

Showstopper 2026 Finals

Rules & Regulations

Welcome to Showstopper!

Please read these Rules & Regulations carefully to ensure your routines are eligible for competition.

Visit the Studio Center for 2026 entry prices and registration.

Must-Know Registration Requirements:

These are the most critical rules to secure your spot and complete your registration.

- **First Come, First Served:** Entries are accepted in the order received and limited by available performance time. Most events sell out before the deadline — register early.
- **Studios Only:** All entries must be submitted by a dance studio. Independent entries are not accepted.
- **Payment Deadlines:** Regional entries and payments must be received no later than **18 days prior** to the event. No payments will be accepted at a Showstopper event.
- **Program Accuracy:** Enter music titles, participant names, and studio names exactly as they should appear in the Showstopper Program.
- **Birth Dates:** Dancers' birth dates must be entered correctly to ensure personal schedules and parent video access.
- **Deposits:** A \$25 deposit per routine is required to reserve or register an entry. Deposits apply to the balance and are non-transferable to other events.
- **Routine Deadline:** The deadline to add new routines and pay deposits is **18 days prior** to the event, unless sold out earlier. No new routines may be added after this date.
- **Complete Registration:** By **18 days prior** to the competition, registrations must be fully complete or routines will not be scheduled. Complete means:
 1. All routines entered correctly
 2. Full payment received
 3. Music uploaded online
- **Refunds:** All registration fees become non-refundable and non-transferable 30 days prior to the event, except with a doctor's note for illness or injury.
- **No Regional Required:** Studios are not required to attend a 2026 regional to register for the 2026 Finals.
- **Easy Transfers:** Routines from a regional can be transferred to any Finals location without re-registering.
- **Opening Number Qualification:** To participate in the 2026 Opening Number, dancers must be selected as an All-Star at a **2026 regional**, the **2025 Holiday Dance Classic** or the **2025 Rust Buster Competition**.

► ENTRY TYPES & LIMITS

All entries must be submitted by the studio; independent entries are not accepted.

Types of Entries

- **Solo:** 1 dancer
- **Duet/Trio:** 2 or 3 dancers (Duets and Trios compete against each other)
- **Small Group:** 4–9 dancers
- **Large Group:** 10–19 dancers
- **Super Group:** 20+ dancers

Time Limits

- **Solo, Duet/Trio, Small Group:** 3:00 minutes
- **Large Group, Super Group:** 4:00 minutes
- **Production:** 8:00 minutes
- No additional time may be purchased.
- A 15% grace period is allowed for machine calibration error.
- Deduction: 0.1 points per judge for every 15 seconds (or portion thereof) beyond the allotted time plus grace period.

Solo Limits by Level

- Competitive Level: Max 2 solos per dancer, per event
- Advanced Level: Max 1 solo per dancer, per event
- Performance Level: Solos not allowed
- Shine Level: Max 1 solo per dancer, per event
- Rising Star: Max 1 solo per dancer, per event

► AGE DIVISIONS

Clear age guidelines ensure fair and consistent placement for all routines.

How Ages Are Calculated:

All ages are determined **as of January 1** of the competition year.

- **Solos:** The dancer's age on January 1 determines their division.
- **Duet/Trios & Groups:**
 - Average the ages of all dancers as of January 1.
 - If the average includes a decimal, **round down** (drop the decimal).

Oldest Dancer Rule:

Duet/Trio and Group routines cannot compete in an age division more than **one age division younger** than the oldest dancer in the routine — regardless of average age.

Example:

- A group has an **18-year-old** dancer (Senior division) and several younger dancers.
- The **average age** of the group is **10** (Junior division).
- Because the routine **cannot be more than one division younger** than the oldest dancer, the group must be placed in the **Teen division** (one younger than Senior).
- Within Teen, the **lowest possible age group** is **12**, so the group is placed in **Teen, age 12** — even though the average is only 10.

