM - Private lessons with judges
- 4:30 - 8:30 PM - Stage Testing, maximum 200 tests

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 13: Maximum Friday Capacity: 60 performances and 74 stage tests

- 10:00 AM - Doors open and competitor check-in begins
- 10:00\ - 10:45 AM - Stage Testing, maximum 37 tests
- 10:45 AM - 4:10 PM - Competition, including scheduled lunch and breaks
- 12:15 - 1:00 PM - Additional Stage Testing, maximum 37 tests
- 4:20 - 5:00 PM - Dinner break

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 14: Saturday Capacity: 120 performances and 124 stage tests

- 8:00 AM - Doors open and competitor check-in begins
- 8:00 AM - 8:30 PM - Stage testing, competition, including scheduled meals, and breaks
- Maximum Saturday Capacity: 120 performances and 124 stage tests

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 15: Maximum Sunday Capacity: 60 performances and 50 stage tests

- 8:00 AM - Doors open
- 8:00 AM - 3:00 PM - Stage testing, competition, scheduled lunch, breaks, and scoring time
- 4:00 PM - Awards Ceremony

Virtual Schedule Overview:

- Virtual Video Submissions Open: October 1, 2026
- Virtual Submission Deadline: October 24, 2026

Music Submission Deadline: October 16, 2026

In-Person Competition Venue:

South Dakota Aerial & Arts
1200 E 3rd Street, Suite 113
Sioux Falls, SD 57103

South Dakota Aerial & Arts is located in the Global Square building. This building is an old elementary school with a full mezzanine and 26-foot ceilings. To get to the studio, enter through Door F on the south side of the building; additional parking is on the north side and on the street.

Registration & Fees:

You can register individually online at <https://www.sdaerialarts.com/dakota-aerial-championship> or as a team using the studio registration form below. Registration must be completed before submitting any virtual performance entries.

Registration Fees:

- Early Bird Registration: June 1 - August 16, 2026 - **Closed**
 - Solo (In-Person) - \$120.00
 - Solo (Virtual) - \$105.00
 - Duo - \$175.00
 - Group (Per Person, Minimum of 3 Performers) - \$80.00
- Standard Registration: August 17 - October 11, 2026
 - Solo (In-Person & Virtual) - \$145.00
 - Duo - \$200.00
 - Group (Per Person, Minimum of 3 Performers) - \$90.00

Please register for each unique performance separately. No refunds will be issued after sign-up. You may not transfer your registration to another category.

Individual Registration:

You can register online at <https://www.sdaerialarts.com/dakota-aerial-championship>. **You must pay a registration fee for each apparatus you wish to compete in.** Registration must be completed before submitting any virtual entries. Studios can register as a team by filling out the spreadsheet on the Official Dakota Aerial Championship main page. Studio registration sheets must be sent to info@sdaerialarts.com, and an invoice will be sent for all performers following registration validation.

Register as a Team:

Studios may register by filling out the **studio registration form**. Once filled out, the final document must be submitted to the Dakota Aerial Championship at info@sdaerialarts.com. Once validated, an invoice will be sent for the full fee. Teams that are registering 10 or more performances through the studio registration form are eligible for a 5% discount. Registration must be done all at the same time to receive the discount. Participants who register as a team and compete virtually will have any awards sent to their studio.

Live Competitor List:

The live competitor registration list will be shared via the Dakota Aerial Championship Official Site once registration opens. If you see an error in your registration, please reach out to info@sdaerialarts.com to resolve any errors.

Change & Late Fees:

- **Music Changes:**

- Changes submitted through October 15: \$30.00
- Late submissions or changes from October 16 through November 8: \$40.00
- No submissions or changes accepted after November 8

- **Category/Level Change Fee - \$40.00**

- Level changes can be made once at no cost any time before September 19, 2026
- Absolutely no level changes will be honored after November 1, 2026.

- **Award Resend Fee - \$5.00 per Award + Shipping**

- This applies to teams/participants who supply insufficient shipping information for awards or lose awards after the in-person award ceremony

Spectator Tickets:

All spectators to the event are required to purchase a ticket to attend.

- **Kids Under 5: Free**

- **Pre-Sale Online Tickets - Available Through November 7, 2026:**

- Kids 6-9 Years Old: \$15.00
- Individuals 10+: \$20.00

- **Tickets at the Door:**

- Kids 6-9 Years Old: \$18.00
- Individuals 10+: \$25.00

Tickets are valid for the full length of the event. Accessible seating and entrances are available upon request. Request an accessible seat by emailing info@sdaerialarts.com.

Where to Purchase Tickets:

Spectator tickets are available for purchase online here: <https://www.sdaerialarts.com/event-details/viewing-of-the-dakota-aerial-championship-3>

Tickets will also be available in person at the door while supplies last.

Tickets For Coaches:

Coaches are eligible for a free pass only if a competitor lists them as their coach at registration. There is a maximum of 3 free coaches per studio (one per apparatus). All coaches who are not listed by a student in their registration need to purchase a spectator ticket.

Dakota Aerial Championship Code of Conduct

This Code of Conduct applies to all competitors, coaches, parents and guardians, spectators, workshop participants, judges, staff, volunteers, vendors, and other individuals participating in or attending the Dakota Aerial Championship. It applies to conduct occurring in person, online, and through communications directly related to the event.

Participation in the Dakota Aerial Championship requires respectful conduct, honest competition, and compliance with all event and safety requirements.

A. Respectful Treatment and Prohibited Conduct

All participants and attendees must treat competitors, coaches, parents and guardians, spectators, judges, staff, volunteers, workshop participants, and other attendees with dignity and respect.

The following conduct is prohibited:

- Bullying, harassment, hazing, intimidation, stalking, or threats
- Physical aggression or unwanted physical contact
- Sexual harassment or other unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature
- Discrimination based on race, color, national origin, ancestry, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, age, disability, pregnancy, or another protected characteristic
- Repeated insults, humiliation, ridicule, or targeted hostile behavior
- Deliberate interference with a competitor's preparation, equipment, performance, or event access
- Retaliation against anyone who makes a good-faith report, assists with a review, raises a safety concern, or requests an accommodation
- Knowingly making a false accusation or intentionally providing materially false info during a review

This policy also applies to event-related communications, including emails, text messages, telephone calls, social-media posts, direct messages, videos, and other electronic communications.

Respectful disagreement, constructive criticism, score-review requests submitted through the appropriate process, and good-faith reports of safety concerns or misconduct are not harassment and will not result in retaliation.

B. Safety Requirements

All participants must follow the instructions of the Dakota Aerial Championship's authorized rigging, safety, stage-management, workshop, and event personnel.

The following requirements apply:

- All competitors, coaches, spotters, human props, and workshop participants must complete the required waivers before participating. A parent or legal guardian must complete the required documents for a minor.
- An approved crash mat or other specifically approved fall-protection system must be used during every virtual and in-person aerial performance and workshop.
- Only authorized members of the rigging team may install, remove, connect, disconnect, or materially adjust rigging equipment.

- Competitors, coaches, parents, guardians, and spectators may not touch or alter rigging equipment unless specifically directed and supervised by the head rigger or another authorized member of the rigging team.
- Any equipment defect, unexpected movement, unusual sound, rigging concern, or unsafe condition must be reported immediately. No person will be penalized for making a good-faith safety report.
- Event leadership, the head rigger, designated safety personnel, or a judge may delay or stop a performance when they reasonably believe an unsafe condition exists.
- Only registered competitors may be onstage after the music begins, except for human props and spotters approved in advance by the Dakota Aerial Championship.
- Approved spotters and human props must follow their assigned roles and all instructions from event personnel. Any applicable spotting deductions will be determined under the published judging and deduction rules.
- Unauthorized coaching, physical assistance, or intervention during a routine may result in a deduction or disqualification. Emergency intervention intended to prevent imminent injury will be evaluated according to the circumstances and will always take priority over scoring.

C. Alcohol, Drugs, and Impairment

Competitors, coaches, spotters, judges, and workshop participants may not consume or be under the influence of alcohol, illegal drugs, unauthorized controlled substances, or any other substance that impairs their ability to participate safely.

The use of legally prescribed or over-the-counter medication is not itself a violation. However, an individual may not participate when a medication or medical condition causes impairment that could make participation unsafe.

When event leadership reasonably believes that an individual may be impaired, the individual may be temporarily restricted from competition, workshops, coaching, spotting, rigging, judging, or other safety-sensitive activities while the situation is reviewed. Event leadership may consult with the individual, their coach, and, when the individual is a minor, their parent or legal guardian. When appropriate, staff may contact emergency medical services or another responsible adult. If the individual cannot participate safely, the Dakota Aerial Championship may delay or prohibit further participation and may require the individual to leave the event. Refusal to comply with a safety-related restriction or removal may result in disqualification or removal from the venue.