Standard Age Divisions

- 4 & under
- 5–6 years
- 7–8 years
- 9–10 years
- 11 years
- 12 years
- 13–14 years
- 15–16 years
- 17–19 years
- 20–29 years
- 30–39 years
- 40–49 years
- 50–59 years
- 60–69 years
- 70 & over

Special Age Divisions

For Contemporary, Tap, Jazz, Lyrical Jazz, Open, Musical Theater, Hip Hop, and Production categories only:

- 4 & under
- 5 years
- 6 years
- 7 years
- 8 years
- 9 years
- 10 years
- 11 years
- 12 years
- 13 years
- 14 years
- 15 years
- 16 years
- 17 years
- 18–19 years
- 20–29 years
- 30–39 years
- 40–49 years
- 50–59 years
- 60–69 years
- 70 & over

Overall Awards Age Groups

For Performance, Advanced, Competitive, and Shine levels:

- **Mini:** 8 years & under
- **Junior:** 9–11 years
- **Teen:** 12–14 years
- **Senior:** 15–19 years
- **Adult:** 20 years & over

► COMPETITION LEVELS

Studios must use their best judgment when placing dancers based on experience, training hours, and skill level. Judges may move routines to a higher level if they appear significantly under-placed.

Competitive Level

The highest and most challenging level.

- Dancers take **over 5 hours** of dance and/or acrobatics per week.
- Includes Performance or Advanced dancers who wish to compete at the highest level.
- Required for any routines competing for:
 - Cash Awards
 - Top Overall Honors
 - The Crystal Award
- Soloists in this level must remain in the Competitive Level for **all** solos, duet/trios, and group routines at the same competition.

Advanced Level

For dancers ready for more than recreational competition but not yet at Competitive level.

- Dancers take **3–5 hours** of dance and/or acrobatics per week.
- Limited competitive experience.
- Soloists must remain in the Advanced Level for all solos.
- Cannot compete in a Performance Level duet/trio.
- May move **up** to a Competitive Level duet, trio, or group.
- Duet/Trios or Groups with **any dancer taking over 5 hours/week** must compete in the Competitive Level.

Performance Level

Designed for recreational dancers with limited training and competition experience.

- Dancers take **fewer than 3 hours** of dance and/or acrobatics per week.
- Entry in this level is optional — dancers may choose Advanced or Competitive instead.
- Duet/Trios must move to a higher level if **any dancer** takes 3 or more hours/week.
- **Solos are not allowed** in the Performance Level. Soloists at this level may perform a solo as part of the **Rising Star Program** or are encouraged to register their solo in the **Advanced Level** for a competitive experience.
- When Performance-level groups include dancers who also perform at the Advanced level, the **Advanced Dancer Allowance*** rules apply.

****Advanced-Level Dancer Allowance in Performance-Level Groups***

Performance-level group routines **may include some Advanced-level dancers without moving up a level:**

- **Limit:** 1 Advanced dancer for every 5 Performance-level dancers.

- **Example:** A group of 10 Performance-level dancers may include **up to 2 Advanced dancers**.
- **Small Groups:** Groups with exactly 9 dancers may include **up to 2 Advanced dancers**.
- Applies **whether the Advanced dancer is in that level normally OR is a Rising Star dancer performing an Advanced-level solo**.

Rising Star Program

A special level for dancers gaining solo experience while building confidence and performance skills.

- Open to dancers in the **Mini, Junior, Teen, and Senior** age divisions.
- For dancers who train **less than 3 hours per week** and would typically qualify for the Performance Level.
- Each dancer may perform **one solo** in this program.
- **Dancers will not compete directly against each other or be ranked against each other – there are no overalls.** The program goal is **personal achievement** and **individual accomplishment**.
- Rising Star dancers may perform in duet/trio or group routines at **any level** without affecting the group's level.
- If a Rising Star dancer performs an **Advanced-level solo**, the **Advanced Dancer Allowance** rules apply for any Performance-level groups they join.

Shine Level

For dancers with special needs or disabilities who want to showcase their talents in a supportive and inclusive environment.

- Open to dancers of **all ages** with diagnosed special needs or disabilities.
- At least one dancer in each routine must be registered in the Shine Level.
- Shine dancers may perform in duet/trio or group routines at **any level** (Performance, Advanced, or Competitive) without affecting that routine's level.
- Studios may enter Shine dancers in solos, duet/trios, and groups without restriction on the number of routines.

► DANCE CATEGORIES

Please review our dance category descriptions and requirements carefully to ensure each routine is placed in the appropriate category. Incorrect placement may result in deductions or category adjustments by the judges.

Routines may compete in any of the following categories: Acrobatic Dance, Ballet, Baton, Character Routine, Clogging, Contemporary, Folkloric, Hip Hop, Jazz, Lyrical Jazz, Musical Theater, Open, Pointe, Pom Pon, Production, Song & Dance, Tap, Teacher.

Acrobatic Dance

Routine using controlled acrobatic moves such as walkovers, limbers, handstands, chest rolls, etc., and may contain gymnastic passes.

- Majority of the routine must be acrobatic moves, otherwise it will be scored lower.
- May also include flexibility or contortionist moves, but must contain dance choreography.

Ballet

Routine must consist of ballet technique and include classical steps and movements.

- No pointe shoes allowed.
- No gymnastic/acrobatic tricks allowed.
- A trick is any movement that passes through or stops at a full inverted (upside-down) position with both feet off the floor, with the torso passing or stopping directly over the head/shoulders.
- Exceptions: forward rolls, backward rolls, shoulder rolls, and acrobatic tricks performed in lifts (a lift is when the dancer is supported by another dancer).
- A gymnastic pass counts each trick in the pass.
- Deduction: 0.5 points per judge for each trick performed.

Baton

Routine using baton(s) and baton technique.

- Judged on both baton technique and dance choreography.
- Any number of gymnastic/acrobatic tricks allowed.

Character Routine

Routine portraying a recognizable character from a play, movie, television, Broadway, or a stereotype (farmer, police officer, etc.).

- Character must be listed on the entry form and will appear in the program book.
- May include dance or acrobatic techniques.
- Any number of gymnastic/acrobatic tricks allowed.

Clogging

Routine utilizing either traditional or contemporary style clogging technique.

- **Maximum of 3 gymnastic/acrobatic tricks allowed.**
- A trick is any movement that passes through or stops at a full inverted (upside-down) position with both feet off the floor, with the torso passing or stopping directly over the head/shoulders.
- Exceptions: forward rolls, backward rolls, shoulder rolls, and acrobatic tricks performed in lifts.
- A gymnastic pass counts each trick in the pass.
- Deduction: 0.5 points per judge for each trick over the limit.

Contemporary

Routine utilizing contemporary style to show extension and balance, and may combine lyrical, modern, and concert techniques.

- Any number of gymnastic/acrobatic tricks allowed.

Folkloric

Routine using an ethnic style of dance such as Spanish, Hawaiian, polka, etc.

- Any number of gymnastic/acrobatic tricks allowed.

Hip Hop

Routine consisting primarily of Hip Hop technique.

- Any number of gymnastic/acrobatic tricks allowed.
- Music containing inappropriate lyrics will result in a lower score or disqualification.

Jazz

Routine consisting primarily of jazz technique.

- **Maximum of 3 gymnastic/acrobatic tricks allowed.**
- A trick is any movement that passes through or stops at a full inverted (upside-down) position with both feet off the floor, with the torso passing or stopping directly over the head/shoulders.
- Exceptions: forward rolls, backward rolls, shoulder rolls, and acrobatic tricks performed in lifts.
- A gymnastic pass counts each trick in the pass.
- Deduction: 0.5 points per judge for each trick over the limit.

Lyrical Jazz

Routine should demonstrate balance, extension, isolations, and control, utilizing the lyrics or mood of the music.