D. Accurate Level and Category Placement

Competitors and coaches are responsible for selecting the level and category that most accurately reflect the competitor's current skills, experience, and routine content. A level review may be initiated when event leadership or at least two qualified judges or members of the Judging Oversight Team reasonably believe that a routine does not meet the published requirements of the registered level.

Before changing a competitor's level or category, the Dakota Aerial Championship will ordinarily:

- Review the routine information and applicable level requirements
- Consult with the competitor's coach or the independent competitor
- Explain the basis for the proposed change
- Provide written confirmation of the final placement decision

When practical, level concerns identified before the competition will be resolved before the performance schedule is finalized.

If a concern becomes apparent during or after a performance, the Dakota Aerial Championship may reclassify the routine, apply a specifically published deduction, or adjust the competitor's eligibility for placement in accordance with the competition rules.

Level changes will be based on published criteria and demonstrated routine content– not solely on reputation, studio affiliation, prior placement, or the subjective expectation that a competitor “looks too advanced.”

E. Reporting, Review, and Response

Conduct and safety concerns should be reported as promptly as possible to a designated member of the Dakota Aerial Championship leadership team at the event or by emailing info@sdaerialarts.com with the subject line:

DAC 2026 Conduct/Safety Report – [Reported Individual's Name, if applicable]

Score-review requests must be submitted separately under the process established in the Judging and Score Review section of the competitor packet.

Reports should include, when available:

- The names of the individuals involved
- A description of what occurred
- The approximate date, time, and location
- The names of potential witnesses
- Relevant photographs, videos, messages, or other documentation

The Dakota Aerial Championship will review reports as promptly and impartially as reasonably possible. The individual accused of misconduct will ordinarily be informed of the concern and given an opportunity to respond.

Immediate temporary action may be taken before the review is completed when event leadership reasonably believes such action is necessary to protect a participant, preserve evidence, prevent disruption, or maintain safety. Information will be shared only with individuals who reasonably need it to evaluate or respond to the concern. Complete confidentiality cannot be guaranteed.

For matters involving a minor, communications regarding formal consequences will ordinarily include the minor's parent or legal guardian. Suspected abuse, neglect, or criminal conduct may be reported to law enforcement, child-protection authorities, venue management, or another appropriate authority.

F. Consequences and Removal

Consequences will be based on the nature, severity, frequency, and circumstances of the conduct. Possible actions include:

- A verbal or written direction to stop the conduct
- A formal warning
- Removal from a particular activity or area
- Score deductions when specifically authorized by the competition rules
- Disqualification of the individual responsible
- Removal from the venue
- Suspension or exclusion from future Dakota Aerial Championship events
- Referral to venue management, law enforcement, emergency services, child-protection authorities, or another appropriate organization

Whenever practical, consequences will be directed toward the individual responsible rather than unrelated teammates or studio members. Severe misconduct—including violence, credible threats, intentional equipment interference, serious harassment, retaliation, or conduct creating an immediate safety risk—may result in removal or disqualification without prior warning.

An individual directed to leave an activity, restricted area, or venue must comply promptly. Refusal to comply may result in disqualification, removal by venue personnel or law enforcement, and exclusion from future Dakota Aerial Championship events.

Reinstatement following a suspension or exclusion is not automatic. Event leadership may consider the seriousness of the conduct, acceptance of responsibility, corrective actions, relevant safety concerns, and any conditions reasonably necessary for future participation. An apology may be considered as part of the reinstatement process but will not be the sole requirement or guarantee of reinstatement.

G. Plagiarism and Choreography Integrity Rules

Competitors, coaches, and choreographers are expected to submit original routines or routines they are authorized to perform. DAC recognizes that aerial routines often contain commonly taught skills, transitions, themes, and music; similarities alone do not establish plagiarism.

For purposes of the Dakota Aerial Championship, plagiarism means the intentional and substantial copying of another performer's original routine. This may include a recognizable combination of the same music, character or visual likeness, distinctive choreography, transitions, musical timing, sequencing, or other creative elements.

Using the same song, theme, costume concept, individual aerial skills, standard transitions, or commonly taught combinations does not, by itself, constitute plagiarism. A concern based primarily on shared aerial skills will be considered plagiarism only when clear and convincing evidence shows that more than 75% of the routine's skill sequence—including the order and arrangement of those skills—is substantially the same as the earlier routine. Minor changes, substitutions, or reversed sides will not necessarily make an otherwise substantially copied sequence original.

The percentage of similarity will be determined by the review panel based on identifiable choreographic sequences, not solely by total running time. Accidental similarities, independently created routines, and elements commonly used within the aerial community will not constitute plagiarism.

Reporting a Concern

A competitor, coach, choreographer, or parent or legal guardian who reasonably believes that a routine contains plagiarized choreography must report the concern to DAC staff as promptly as possible.

The report must identify the specific portions of the routine believed to have been copied and include dated video evidence showing that the original choreography existed before the DAC performance.

Reports must be emailed to info@sdaerialarts.com with the subject line:

URGENT: PLAGIARISM CONCERN - [Competitor Name]

When available, the report should include:

- The names of the performers and choreographers involved
- A link to or copy of the earlier routine
- The date and source of the earlier recording
- A description or timestamps identifying the allegedly copied portions
- Any other relevant supporting information
- Good-faith reports will not result in retaliation. Knowingly false, misleading, or retaliatory allegations may be addressed under the DAC Code of Conduct.

H. Plagiarism Preliminary Review

When a report is received during the in-person competition, DAC may call an approximately five-minute recess to conduct an initial review. This recess is intended only to determine whether the report contains enough credible information to begin a formal review. It is not a final determination.

If additional review is warranted, the competition may resume while the matter is reviewed privately. DAC may meet separately or jointly with the performers, coaches, choreographers, and parents or legal guardians of minor competitors. Each party will be allowed to explain the routine's origin and provide relevant evidence.

I. Plagiarism Review Panel and Evidence Standard

The final determination will be made by a six-person review panel consisting of DAC leadership and all in-person judges. Panel members must be independent of the performers and routines involved. Any panel member with a coaching, choreographic, family, studio, financial, or other material connection to the matter must disclose the conflict and may not participate in the decision. DAC will appoint an independent replacement when reasonably possible.

Plagiarism must be established by clear and convincing evidence. At least four eligible panel members must agree that this standard has been met before a violation may be found. Similarities involving music, themes, costumes, common skills, standard transitions, or broadly used performance concepts will not be sufficient without evidence of intentional and substantial copying. If the panel determines that plagiarism occurred, the routine will be disqualified upon a final finding under this process from scoring, placement, and awards. Any award already issued will be withdrawn. A \$100 fee will be assessed against the coach or choreographer determined to be responsible. A minor competitor will not be personally responsible for the fee, and unrelated competitors or teammates will not be prevented from performing because of another individual's violation or unpaid fee.

Photography, Videography, and Media Privacy

Official photographers and videographers may be present throughout the Dakota Aerial Championship. Photo and video packages may be available for purchase.

No flash photography is permitted during performances, stage testing, workshops, or other aerial activities. Performances may be recorded for judging, score review, safety, event documentation, and private delivery to competitors and coaches. These administrative recordings may still be created when a competitor opts out of public media use.

Media Opt-Out

Competitors may opt out of having identifiable photographs or videos used publicly by the Dakota Aerial Championship or South Dakota Aerial & Arts. To opt out, email info@sdaerialarts.com by November 1, 2026 with the subject line: DAC 2026 Media Opt-Out – [Competitor Name]

Include:

- Competitor's full name
- Parent or legal guardian's name if the competitor is under 18
- Studio name, if applicable
- Apparatus and performance category
- Whether the request applies to photographs, videos, livestreams, or all public media

Media opt-out requests will be approved. DAC will exclude identifiable media of the competitor from public social-media posts, website galleries, promotional materials, and public videos or livestreams. Private administrative recordings may still be reviewed by judges and authorized event personnel or delivered privately to the competitor and coach.

For duo or group routines, an opt-out submitted for any member will prevent DAC from publicly sharing the complete routine or identifiable group media unless separate permission is received.

Spectator Photography and Recording

Spectators may photograph or record their own family members, members of their studio when authorized, or performers who have given permission. Spectators may not photograph, record, livestream, or publicly post another competitor without permission from the competitor or, for a minor, their parent or legal guardian. Photography and recording must not use flash, block sightlines, interfere with judging or staff, distract performers, or occur within restricted areas. Event staff may direct anyone to stop photographing or recording. Refusal to comply may result in removal from the event.

Ways to Compete

The Dakota Aerial Championship welcomes both in-person and virtual competitors. Each format allows competitors to present their work, receive professional judging feedback, and participate in the DAC competition experience.

Virtual Competition

Virtual competition provides an accessible option for aerialists who are unable to travel to Sioux Falls or who prefer to perform in their home studio.