- **Maximum of 3 gymnastic/acrobatic tricks allowed.**
- A trick is any movement that passes through or stops at a full inverted (upside-down) position with both feet off the floor, with the torso passing or stopping directly over the head/shoulders.
- Exceptions: forward rolls, backward rolls, shoulder rolls, and acrobatic tricks performed in lifts.
- A gymnastic pass counts each trick in the pass.
- Deduction: 0.5 points per judge for each trick over the limit.

Musical Theater

Routine featuring any style of dance interpreting a song from a Broadway show or movie musical.

- Any number of gymnastic/acrobatic tricks allowed.

Open

Routine combining any listed categories or dance styles.

- Any number of gymnastic/acrobatic tricks allowed.

Pointe

Routine must consist of pointe/toe technique.

- No gymnastic/acrobatic tricks allowed.
- A trick is any movement that passes through or stops at a full inverted (upside-down) position with both feet off the floor, with the torso passing or stopping directly over the head/shoulders.
- Exceptions: forward rolls, backward rolls, shoulder rolls, and acrobatic tricks performed in lifts.

- A gymnastic pass counts each trick in the pass.
- Deduction: 0.5 points per judge for each trick performed.

Pom Pon

Routine incorporating the use of pom pons.

- Must use precise, definite movements.
- Any number of acrobatic tricks allowed.
- No stunts, tosses, or pyramids taller than one person (Deduction: 1 point per judge).
- Judged on both pom pon technique and dance choreography.

Production

Routine using a group of at least 10 dancers, incorporating any style(s) of dance or acrobatics.

- Time limit: 8 minutes.
- All Production Groups at Finals are automatically part of the PRODUCTIONMANIA® show the evening before the final championship day, The America Loves to Dance Awards.

Song & Dance

Routine must contain both singing and any listed category of dancing. Judging is based on both singing and dancing.

- There must be no other lead voices in the pre-recorded music (Deduction: 0.5 points per judge).
- Two handheld wireless microphones will be available.
- Deduction: 1 point per judge if any special microphones or sound equipment are set up by Showstopper for the performance.

Tap

Routine must contain tap technique and primarily tap work. Tap sounds should not be pre-recorded in the music.

- **Maximum of 3 gymnastic/acrobatic tricks allowed.**
- A trick is any movement that passes through or stops at a full inverted (upside-down) position with both feet off the floor, with the torso passing or stopping directly over the head/shoulders.
- Exceptions: forward rolls, backward rolls, shoulder rolls, and acrobatic tricks performed in lifts.
- A gymnastic pass counts each trick in the pass.
- Deduction: 0.5 points per judge for each trick over the limit.

Teacher

For dancers aged 20+ who are teachers, assistant teachers, professional dancers, or have ever held those roles.

- Teachers may compete in any dance category.
- Any duet/trio or group with at least one teacher must compete in the Teacher category.
- Teacher groups are not eligible to appear on the final championship day, The America Loves to Dance Awards.

► CATEGORY POINT DEDUCTIONS

Certain rule violations may result in point deductions as outlined below.

A **gymnastic/acrobatic trick** is defined as any movement that passes through or stops at a full inverted (upside-down) position with both feet off the floor, with the torso passing or stopping directly over the top of the head or shoulders.

Exceptions (not counted as tricks): forward rolls, backward rolls, shoulder rolls, and acrobatic tricks performed in lifts (where the dancer is supported by another dancer). A gymnastic pass will be counted as the total number of tricks in that pass.

Limits and Deductions by Category:

- **Ballet and Pointe:** No gymnastic/acrobatic tricks are allowed. A deduction of 0.5 points per judge will be made for each trick in these categories.
- **Tap, Jazz, Lyrical Jazz, and Clogging:** A maximum of three gymnastic/acrobatic tricks are allowed. A deduction of 0.5 points per judge will be made for each trick over the limit.
- **Hip Hop, Musical Theater, Baton, Pom Pon, Character, Folkloric, Open, Contemporary, and Production:** No limit on gymnastic/acrobatic tricks — no deductions apply for tricks in these categories.