Virtual competitors must record and submit a one-take performance between Thursday, October 1, and Saturday, October 24, 2026. Each recording must follow the required introduction and submission procedures outlined in the Virtual Competition Rules. DAC staff will review each submission to confirm that it was recorded during the designated submission period and specifically for the 2026 Dakota Aerial Championship.

In-Person Competition

The in-person Dakota Aerial Championship will take place at South Dakota Aerial & Arts from Thursday, November 12, through Sunday, November 15, 2026.

Competitors may request early stage testing on Thursday, November 12, or Friday morning, November 13. Competitors registered for one of these early stage-testing sessions may also participate in free open training at the studio during the designated early stage-testing block.

To request early stage testing, email info@sdaerialarts.com with the subject line:

DAC 2026 Early Stage Testing Request – [Competitor Name]. Please include the competitor's name, studio, apparatus, and preferred stage-testing day.

Standard stage-testing sessions and competition performances will take place from Friday, November 13, through Sunday, November 15. Each in-person competitor will receive an assigned stage-testing time and performance time based on availability. Complete schedules and additional event information will be released before the competition.

Virtual Rules and Guidelines for Submission:

The virtual competition provides aerialists with an accessible way to participate in the Dakota Aerial Championship from their home studio. To maintain fairness, all virtual competitors must follow the same recording and submission requirements and will be evaluated using the published rules and judging criteria for their registered apparatus, level, and division.

All virtual performances must be recorded in one continuous take specifically for the 2026 Dakota Aerial Championship. DAC staff will review each submission for compliance before it is sent to the judging panel. Failure to follow the recording, safety, or submission requirements may result in deductions or disqualification.

Virtual Submission Process

1. Prepare the Performance Area

Before recording, confirm that:

- The complete apparatus, including a mat, and performance area can be seen clearly on camera.
- The recording angle allows judges to evaluate the competitor throughout the entire routine.
- The performance area is well lit and free from visual obstructions.
- An approved crash mat is positioned beneath the apparatus.
 - All virtual competitors must use a crash mat that is at least eight inches thick and measures at least 4 feet by 6 feet. A permanently installed foam floor may be submitted to DAC for approval in place of a crash mat. Approval must be received before the routine is recorded.
 - Approved straps and specialty routines may be approved if determined to be safe by the Dakota Aerial Championship team - request approval by emailing info@sdaerialarts.com
 - A 4-point deduction will be incurred if no/a non-approved mat is utilized
- The apparatus, rigging, and performance space are safe and appropriate for the routine.

2. Announce the Competitor

The performance must be announced on camera immediately before the routine begins. The announcement may be made by someone standing in front of the camera or by an offstage announcer during a studio showcase or recording event.

The announcement must use the following script:
“Presenting [Performer Name] on [Apparatus Name] on [Date].”

The announcement confirms the competitor’s identity and verifies that the performance was recorded specifically for the 2026 Dakota Aerial Championship. Voice-over announcements are not permitted. Studios may arrange a designated team-recording date with DAC. When the recording date has been arranged and verified in advance, the date may be omitted from individual competitor announcements.

3. Record the Routine in One Take

The announcement and complete performance must be captured in one continuous recording. The video may not contain cuts, splices, combined takes, speed changes, filters, visual effects, or replacement audio. The competitor must remain visible throughout the performance. A routine is considered complete when the competitor safely exits the apparatus and performs a final bow. Failure to include a final bow will result in a two-point deduction.

4. Upload the Video

Upload the completed video to one of the following platforms:

- Google Drive — preferred
- YouTube
- Vimeo

Confirm that the sharing permissions allow the Dakota Aerial Championship to view the complete video. DAC is not responsible for delays caused by inaccessible links or incorrect sharing permissions.

5. Submit the Virtual Entry Form

The official Virtual Submission Form will open on Thursday, October 1, 2026. Virtual entries must be submitted by Saturday, October 24, 2026.

Submit the completed video through the official Virtual Submission Form:

<https://www.sdaerialarts.com/dakota-aerial-championship/virtual-entry>.

Enter the video or folder link in the designated field and complete all required information.

Videos sent by email, text message, or social media will not be accepted.

6. Submission Review

Once submitted, a virtual entry is final and cannot be replaced or rerecorded for that apparatus.

DAC staff will review the submission to confirm that:

- The video was recorded in one continuous take.
- The required announcement was included.
- The competitor and apparatus remain visible.
- The minimum mat requirements were followed.
- The video was recorded during the designated submission period.
- The link is accessible and the video can be viewed by the judging panel.

If DAC encounters a technical problem accessing or playing the submitted video, the competitor or coach will be contacted by email. This does not permit a competitor to submit a different performance unless DAC confirms that the problem resulted from a technical issue unrelated to the performance itself.

Additional Virtual Competition Information

- Virtual entries are accepted from competitors in any country.
- Awards shipped outside the United States may require the competitor to pay additional shipping and handling costs.
- Virtual apparatus height and setup do not need to match the in-person venue exactly. However, the routine must comply with all rules for the competitor's registered apparatus, level, and division.
- Competitors with questions about their apparatus, mat, rigging configuration, or performance space should email info@sdaerialarts.com for approval before recording.
- Awards will be mailed following the competition.
- Scores, results, and judging feedback will be provided according to the timelines established in this packet.
- Feedback and other virtual competition communications will be sent from info@sdaerialarts.com.

Divisions and Division Placement

A. Standard Age Divisions

A competitor's age division will be determined by their age on November 1, 2026.

The standard age divisions are:

- Ages 9 and Under
- Ages 10–12
- Ages 13–15
- Ages 16–19
- Ages 20+

Competitors - or their parents or legal guardians when the competitor is under 18 - are responsible for providing an accurate date of birth during registration. DAC may request reasonable documentation to verify a competitor's age. Dates of birth will not be published in the public competitor list.

B. How Competitive Divisions Are Formed

A competitive division is created using the following factors:

- Competition format: in-person or virtual
- Routine type: solo, duo, or group
- Apparatus category: Silks, Hammock/Sling, Lyra, Specialty, or Group
- Performance level: Emerging, Rising, Seasoned, or Advanced
- Age division or approved cross-generational division

Whenever registration numbers reasonably allow, competitors will be placed with other competitors who share the same format, routine type, apparatus category, performance level, and age division.

The standard division structure is:

[Competition Format] – [Apparatus or Routine Category] – [Performance Level] – [Performer Age Group]

Example:

Virtual - Silks - Rising Performer - Ages 10–12

The following standards apply:

- Different performance levels will not be combined under any circumstances.
- Solo, duo, and group routines will not be combined as the same routine type.
- All duo routines will compete in the Specialty category, or will be broken into a duo-specific category, when applicable.
- Routines containing three or more performers in one performance will compete in the Group category.
- Specialty routines may include different apparatuses when fewer than three comparable routines use the same specialty apparatus.
- A separate apparatus division may be established when at least three comparable Specialty routines within the same performance level and age division use the same apparatus.

Division names and groupings may be adjusted to reflect the registrations received, but all adjustments will follow the standards established in this section.

C. Division Announcements

Registration closes on October 11, 2026.

Preliminary divisions will be published by October 15, 2026, in the Live Competitor List.

Final divisions will be confirmed and published by November 1, 2026. All approved adjustments will be reflected in the Live Competitor List.

Because withdrawals, corrections, and approved category changes may occur after preliminary divisions are published, competitors should not consider a division final until November 1.

After final divisions are published, DAC will make additional changes only when reasonably necessary to:

- Correct a factual or administrative error
- Address a withdrawal
- Address an eligibility issue
- Implement an approved level or category change
- Resolve another circumstance materially affecting competitive fairness

Division placement will not be changed arbitrarily after a competitor has performed.

D. Combining and Splitting Age Divisions

DAC may combine or further divide standard age divisions when reasonably necessary to create fair and meaningful competitive groups.

The following standards apply:

- Different performance levels will not be combined under any circumstances.
- Only neighboring age divisions will ordinarily be combined.
- Competitors under 18 will not ordinarily be combined with the Ages 20+ division.
- Divisions containing seven or more competitors may be divided into smaller groups.
- When an age division is split, competitors will be grouped according to age and then date of birth.
- DAC will make reasonable efforts to create divisions of comparable size.
- DAC will make reasonable efforts to avoid divisions containing only one competitor.
- DAC does not guarantee a minimum number of competitors in any division.

E. In-Person and Virtual Divisions

DAC will make efforts to place in-person and virtual competitors in separate divisions because the performance environments, equipment, recording perspectives, and competition conditions differ.

A virtual or in-person division containing three or fewer competitors may be combined with the corresponding division in the other competition format. Any combined in-person and virtual division will be identified in the final competitor list before judging begins.