Important Notes:

- If a rule violation is not caught at one Regional event, it may still be applied at another Regional or at Finals. Previous judging does not set a precedent.
- A violation found after an event may be addressed retroactively, with results and posted scores updated if deductions are applied.
- If dance movements, music lyrics, or costuming are deemed too suggestive or inappropriate for a family audience, or if music contains vulgar or offensive language, the routine will either receive a lower score from the judges or be disqualified.

► SCORING CRITERIA & DEDUCTIONS

Routines are evaluated by judges in these core categories, with personalized written and audio feedback provided to help dancers grow:

- **Costume:** Creativity, appropriateness
- **Rhythm & Sound:** Timing, precision
- **Routine:** Difficulty, creativity, knowledge of routine
- **Stage Presence:** Expression, confidence, showmanship
- **Technique:** Basics, body lines, control, execution

All judging decisions are final. The time, manner, and method of judging are at the sole discretion of Showstopper's directors and producers.

Point Deductions:

- 5-point deduction for routines not completed (unless due to a costume malfunction resulting in an immodest performance)
- 1-point deduction per judge if special microphones or sound equipment must be set up by Showstopper for a performance
- 0.1 points per judge for every 15 seconds (or portion thereof) beyond the allotted time limit plus the 15% grace period (see Time Limits)
- Violations of prop or safety rules may result in score deductions or disqualification
- Inappropriate costuming, choreography, or music may be scored lower or disqualified (see Showstopper Appropriate)

► MUSIC REQUIREMENTS

- Each entry must furnish its own music and upload it through the Studio Center at goshowstopper.com.
- Music must be uploaded **at least 18 days prior** to the competition or the routine will not be considered fully registered and may not be included in the show schedule.
- After uploading, studios must listen to confirm the correct file is matched with the correct routine.
- Music on cell phones or CDs is **not accepted**.
- A backup copy is strongly recommended on a flash drive in case of technical issues.
- Music left at the event will not be saved.

► PROP ALLOWANCE

- All props and set pieces must be safe, stable, and free from sharp edges or hazardous materials.
- Props must fit through the venue's standard backstage entrance and be able to be set up and removed quickly within the allotted time. Excessive set-up or removal time may be considered in scoring.
- Fire, swords, and knives on stage are prohibited. Simulated weapons with dull, safe edges are acceptable with prior approval from Showstopper.
- No use of liquid, paint, gel, aerosol, glitter, fog, smoke, powder, paint powder, ashes, helium balloons, or any similar substance that could damage the stage or affect the dancing surface, unless specifically approved by Showstopper. Use without approval may result in a lower score.
- Props must be freestanding; scenery or backdrops requiring theater fly bars may not be used.
- All props must be handled and placed on stage by the performing dancers and/or their studio staff.
- If the stage is littered during a routine, the performing studio must clean it immediately after the performance.
- Any prop or set piece deemed unsafe or likely to cause delays may be removed at the discretion of Showstopper staff.

► **SHOWSTOPPER APPROPRIATE**

We are committed to providing a family-friendly environment at all events.

This means:

- Costuming, choreography, and music lyrics must be suitable for all ages.
- Music containing vulgar or explicit language is not permitted.
- Choreography that is overly suggestive or depicts inappropriate themes will result in a lower score or disqualification.
- Judges' decisions regarding appropriateness are final.

Studios are responsible for reviewing routines before the event to ensure compliance.

► **COMPETITION RULES & REGULATIONS**

Participation Rules

- Dancers in Competitive Level solos must remain in the Competitive Level for all other solos, duet/trios, and groups at that competition.
- The same dancer(s) may not compete more than once in the same category and age group for solos, duets/trios, or groups.
- Regional routines are eligible to enter any National Finals, but dancers may attend only one Finals event.
- Routines must perform in scheduled order; performing out of order may affect awards ceremony video playback.
- Routines must perform in their assigned awards session to be eligible for overall awards.
- Duet/Trios cannot win in Group categories.