Combined divisions must:

- Remain within the same performance level
- Contain the same routine type
- Contain the same apparatus category or an otherwise permitted Specialty category
- Contain the same or an appropriately combined age division

G. Mixed-Age and Cross-Generational Routines

Routines containing competitors from different standard age divisions will be placed in a cross-generational division when at least three reasonably comparable mixed-age routines are registered within the same performance level and routine category.

If fewer than three comparable mixed-age routines are available, the routine's age division will be determined by the average age of its performers as of November 1, 2026.

Different performance levels will not be combined to create a cross-generational division.

H. Placement Corrections and Conflicts of Interest

When DAC proposes a division placement that differs from the information submitted during registration, the competitor's coach—or the competitor if registering independently—will be notified of the change and the reason for it.

Requests to correct an age, apparatus, level, competition format, or registration error must be submitted promptly to info@sdaerialarts.com.

A placement review may be used to correct a factual or administrative error but may not be used solely to request a more favorable group of competitors.

Any DAC team member with a direct coaching, family, financial, or studio relationship involving a placement under review must disclose that relationship and, whenever practical, may not serve as the sole decision-maker.

Final division placement authority remains with the Dakota Aerial Championship and will be exercised according to the standards stated in this section.

Apparatus Categories and Equipment

Competitors must register each routine under the apparatus and routine category that most accurately represents the performance.

The standard categories are:

- Aerial Silks
- Aerial Hammock/Sling
- Aerial Hoop/Lyra
- Specialty
- Group

Standard equipment will be available for solo Silks, Hammock/Sling, and single-point Lyra routines. Competitors may use personal equipment when it complies with the requirements in this section and is approved under the rigging requirements.

A. Aerial Hammock/Sling

The Dakota Aerial Championship will provide a standard aerial hammock for competition use.

The provided hammock will be:

- Low-to-medium stretch nylon tricot fabric
- Approximately 108 inches wide
- Approximately 8-10 feet in length
- Configured as a sling on a single stainless-steel rescue eight
- Suitable for connection to a single rigging point

Personal hammocks are permitted when approved by the DAC rigging team.

Hammocks rigged directly to O-rings are not permitted unless the competitor or studio supplies an approved rigging plate or another approved configuration that prevents tri-loading.

B. Aerial Silks

The Dakota Aerial Championship will provide standard aerial silks for competition use.

The provided silks will be:

- Low- to medium-stretch nylon tricot
- Approximately 108 inches wide
- Approximately 24 feet in height
- Rigged with an approximately two-foot tail
- Connected to a stainless-steel rescue eight and swivel
- Suitable for suspension from a single rigging point

Silks may not exceed 24 feet at the competition venue, based on the rig point/ceiling height. Competitors requiring a different approved height or tail length must make the request during stage testing.

Personal silks are permitted when approved by the DAC rigging team.

C. Aerial Hoop/Lyra

All routines entered in the standard Lyra category must use a single-point aerial hoop rigged with a spanset.

Double-point lyra routines **must** be entered in the Specialty category. Any double-point lyra routines competed under the Lyra division will receive an automatic 5-point deduction.

DAC will provide the following tabless, single-point lyras:

- 32-inch lyra
- 35-inch lyra
- 36-inch lyra

The provided lyras will:

- Be made from approximately one-inch stainless-steel tubing
- Be taped with hockey tape
- Be supplied with a six-foot spanset

Competitors requiring another lyra size, tab configuration, tape style, or spanset length must provide their own equipment.

Spansets ranging from 4 to 10 feet are permitted when they fit safely within the competition venue. DAC will provide only a six-foot spanset. Competitors requiring another spanset length must supply it.

Competitors whose routines or performance-level requirements include skills performed in the spanset must use a spanset that is at least five feet long.

D. Specialty

The Specialty category includes:

- Apparatuses not included in the standard Silks, Hammock/Sling, or Lyra categories
- All duo routines
- Double-point lyras
- Other solo or duo routines that do not fit within a standard apparatus category

Competitors must provide their Specialty apparatus and all required Specialty equipment. This may include:

- Rigging plates
- Spreader bars
- Spansets
- Connectors
- Slings
- Specialty mounting components
- Other apparatus-specific equipment

When a duo routine uses standard Silks, Hammock/Sling, or single-point Lyra equipment, DAC-provided equipment may be used if approved in advance and compatible with the routine.

When at least three comparable routines within the same performance level and age division use the same Specialty apparatus, DAC may create a separate division for that apparatus.

When fewer than three comparable routines use the same apparatus, different Specialty apparatuses may compete within one Specialty division using the published general judging criteria.

Different performance levels will not be combined.

E. Group

A Group routine contains three or more performers.

Group routines may use:

- One shared apparatus
- Multiple apparatuses of the same type
- Multiple types of apparatuses
- Approved props or flow-arts elements

The studio or group must provide all apparatuses and additional equipment required for the routine. DAC-provided equipment may be used only when approved in advance.

Studios must contact info@sdaerialarts.com before registering a Group routine and provide:

- Number and type of apparatuses
- Apparatus dimensions
- Number and ages of performers
- Proposed performance level
- Requested rigging configuration
- Required spacing and heights
- Hardware and connection requirements
- Props or flow-arts elements included in the routine

Group routines will be judged using the general published judging criteria and the requirements of their registered performance level.

A Group containing performers of different individual levels must register at the level that reflects the highest-level skills included in the routine. Different performance levels will not be combined.

Rigging and Apparatus Safety Requirements

The safety of competitors, coaches, staff, and spectators takes priority over performance preferences, scheduling, scoring, or placement.

All apparatuses and rigging configurations used during the Dakota Aerial Championship must be approved by the DAC rigging team.

A. Rigging Authority

Only authorized members of the DAC rigging team may:

- Install or remove an apparatus
- Connect or disconnect rigging components
- Raise or lower an apparatus
- Adjust an apparatus height
- Change a rigging configuration
- Operate the venue's pulley system
- Approve equipment for competition use

Competitors, coaches, parents, guardians, and spectators may not touch or alter rigging equipment unless specifically directed and supervised by an authorized member of the DAC rigging team. The DAC head rigger or authorized rigging representative has final authority regarding whether and how an apparatus may be installed and used.

B. Personal-Apparatus Inspection

All personal apparatuses must be inspected and approved by the DAC rigging team upon arrival and before stage testing or competition use.

Competitors must bring all components required to install and use their apparatus safely. DAC is not responsible for supplying unlisted or specialty rigging components.

DAC may refuse to rig or use equipment that is:

- Damaged or excessively worn
- Improperly configured
- Missing required components
- Incompatible with the venue or available rigging points
- Missing sufficient manufacturer or safety information
- Otherwise determined to be unsafe by the DAC rigging team

Approval at another studio, venue, or competition does not guarantee approval by DAC.

C. Preliminary Specialty-Apparatus Approval

Competitors bringing a unique Specialty apparatus may request preliminary approval before the competition by emailing info@sdaerialarts.com.

The request must include:

- Clear photographs of the complete apparatus
- Photographs of all connection points and rigging components
- Apparatus dimensions and weight
- Manufacturer name
- Published working-load limits or other available safety ratings
- Proposed rigging configuration
- Specialty hardware required

Preliminary approval allows DAC to evaluate whether the apparatus is likely to be compatible with the venue. It does not replace the required onsite inspection or guarantee final approval.

D. Connection and Hardware Requirements

The following requirements apply to all personal, Specialty, duo, and Group apparatuses:

- Tri-loading carabiners is prohibited.
- Competitors must provide any required rigging plates, spreader bars, spansets, connectors, slings, or Specialty components.
- DAC may provide standard connection hardware when appropriate.
- DAC does not guarantee that a swivel or another specific connector will be suitable for every apparatus.
- The DAC rigging team will determine the final connection method used at the venue.
- DAC will not design or supply an unplanned Specialty rigging solution on the day of competition.
- Equipment that cannot be connected safely within the available venue configuration will not be used.

E. Apparatus Height and Pulley Use

Competitors may provide their requested apparatus height during stage testing.

If no height is provided:

- Hammocks will be set with the lowest point approximately 60 inches from the performance surface.
- Lyras will be set with the lowest point approximately 60 inches from the performance surface.
- Silks will be set according to the standard venue configuration.

Apparatus heights will be established during stage testing and recorded by the authorized stage or rigging manager. If winching or lifting is requested, a team of at least 4 individuals must be approved for rigging, and they must attend early stage testing to determine their rigging process and procedures.

Motors are not permitted.

DAC pulley systems may be used by authorized rigging personnel to establish apparatus height before a routine. Pulley systems may not be operated to change the rig-point or apparatus height during a performance.

G. Group Rigging

The venue can accommodate up to seven rigging points arranged in a horizontal line.

Alternative point layouts, spacing, or configurations are not guaranteed. Final availability depends on the apparatuses, hardware, spacing, loading, and venue configuration.

Each Group will receive a maximum of 10 minutes for:

- Apparatus installation
- Height setting
- Rigging and connection checks
- Safety testing
- Competitor stage testing

Groups must arrive with a prepared rigging plan and all required equipment. A Group routine may be modified or denied if its requested configuration cannot be completed safely within the available time or venue limitations.

H. Unsafe or Unapproved Equipment

DAC may delay, modify, or prohibit a routine when its apparatus or rigging configuration cannot be used safely.

Registration fees will not be refunded when a competitor's personal equipment cannot be used because it is:

- Faulty or damaged
- Unsafe
- Incomplete
- Missing required documentation or components
- Incompatible with the published venue or rigging requirements
- Different from the apparatus or configuration previously submitted for approval

Safety decisions made by the DAC head rigger or authorized rigging representative are final for the event.

Performance Levels

The Dakota Aerial Championship offers the following performance levels:

- Emerging Performer - Level 1
- Rising Performer - Level 2
- Seasoned Performer - Level 3
- Advanced Performer - Level 4
- Showcase - No Awards or Placements

Competitors must select the level that most accurately reflects their current abilities, experience, and routine content. Competitors who are uncertain about their placement should consult their coach and review the apparatus-specific level requirements in this packet.

All competitive routines must be registered under the correct apparatus, routine category, and performance level. Different performance levels will not be combined under any circumstances.

A. Divisions With One Competitor

A competitor who is the sole participant in their division may remain in that division and be evaluated under its published requirements.

The competitor may also be offered the voluntary option to:

- Move to another appropriate age division at the same performance level
- Move to the next higher performance level

A competitor who moves to the next higher level will be fully reclassified and judged under all requirements and restrictions of that level. This does not constitute combining performance levels.

Competitors are not required to accept a division or level change. A competitor who remains alone in their original division will remain eligible for scoring, feedback, awards, and placement.

B. Level Reviews

A level review may be initiated when at least two members of the Judging Oversight Team reasonably believe that a routine does not meet the published requirements of its registered level. Level reviews will be conducted only when necessary to preserve competitive fairness and appropriate division alignment.

When practical, DAC will:

- Review the routine and applicable level requirements
- Consult with the competitor's coach or the independent competitor
- Explain the basis for a proposed level change
- Provide confirmation of the final placement decision

If a level concern is identified before the competition, DAC may require the routine to move to the appropriate level.

If a concern becomes apparent during or after a performance, DAC may reclassify the routine or adjust its eligibility for placement according to the published level-review and judging rules.

Competitors from different performance levels will not be ranked against one another.

C. Mixed-Level Duos and Groups

A duo or Group containing performers from different individual experience levels must register at the performance level that reflects the highest-level skills included in the routine.

The performers' individual class placements and years of experience may be considered, but the routine's demonstrated skill content will be the primary factor in determining its competitive level.

D. Special Cases

- Instructors may not compete in the Emerging Performer division, even when an apparatus is new to them.
- A competitor affected by injury, illness, pregnancy, or another significant life event may request placement in a lower level when their current abilities and routine content support that placement.
- Requests for special level placement must be submitted in writing to info@sdaerialarts.com and approved before the competition.
- A coach may not compete in the same competitive division as a current student they directly coach.
- If a coach and current student would otherwise be placed in the same division, the coach will be moved to the Showcase category. The student will remain in the applicable competitive division.
- The coach may still perform and receive judging feedback but will not receive a competitive score, placement, medal, or other competitive award for that routine.
- A "current student" is a competitor whom the coach regularly and directly trains or has directly coached in preparing the routine entered in DAC.
- Attendance at a single workshop, occasional open training, or limited informal assistance does not, by itself, establish a current coach-student relationship.
- Coaches are responsible for disclosing potential coach-student conflicts during registration or as soon as the conflict becomes known.

Wardrobe, Grip Aid and Prop Guidelines:

Costumes and props should enhance a competitor's performance while maintaining a family-friendly environment and protecting the safety of performers, staff, and spectators.

Costumes:

- Costumes and props must be family-friendly and age-appropriate.
- Stripping or removing clothing with sexual or provocative intent is prohibited. Family-friendly costume changes that support the routine's character or storyline are permitted.
- Appropriate undergarments are required. Tights and aerial socks are permitted.
- Necklaces, anklets, rings, bracelets, and dangling earrings are prohibited.
- Boots and shoes are prohibited because they obscure foot and toe control. Wearing boots or shoes will result in an automatic two-point deduction.
- Hair may be worn down. A deduction may apply if hair becomes caught or disrupts the performance.
- Feathers, glitter bombs, confetti, liquids, powders, or other items that leave debris or residue in the performance area are prohibited. Use of these items will result in an automatic two-point deduction.
- Competitors must test their complete costume before stage testing. A costume malfunction resulting in indecent exposure or a significant violation of the family-friendly requirements may result in disqualification.

Props:

A prop is an object used to support the character, story, or presentation of a routine. Examples include hats, wings, suitcases, chairs, or similar performance items.

Non-human props may be positioned around the outside of the crash mat when they do not interfere with the performer, judges, rigging, staff, or performance area. A non-human prop may be placed or used on the crash mat only while the performer is completely off the aerial apparatus. The prop must be removed from the crash mat before the performer remounts the apparatus. This can be done by the performer or an approved stage hand.

Props may not:

- Be attached to or placed on an aerial apparatus unless approved as part of the apparatus
- Remain on the crash mat while the performer is on the apparatus
- Create a tripping, falling, entanglement, or rigging hazard
- Block the judges' view
- Damage or leave residue on the mat, apparatus, stage, or venue

A prop improperly placed on the mat or apparatus will result in an automatic one-point deduction. Up to three points may be deducted if the prop disrupts the routine or creates an avoidable safety concern. Props do not require advance approval unless they are large, require assistance, attach to an apparatus, or could affect rigging or safety. Large props used by in-person competitors must be checked in at the equipment-intake area. Event staff will move approved large props to the designated side-stage or performance area. Human props and spotters must receive advance approval and follow the separate human-prop and spotting requirements.

Costume or Prop Entanglement

A costume or prop entanglement will result in an automatic five-point deduction when:

- The competitor requires assistance from a coach, spotter, staff member, or audience member; or
- The competitor is unintentionally stuck for 10 seconds or longer because of their costume or prop.

If the competitor must be lowered by the head rigger because of a costume or prop entanglement, the routine will receive an eight-point deduction.

Emergency assistance will always take priority over scoring.

Grip Aids

Grip aids are permitted for use during workshops and competitions. Grip aids will not be permitted if they compromise the apparatus or leave residue that stains or impacts the apparatus. Approved Grip Aids: Midas Grip Aid, Natural Rosin Powder, Firm Grip Spray, Grip-IT Hand Spray, Tuf Skin Grip Spray, Better Grip, and Mueller Grip Spray.

Music:

Music Guidelines:

- You need to execute your full act (excluding getting off the apparatus) in the time allotted. You are not required to use the full time allotted. All requirements must be executed within the time allotted.
- The music will start once you hold your starting position.
 - If you would like to do floorwork prior to your music starting, you must include dead space/silence at the beginning of your music. Music will not be restarted in any circumstances unless there is a technical error that needs to be resolved by the DAC team.
 - If music is requested to be restarted before mounting the apparatus, the performer will incur an automatic 3-point deduction.
 - No music will be restarted once a performer mounts the apparatus.

- If your music exceeds the maximum length allotted for your division, you will incur a deduction.
- Competitors have 20 seconds to unwrap and dismount the silk after the music ends. The routine will be considered “completed” when the competitor bows. The unwrapping execution and exit will be considered when judging the routine. Over-exceeding your dismounting time allotment will result in a 2-point deduction.
- All music must be a clean or radio-edited version. Music containing profanity, explicit language, sexual content, drug references, or strong alcohol-related references will not be permitted. The Dakota Aerial Championship is a family-friendly event.
- The Dakota Aerial Championship **will not conduct music reviews** before the competition for in-person or virtual competitors.
- All music selections must be submitted in compliance with these guidelines. Coaches/Performers are responsible for reviewing lyrics, background vocals, and edited versions to ensure compliance.
- Routines using music determined to violate these guidelines will be subject to deductions. DAC reserves the right to disqualify a routine in cases of significant violations.

Music Submission:

All music must be submitted in an Mp3 or M4A format.