General Competition Rules

- All routines must comply with Showstopper's rules for categories, levels, age divisions, props, and safety.
- If dance movements, music lyrics, or costuming are deemed too suggestive or otherwise inappropriate for a family audience—or if the music contains vulgar or inappropriate lyrics—the routine will be scored lower or disqualified.
- Videotaping and movie cameras are prohibited. Still photography is limited to taking photographs of your own child. No professional set-ups, tripods, or monopods are allowed.
- Air horns or similar devices are prohibited in the audience.
- Props must meet the guidelines in the Prop Allowance section and be safe for the stage environment.
- Music must be uploaded in advance per the deadlines listed in Music Requirements.
- All judging decisions are final.

➤ AWARDS & RECOGNITION

Every routine is recognized on stage and receives a trophy.

Every dancer in a group routine receives a category medal matching the group's trophy.

Category Awards

These awards are based on predetermined point ranges and are given in each category and age group. Multiple awards may be presented within the same age group and category.

- Crystal Award (Competitive Level only)
- Double Platinum
- Platinum
- Gold
- Silver Award

Category Age Divisions

- **All Categories:** (4 & under), (5–6 years), (7–8 years), (9–10 years), (11 years), (12 years), (13–14 years), (15–16 years), (17–19 years), (20–29 years), (30–39 years), (40–49 years), (50–59 years), (60–69 years), (70 & over)
- **Contemporary, Tap, Jazz, Lyrical Jazz, Open, Musical Theater, Hip Hop, and Production Only:** (4 & under), (5 years), (6 years), (7 years), (8 years), (9 years), (10 years), (11 years), (12 years), (13 years), (14 years), (15 years), (16 years), (17 years), (18–19 years), (20–29 years), (30–39 years), (40–49 years), (50–59 years), (60–69 years), (70 & over)

Overall Awards

Overall recognition is given to the Top 10 routines in each of the following age divisions:

- Mini: 8 years & under
- Junior: 9–11 years
- Teen: 12–14 years
- Senior: 15–19 years
- Adult: 20 years & over

Overall Awards Presentation

National Champion: Trophy

2nd–10th Overall: Medal

Rising Star Awards

Rising Star routines do not compete for category or overall awards. Instead, they are scored using a three-tier system—**3-Star, 4-Star, or 5-Star**—based on performance. Within each tier, dancers are further evaluated on a slider scale to highlight progress and development without numerical scores or direct comparisons to others.

Each Rising Star dancer is honored on stage and receives:

- Rising Star Trophy (with their star-tier ranking)
- Certificate of Accomplishment

Advanced Level Awards

Top Solo

- Full Showstopper Convention Scholarship – Top Overall Soloist in each age division
- Partial Accelerate Acro Dance Convention Scholarship – Top Overall Soloist in each age division
- Showstopper Magazine Print & Online Feature – Top Overall Senior Soloist

Competitive Level Awards

Top Solo

- \$50 Cash Prize + \$50 Showstopper Gift Certificate – Top Overall Soloist in each age division
- Showstopper All-Star Dancer Recognition & Opening Number Invitation – Top 4–10 Overall Soloists (based on event size) in Junior, Teen, and Senior divisions
- Golden Ticket to Perform in Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade – Top Overall Soloist in Senior & Teen divisions
- Full Prodigy The Dance Team Convention Scholarship – Top Overall Soloist in Senior & Teen divisions
- Full Showstopper Convention Scholarship – Top Overall Soloist in each age division
- Partial Accelerate Acro Dance Convention Scholarship – Top Overall Soloist in each age division
- Showstopper Magazine Print & Online Feature – Top Overall Senior Soloist

Top Duet/Trio

- \$50 Cash Prize + \$50 Showstopper Gift Certificate – Top Overall Duet/Trio in Mini, Junior, Teen, and Senior divisions

Top Small Group

- \$100 Cash Prize + \$100 Showstopper Gift Certificate – Top Overall Small Group in Mini, Junior, Teen, and Senior divisions

Top Large Group

- \$100 Cash Prize + \$100 Showstopper Gift Certificate – Top Overall Large Group in Mini, Junior, Teen, and Senior divisions

Top Super Group

- \$100 Cash Prize + \$100 Showstopper Gift Certificate – Top Overall Super Group in Mini, Junior, Teen, and Senior divisions

Top Teacher Award

- Special trophy for the highest scoring Teacher routines in Solo, Duet/Trio, and Group divisions

Top Adult Award

- Special trophy for the highest scoring Adult (20+) routines in Solo, Duet/Trio, and Group divisions

Please Note: All cash prizes with gift certificates are mailed to the Studio Director or Teacher after the competition. No cash awards are given in the Rising Star, Performance, Advanced, or Shine Levels.

► PERFORMING FOR ADJUDICATION

Routines must be performed during their scheduled set (when routines in the same age group and dance category perform) and before the awards session for that set.

If a routine cannot perform during its scheduled time, it may perform for **Adjudication**. In this case:

- The routine will be announced on stage at the end of the awards session as an Adjudication.
- The appropriate medal or trophy will be awarded, and the routine will still qualify for National Finals.
- The routine will receive a trophy based on its score within our award scale (Double Platinum, Platinum, Gold, Silver) and receive judges' comments.

► QUALIFYING FOR THE FINALS

Though we encourage regional competition participation, studios DO NOT need to compete at a 2026 regional to register for a 2026 Finals event.

- You do **not** have to attend a 2026 regional to compete at the 2026 Finals.
- Routines from a regional can be easily transferred to any Finals location.
- To perform in the 2026 Opening Number, dancers must qualify as an All-Star at a 2026 regional, the **2025 Holiday Dance Classic**, or the **2025 Rust Buster Competition**.

► PRODUCTIONMANIA!®

Automatic Entry: All Production groups at The Finals are automatically included in PRODUCTIONMANIA!®—a high-energy showcase held the evening before *America Loves to Dance Awards* Championship Day.

Performance Format: All Production groups perform back-to-back in one set. Each routine is introduced live by our host, and the event concludes with its own award ceremony, closing out the final regular competition day of The Finals.

Divisions & Awards: Production groups compete in Mini, Junior, Teen, and Senior age divisions for Crystal (Competitive Level only), Double Platinum, Platinum, and Gold within their category, plus Overall awards within their age division.

Cash Awards: \$500 Cash Prize + \$500 Showstopper Gift Certificate awarded to the Top Overall routine in each age division.

► THE AMERICA LOVES TO DANCE AWARDS

EVENT OVERVIEW

Our championship day LIVE show where the week's top Competitive-Level groups in the Mini, Junior, Teen, and Senior age divisions return to compete once more in front of our full panel of judges (from all rooms) and our largest audience of the week—streamed live to an average of 10,000 viewers.

OPENING CELEBRATION

The day begins with a Pink Carpet Walk for graduating seniors and teachers/studio owners, followed by the prestigious All-Dancers Opening Number performance.

SHOW FORMAT

Produced like a live TV broadcast (inspired by our nationally televised *American Dance Championships*—a 5-time Emmy-nominated series), the event features live studio interviews, backstage segments, epic award ceremonies, a top solo and duet/trio showcase, and high-energy performances packed with confetti and excitement.

QUALIFYING ANNOUNCEMENTS

Groups who qualify are announced during the week at their award ceremony. Teachers from qualifying studios attend a pre-show meeting the night before (time and location on the week's schedule) to determine the performance order by draw, review guidelines, and enjoy a celebratory champagne toast.

QUALIFICATION & AWARDS

Small Groups: Top 10 overall in Mini (8 & under), Junior (9–11), Teen (12–14), and Senior (15–19) age groups (*no dancer overlap allowed within the age group*).