- **Maximum Time Allowance:**
 - **Emerging Performer:** 3:00
 - **Rising Performer:** 3:30
 - **Seasoned Performer:** 3:45
 - **Advanced Performer:** 4:00
- Use the following naming convention when submitting your music:
 - **Performer Name_Song Name_Apparatus_Division_Studio Name**
- Music can be submitted by filling out the following form: **DAC Music Submission Form**
- When your music is received, it will be notated in the Live Competitor List. Individual music reviews will not be contacted by the DAC team. If you have concerns about your selected music, and if it may lead to deductions, please email info@sdaerialarts.com with the Subject Line “Music Review Requested_Name_Apparatus”. Music reviews will be conducted within 5 business days of receiving the request. These requests must be done by October 10, 2026.
- Virtual Competitors do not need to submit their music for approval; however, if their song does not fit the above criteria, this is grounds for deduction or disqualification
- **The Music Submission Deadline is October 16, 2026**
- Any music file revisions will be subject to a \$30 late fee.
- Any music not submitted/received, or revised between October 16 - November 8, 2026, will be subject to a \$40 late fee, no exceptions.



Judging:

A: Process (New in 2026)

- There will be a minimum of three judges for each competitive performance. All competition and showcase pieces will receive feedback for their performance. All competition routines will be evaluated based on the criteria outlined below.
- All in-person competitors will be evaluated by an in-person panel of judges located in front of the main stage.
- All virtual competitors will be evaluated based on the video they submit for judging review.
- There will be a designated judge processing deductions (New in 2026) to make sure all objective deductions are consistent for competitors. This individual is not a part of the standard judging panel, they are designated specifically as an unbiased deduction-specific judge.
- Judges' subjective evaluations are final. Mathematical, administrative, eligibility, deduction, division-placement, and published-rule errors may be reviewed through the score-review process below.
- Competitors, coaches, and parents will not request explanations, changes, or anything in relation to the given scores from the in-person judges. This is grounds for disqualification.
- Judges must disclose any direct coaching, choreographic, family, financial, or studio relationship involving a competitor they are assigned to evaluate. When practical, the judge will not score that routine. DAC may assign a replacement judge or remove the conflicted judge's score from the calculation, provided the routine remains evaluated by the required minimum number of eligible judges.
- Ties will result in both competitors getting the same medal/placing that correlated with their placing.

B: Feedback

- Performance scores will be provided during the award ceremony. Formal feedback will be provided approximately **two weeks (14 days)** after the date of performance. Feedback will be provided in Excel or PDF format, and the name of the judge who provided the feedback will not be specified.
- Scores and results will be posted online within 24 hours of the award ceremony, but feedback will be sent to the coach, studio, and/or performer's info provided during registration.
- Judges may not be approached directly regarding scores, placements, deductions, or feedback. Questions involving a possible mathematical, administrative, eligibility, or published-rule error must be submitted to info@sdaerialarts.com within 48 hours after scores are released. Score reviews will not reconsider a judge's subjective evaluation but may correct documented calculation, transcription, deduction, division-placement, or rule-application errors. Good-faith score-review requests will not result in retaliation or disqualification.

C: Judging Criteria and Points (100 Point Scale)

- **1). Difficulty (35 Points)**
 - Difficulty of Skills and Combinations (25)
 - Difficulty and Uniqueness of Transitions (10)
- **2). Technical (35 Points)**
 - Body Lines & Movement Precision (25)
 - Apparatus Control (10)
- **3). Composition & Artistry (30 Points)**
 - Artistic Presentation & Storytelling (10)
 - Musicality & Timing (10)
 - Flow, Structure & Movement Variety (10)

- **Deductions**

- Not meeting the criteria for a specific division - 2-point deduction per missed criterion
- Inappropriate or unsafe use of rigging/touching rigging throughout the performance - 4 point deduction
- Exceeding maximum performance time - 1 point deduction per 5 second overage
- Slips, locks, or falls (severity-based; judges may stop performance) - 1-10 point deduction
- Props being placed on mats - 3 point deduction
- Prohibited costumes - 1-5 point deduction, potential grounds for disqualification
- Performing a restricted move - Up to 5 point deduction
- Swinging off the performance mats - 2 point deduction per instance

- **Grounds For Disqualification**

- Plagiarism of choreography
- Use of explicit or inappropriate music
- Disrespectful language or actions towards or about judges, competitors, coaches, staff, volunteers, or schools
- Use of equipment in a virtual performance that is markedly different from the DAC standards
- Intentional stripping

D: Score Calculations:

- Sum of all Judges' Scores Divided by Total Number of Judges
- Final Score cannot surpass 100 points

E. Rule Definitions:

- **Starting in the Air:** Both feet are off the ground when the music starts. This generally utilizes a climb, knee hook or inversion before the start of the music.
- **Aerial Invert:** An unwrapped aerial inversion where the individual is sitting in or standing on the apparatus. Wrapped inversions do not satisfy this criteria.
- **Drop:** A drop is an aerial skill in which the performer intentionally releases from a secured or wrapped position, creating a rapid descent, rotation, or unfolding that is caught by the apparatus or another aerialist. Examples include salto drops, star drops, slack drops, and ankle drops.
- **Open Drop:** A drop where an individual completely unwraps and needs to use their hands to catch the apparatus, or they will fail to execute the skill. Open 360/Angel drops or drops from a belay or X back that remain in the base wrap through the drop are not considered open drops.
- **Demonstrates Only 1 Climb:** Only one climb was used throughout the routine. If two different styles of the same climb are utilized French Flamenco Climb and French Climb, this criteria would be satisfied. Wrap and Step (French) and Scoop and Step (Russian) are considered two different climbs when evaluating this criteria.

Hammock Rules

Category	Emerging Performer	Rising Performer	Seasoned Performer	Advanced Performer
Performer Description	An Emerging Hammock Performer is considered beginner-level in both skill and performance. Instructors may not perform at this level. Performers should show awareness of the audience and match their skills to music.	A Rising Hammock Performer is one who is comfortable with basic inverted skills in the air. They do not need prior experience performing. Rising Performers are expected to show level-appropriate strength, flexibility, and flow. Rising Performers are expected to interact with the audience and show awareness of the crowd.	A Seasoned Hammock Performer has a solid command of intermediate-level aerial hammock skills, with moderate performance experience and prior competition participation. They should demonstrate level-appropriate strength, flexibility, flow, and create a clear, engaging character or story within their routine.	An Advanced Hammock Performer has a comprehensive command of aerial hammock skills, often with teaching and significant performance experience. They are expected to demonstrate dynamic movement, strong flow, level-appropriate strength and flexibility, and present a well-developed, clear character or storyline.
Required Skills	- Routine must start with at least one body part touching the ground - Performers may come down from the apparatus fully within their routine - Demonstrate proficiency in the bottom of the hammock	-Routine must start with at least one body part touching the ground -Performers may come down within their routine -Demonstrate at least one drop - Demonstrate proficiency in the bottom and middle of the hammock -Inversion from the floor is required	-Routine must start with at least one body part touching the ground -Performers may come down within their routine -Demonstrate at least 2 drops -Demonstrate at least one aerial, straight leg invert - Demonstrate proficiency in the bottom of the hammock, and standing in the hammock - Spinning is required	-Routine must start with at least one body part touching the ground -Performers may come down within their routine -Demonstrate at least two drops from different drop families -Demonstrate at least one aerial, straight arm, and straight leg invert -Must use the full height of the hammock -Spinning is required -Must demonstrate at least one dynamic skill
Maximum Music Length	3:00	3:30	3:45	4:00
Restrictions *Higher level rules apply to all lower levels	-Only Single drops permitted -No aerial inversions -No climbing permitted -No neck or ankle hangs -No open wrap drops -No kamikaze drops	-No open wrap drops -No kamikaze drops -No more than two rotations in a drop are permitted -No more than one aerial invert permitted	-No open wrap drops -No kamikaze drops	-No kamikaze drops