- 1st Place: \$500 | 2nd Place: \$250 | 3rd Place: \$100
- Compete in the morning before lunch break.

Large Groups: Top 10 overall in Mini (8 & under), Junior (9–11), Teen (12–14), and Senior (15–19) age groups (*no dancer overlap allowed within the age group*).

- 1st Place: \$500 | 2nd Place: \$250 | 3rd Place: \$100
- Compete in the afternoon after lunch break.

Super Groups: Top 5 overall in combined Mini/Junior (11 & under) and combined Teen/Senior (12–19) age groups (*no dancer overlap allowed within the age group*).

- 1st Place: \$500 | 2nd Place: \$250 | 3rd Place: \$100

Ineligible Categories: Production, Teacher Groups, Adult Groups, Advanced Level, Performance Level, and Shine Level routines are not eligible for *the America Loves to Dance Awards*.

TIEBREAK PROCEDURE

If a studio has two groups with the same score and overlapping dancers, the advancing group will be chosen in the following order:

1. Highest total technical score.
2. If removing one group allows another group from the studio to advance, that group will be removed to allow the other group to qualify.

3. Group with the most dancers.
4. Highest total technical score plus highest total stage presence score.
5. Highest single technical score minus lowest rhythm & sound score.
6. Highest single technical score minus lowest routine score.
7. If still tied, the studio will choose which group competes.

► ALL STAR OPENING NUMBER

The Opening Number at each Finals is a show-stopping kickoff to the *America Loves to Dance Awards*, performed by dancers named Showstopper All-Stars during the 2026 regional season, the 2025 Holiday Dance Classic, or the 2025 Rust Buster Competition.

These dancers are the top-scoring Competitive-level soloists in the Junior, Teen, and Senior Divisions from their qualifying events.

- **Up to 900 entries:** Top 4 scoring soloists
- **901–2000 entries:** Top 6 scoring soloists
- **2001–2500 entries:** Top 8 scoring soloists
- **2501+ entries:** Top 10 scoring soloists

OPENING NUMBER PARTICIPATION

Qualifying dancers must sign up to perform in the Opening Number.

- Submission forms will be available in each dancer's **Dancer Hub** account and in their studio's **Studio Center**.
- Only one submission form is required per dancer.
- **Deadline:** June 7, 2026, to confirm participation.

► PHOTOS & VIDEOS POLICY

Contestants and studios can purchase video downloads of their routines, available online at **goshowstopper.com** during the performance year they're recorded.

- Videos purchased during the competition season must be downloaded by **December 31** of that year. After that date, they will no longer be available.
- Videos and photos can be downloaded to up to **four** compatible devices, such as desktops, laptops, or Android devices.

By entering a Showstopper event, contestants and teachers grant permission for Showstopper to use their images, photographs, and likeness in videos, television, or other media for advertising, news coverage, or any other promotional or commercial use related to our events.

► SAFETY FIRST

Participation in any dance competition comes with inherent risks, including but not limited to sprains, bruises, pulled muscles, and broken bones. By entering this event, participants accept these risks and agree not to hold **Showstopper® LLC, Showstopper American Dance Championships®,** its officers, directors, officials,

staff, employees, or the hosting facility responsible for injuries sustained or illnesses contracted while attending or participating in any activity related to a Showstopper® competition.

Showstopper is not responsible for lost or stolen property. Do not leave valuables unattended in the event center, theater, or dressing rooms.

All props and staging elements must be safe for performers, audience members, and staff. Set pieces must be stable, secure, and free of sharp edges or hazardous materials. The use of fire, open flames, pyrotechnics, live animals, water, or other potentially dangerous materials is strictly prohibited.

Routines must be performed in a manner that minimizes the risk of injury to dancers and others on stage. Any violation of these safety standards may result in the removal of the prop, alteration of the routine, or disqualification at the discretion of Showstopper staff.