Silks Rules

Category	Emerging Performer	Rising Performer	Seasoned Performer	Advanced Performer
Performer Description	An Emerging Silks Performer is considered beginner level in both skill and performing. Instructors may not perform at this level. Performers should show awareness of the audience and match their skills to music.	A Rising Silks Performer is one who is comfortable with a basic level of inversions. They do not need performance experience. Rising Performers are expected to show level appropriate strength, flexibility, and flow. Rising Performers are expected to interact with the audience and show awareness of the crowd.	A Seasoned Silks Performer has a solid command of intermediate-level aerial silks skills, with moderate performance experience and prior competition participation. They should demonstrate level-appropriate strength, flexibility, flow, and create a clear, engaging character or story within their routine.	An Advanced Silks Performer has a comprehensive command of aerial silks skills, often with teaching and significant performance experience. They are expected to demonstrate a variety of different movement types and wraps, including dynamic movement, strong flow, level-appropriate strength and flexibility, and present a well-developed, clear character or storyline.
Required Skills	-Climbing is not required, but is encouraged -Demonstrate proficiency in the lower half of the height of the silks - must not go higher than 60% up the fabric -Must start on the ground -May utilize a knot	-Demonstrate at least 1 aerial invert -Demonstrate more than 1 type of climb -Demonstrate at least 1 non-footlock skill -Proficiency in the lower $\frac{2}{3}$ of the silks - May use the full length for the routine -Must start on the ground	-At least 1 drop is required -Demonstrate at least 2 straight leg aerial inversions -Demonstrate at least 2 climbs, including at least one inverted climb -Proficiency in full fabric -Must include a moderate to fast spin -Must start on the ground	- At least 1 drop is required - 1 straight leg, straight arm invert is required -Demonstrate at least 2 distinct inverted climbs -Must include a moderate to fast spin -Must demonstrate at least one dynamic skill during the routine -Must start on the ground
Maximum Music Length:	3:00	3:30	3:45	4:00
Restrictions *Higher level rules apply to all lower levels	-Up to one middle, bent-arm aerial invert is allowed - Only single drops are permitted -No inverted climbs -No double drops -No ankle drops -No intentional beats -No aerial wristlocks -No side aerial inverts	-Only single drops, wrapped double drops and single slack drops permitted. -No open wrap drops -No neck hangs -No wrist-lock drops -No kamikaze drops -No wheel downs -No straight arm inverts -No handstands -No single arm hangs	-No open wrap drops -No single point neck hangs -No single arm hangs -Limited to 1 straight arm inversion -No catch and release, inlocates (armpit flips), dislocates, or handstands -No kamikaze drops	-No kamikaze drops

Lyra Rules

Category	Emerging Performer	Rising Performer	Seasoned Performer	Advanced Performer
Performer Description	An Emerging Lyra Performer is considered beginner level in both skill and performing. Instructors may not perform at this level. Performers should show awareness of the audience and match their skills to music.	A Rising Lyra Performer is one who is comfortable with inverting to enter the hoop and with skills on or above the top bar. They do not need performance experience. Rising Performers are expected to show level appropriate strength, flexibility, and flow. Rising Performers are expected to interact with the audience and show crowd awareness.	A Seasoned Lyra Performer has a solid command of intermediate-level lyra skills, with moderate performance experience and prior competition participation. They should demonstrate level-appropriate strength, flexibility, flow, and create a clear, engaging character or story within their routine.	An Advanced Lyra Performer has a comprehensive command of aerial lyra skills. These performers often are coaches or have significant performance experience. They are expected to demonstrate a variety of movements and skill types, including dynamic movement, strong flow, level-appropriate strength and flexibility, and present a well-developed, clear character or storyline.
Required Skills	-Routine must start with at least one body part touching the ground - Must use bottom bar and show use of middle and side bars of the hoop - May come down and re-enter the apparatus as appropriate	-Routine must start with at least one body part touching the ground -Proficiency in and under lyra - Demonstrate at least one type of invert - Demonstrate at least one move with only 2 points of contact - A spin is required	-Routine must start with at least one body part touching the ground -Proficiency on top, in and under lyra -Must use the spanset for at least one move -Demonstrate a minimum of one drop -Demonstrate at least one straight leg invert - Demonstrate at least one move with only 2 points of contact - A spin is required	-Routine must start with at least one body part touching the ground -Proficiency on full lyra and spanset -Demonstrate a minimum of two drops -Demonstrates at least one roll -Demonstrate at least one straight arm invert -At least one flare spin is required
Maximum Music Length	3:00	3:30	3:45	4:00
Restrictions *Higher level rules apply to all lower levels	- No drops - No use of spanset allowed - No intentional beats - No inverts on the top of the apparatus - inverts to the top bar from seated are permitted - No standing or sitting on the top bar - No ankle, foot, toe or heel hangs -No rolls other than beauty or birdie rolls are permitted.	- A maximum of one drop is permitted - No no-handed foot, toe or heel hangs (candlesticks and walking man permitted) -Inverts in the spanset are only permitted if they are executed within the middle of the spanset -No catch and release moves permitted -No rolls other than beauty, glamour, Russian/monkey or birdie rolls are permitted.	- No single point neck hangs -No open drops are permitted (top bar salto drops are permitted) -Drops must not surpass a single rotation -No more than one rotation in rolls of any variety. Multiple different types of rolls are permitted in succession.	-No restrictions

Specialty Rules

Category	Emerging Performer	Rising Performer	Seasoned Performer	Advanced Performer
Performer Description	An Emerging Specialty Performer is considered beginner level in both skill and performing. Instructors may not perform at this level. Performers should show awareness of the audience and match their skills to music.	A Rising Specialty Performer is comfortable with basic skills on their chosen apparatus. They do not need performance experience. Rising Performers are expected to show level appropriate strength, flexibility, and flow. Rising Performers are expected to interact with the audience and show crowd awareness.	A Seasoned Specialty Performer has a solid command of intermediate-level specialty skills, with moderate performance experience and prior competition participation. They should demonstrate level-appropriate strength, flexibility, flow, and create a clear, engaging character or story within their routine.	An Advanced Specialty Performer has a comprehensive command of aerial specialty skills. These performers often have teaching and significant performance experience. They are expected to demonstrate dynamic movement, strong flow, level-appropriate strength and flexibility, and present a well-developed, clear character or storyline.
Required Skills	-Routine must start with at least one body part touching the ground -No free-hanging inverts are allowed on the apparatus, unless required for mounting the apparatus -Only single drops are permitted	-Routine must start with at least one body part touching the ground -One aerial invert is required -Single drops are permitted -Spinning is required, unless not applicable on the apparatus	-Routine must start with at least one body part touching the ground -One aerial invert is required -Single and double drops are permitted -Spinning is required, unless not applicable on the apparatus	-Routine must start with at least one body part touching the ground -Full height of the apparatus must be utilized -At least one drop is required, unless not applicable to the apparatus -Spinning is required, unless not applicable on the apparatus -Must demonstrate dynamic movement and balance
Maximum Music Length	3:00	3:30	3:45	4:00
Restrictions *Higher level rules apply to all lower levels	-No open drops -No ankle, heel, foot, toe or heel hangs -Must not be higher than 16 feet in the air	- No ankle, heel, foot, toe or heel hangs - No single point neck hangs -No open drops	- No single point neck hangs -No open drops (unless approved by DAC staff)	-No kamikaze drops

Event Flow and Information:

Before the Event:

- All information, including music, virtual submissions, song reviews, etc. required to be sent according to the specified deadlines listed in the competitor packet.
- The 2026 Live Competitor List will be available for review once published
 - Once registration closes, this link will be updated with the tentative performance schedule
- When registering, please outline your performance availability - we will be expanding performances into Friday, Saturday, and potentially Sunday to accommodate as many performers as possible.
- Open gyms will be available before the competition to test rigging and the performance space.

Day of Event - Check-in/Getting Ready:

- There are no dressing rooms currently available at the venue - **please come fully ready to the venue for your performance.** This helps keep our bathrooms available for spectators and performers.
- Please arrive early for stage testing based on the provided schedule. If your stage testing is missed, no additional time will be permitted. You must complete your stage testing during your allotted time.
- Sign the performance waiver online before stage testing: <https://www.sdaerialarts.com/liability-waiver>
- If you are the guardian of a minor, you are responsible for checking them in and signing all their waivers. A legal guardian is required to sign all forms for competitors under 18 years old.
- If you have equipment or large props that are being used to facilitate your performance, you will need to check in this equipment with our intake team. The individuals at the front desk can direct you to the equipment intake area.

Day of Event - Stage Testing:

- Stage testing will be a maximum of 1 minute and 45 seconds for all aerial silks performances and 2 minutes for all other apparatuses. Please plan in advance for your stage testing. You will be asked to leave the apparatus once your stage testing time is completed.
- Your stage testing will include setting your height (if applicable) and familiarizing yourself with the apparatus and stage. You will not have enough time to go through your full routine.
- Coaches are permitted to accompany competitors for stage testing but are not permitted to touch the apparatus after the height has been adjusted.
- No competitors will be given additional time for stage testing; time will be taken away from your apparatus time for setting your height - no exceptions.
- Only one competitor and one coach are allowed in the stage testing area at a time (duo and group performances are exempt from this rule).

Day of Event – Live Competitor Information

Arrival & Check-In:

- Arrive at least 1 hour before your scheduled performance time
- Arrive fully performance-ready; there are no dressing rooms at the venue
- Complete required liability waivers prior to stage testing, if under 18, ensure guardian completes check-in & waivers
- Check in any equipment or large props
- Report to stage testing at your assigned time, come to the designated area when announced

Important Information:

- Schedules may run early, up to 30 minutes early
- Missed performance times cannot be rescheduled

Stage Testing Guidelines:

- Silks: Maximum 1 minute 45 seconds
- All Other Solo Apparatuses: Maximum 2 minutes
- Group Routines: Maximum of 10 minutes
- Height adjustments count toward testing time
- Full routines cannot be performed
- No additional time will be granted
- Coaches may accompany competitors for stage testing
- Coaches may not touch the apparatus after height adjustments

Before Your Performance

- Report downstairs when you are one of the next 3 competitors
- Confirm apparatus setup with the rigging manager
- Request height adjustments before the routine begins
- Be prepared for potential schedule shifts
- Perform when called

Music & Technical Issues:

- If incorrect music plays, competitors must not start their performance and inform the DAC staff. If the incorrect music was submitted by the performer or studio, they will not get to re-start their routine.
- If a verified technical disruption occurs, competitors may stop
- Routine restarts are permitted at DAC staff discretion

Awards Ceremony

- Attend Sunday Awards Ceremony (if present). In-person competitors must pick up their awards in person or arrange for pick up by a coach or other individual present.

Awards Information:

- All awards will be presented during the award ceremony via Livestream
- Livestream links will be shared via email and available on the South Dakota Aerial & Arts YouTube Channel
- Unclaimed awards may be shipped at additional cost
- Virtual awards will ship within 4 weeks of the competition

Final Results

- Scores & placements will be posted on the Dakota Aerial Championship website within 24 hours

Meet the 2026 Live Judges

Brennan Figari

Originally from California's Bay Area, Brennan Figari has spent more than 20 years working as an aerial artist, choreographer, and coach. He began training on flying trapeze in 2002 and secured his first professional contract at SeaWorld San Diego shortly after turning 18. His performance career has taken him around the world aboard cruise ships and to renowned productions including America's Got Talent, Cavalia's *Odysseo*, and Berlin's *Wintergarten Variété*. During five years and more than 1,000 performances with *Odysseo*, he performed aerial hoop, Chinese pole, and equestrian production scenes. His credits also include Ireland's Got Talent, *MythBusters*, *The Ellen DeGeneres Show*, *The Tonight Show*, and corporate events spanning Big Tech, NASCAR, and Saudi Arabia.

In 2017, Brennan began shifting his focus toward coaching, choreography, casting, and production. He co-founded and served as Managing Director of one of Berlin's first aerial studios before joining the Friedrichstadt-Palast Berlin, where he spent six years as an aerial choreographer, trainer, and coordinator for large-scale productions featuring more than 60 artists. Brennan is also the founder of Aerial Compass, an online training program serving students worldwide, and has coached and choreographed artists who have gone on to perform with Cirque du Soleil, Dragone, and Circus Roncalli. An experienced competition judge, he has adjudicated the De Leon Aerial Competition and numerous live and virtual Aerialympics events. Now based in Croatia, Brennan teaches technical and artistic aerial silks and hoop workshops throughout Europe and the United States.



Hayley "Dynamo" Larson

Hayley Larson is a Chicago-based multidisciplinary circus artist, performer, choreographer, and coach who tours internationally with Aloft Circus Arts. Her performance credits include the Moisture Festival, Edinburgh Festival Fringe, Montréal Complètement Cirque, Japan's Setagaya Public Theatre, CIRKL Festival, Circusstad Festival, and the Paramount Theatre's production of *Cats*, where she served as circus captain. Hayley specializes in Cyr wheel, aerial silks, duo sling, duo trapeze, duo cube, juggling, handstands, dance, and ensemble acrobatics.

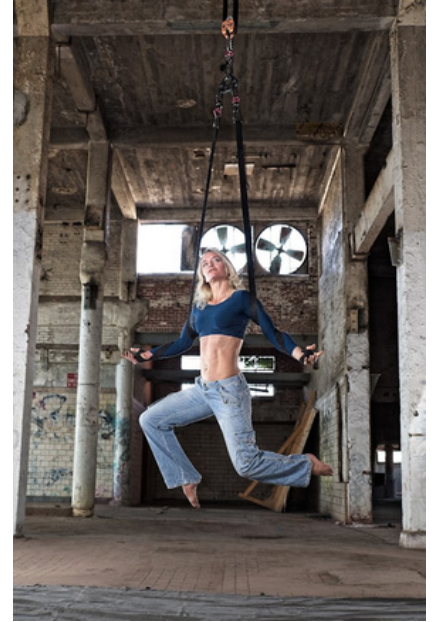
A graduate of the Aloft Circus Arts Professional Training Program with a bachelor's degree in dance from Oberlin College, Hayley brings both technical expertise and artistic curiosity to her coaching. Known for her thoughtful and encouraging approach, she helps students develop strong technique, healthy movement mechanics, and the confidence to explore beyond the expected.



Emily Barber

Emily Barber is a Colorado Springs-based aerial performer, choreographer, coach, and competition judge with more than 10 years of experience. She is the founder of Aerial Aura, a professional performance company presenting solo and ensemble entertainment throughout Colorado and across the United States. Specializing in aerial straps, silks, hoop, trapeze, and duo apparatus, Emily has performed at festivals, theatrical productions, fashion events, fundraisers, and corporate events. In 2024, she earned first place in the Emerging Pro Duo Trapeze division at VIVA Fest.

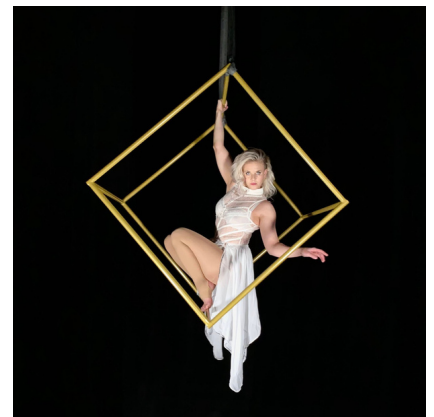
Emily coaches recreational and competitive athletes at several aerial studios, helping students develop technique, artistry, conditioning, and performance readiness. She also teaches workshops throughout the United States and internationally, emphasizing efficient movement, injury prevention, and sustainable training practices. A judge for the Aerialympics Competition League since 2022, Emily is known for balancing technical precision, artistry, safety, and constructive feedback while evaluating performers of all ages and experience levels.



Megan Loreen

Megan Loreen is an Iowa-based multidisciplinary aerialist, dancer, choreographer, coach, and specialty performer. Her extensive performance repertoire includes lyra, silks, sling, trapeze, chains, cube, pole, sway pole, fire arts, and character work. Megan performs throughout the Midwest with Kinetic Entertainment and has held a recurring fire and aerial residency at Vala's Pumpkin Patch. Her competitive accomplishments include national Aerialympics championships in lyra, hammock, and trapeze, as well as the 2016 PSO Central Pro Lyra Championship.

As an instructor, Megan teaches aerial technique, choreography, and performance development through private coaching and workshops across the United States and internationally. She has served as an Aerialympics judge since 2018 and as Head Aerial Judge for the Aerial Star Competition since 2021, evaluating lyra, sling, silks, and specialty apparatuses. Drawing on her background as a music educator, dancer, and longtime choreographer, Megan brings a well-rounded understanding of technique, musicality, artistry, and stage presence to both her coaching and judging.



Erica Mix

Erica Mix is an aerial performer and instructor based in Birmingham, Alabama. She has taught and performed throughout the South with companies including Lagniappe Aerial, Sky Candy, and Blue Lapis Light. Specializing in silks, sling, lyra, and duo aerial, Erica is passionate about helping students find confidence, creativity, and self-expression through movement. Her performance credits include the Tobin Center for Performing Arts, ZACH Theatre, Pease Park Conservancy, SA Fiesta events, films, music videos, and more.



Elizabeth (Liz) Straub

Liz Straub is the Owner and Head Coach of Valkyrie Aerial Acrobatics in Danville, Virginia, and brings more than two decades of experience in dance, movement, and aerial arts. After beginning her aerial coaching career in 2006, Liz traveled internationally with Cirque du Soleil's Cirque du Monde outreach program before returning to the United States to build award-winning youth aerial programs and found the Single Point Aerial Dance Company in New York City.



Today, Liz leads Valkyrie Aerial Acrobatics, where she coaches athletes across multiple disciplines, has developed a comprehensive 100-hour Aerial Acrobatics Teacher Training Program, and mentors competitive aerialists throughout the region. She currently serves as Head Judge for the U.S. Aerial Arts Organization (USAAO) and has previously judged for Aerialympics. We are also excited to welcome her back after serving as a judge at the 2025 Dakota Aerial Championship.

With expertise spanning fabric apparatuses, lyra, trapeze, pole, cube, harness work, dance, gymnastics, yoga, and aerial safety, Liz is passionate about helping athletes become stronger performers both on stage and on screen.

Thank you for reviewing the Dakota Aerial Championship Competitor Packet. Have any remaining questions? Email info@sdaerialarts.com. or call/text 605-215-1505

Want to Get Involved With the Dakota Aerial Championship?

Interested in volunteering at or sponsoring the 2026 Dakota Aerial Championship - email us at info@sdaerialarts.com to connect.