Poised for Success Freestyle Titling Program Guidebook

Rules and Guidelines for all Poised for Success Freestyle Titles and Events

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@ Kristine C. Hammar, 2017 – 2026

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Mission and Philosophy

As a Freestyle enthusiast, it is my hope that training and performance in Canine Musical Freestyle is both a source of joy, and a form of art and expression, for each dog and handler team who choose to participate.

I have designed this Titling Program and the Etude Events to provide participants with a format that will assist with the development of technical and artistic skills in the discipline of Canine Musical Freestyle, with a goal of enabling dog and handler teams to create their own unique art together.

It is my hope that the tasks included in the Program will challenge teams creatively and artistically, while providing a format that allows handlers to continually discover their own dog's artistic talents and preferences.

- Kristine C. Hammar
  Founder and Owner of
  Poised for Success

Poised for Success Titling Program and Etude Events

The Poised for Success Freestyle Titling Program and Etude Events are titling opportunities in Canine Musical Freestyle that can be completed through video submission, regardless of the amount of space available to the dog and handler team.

For those teams who have access to large performance areas, you are encouraged to use those areas.

However, for those teams who have access only to smaller spaces, perhaps in your own home, this program is designed so you, too, can participate to the fullest!

Who Can Participate?

All dog and handler teams are welcome to participate in the Poised for Success Freestyle titling program. Puppies, dogs in their prime, and senior dogs are equally welcome. The Etude Events and Debut Division provide titling opportunities for dogs that are in the earlier stages of training, and for senior dogs that benefit from the use of more motivating reinforcement.

Handlers and dogs with disabilities are welcome. Modifications to elements of the titling program can be designed upon request, based on the needs of the team. In addition, the Laude Class is available for senior dogs and dogs with limited mobility.

Although the guidelines always refer to "dogs", other types of animals, such as cats, horses, and sheep may participate if they can safely meet the criteria for each titling option or requirement. Modified criteria, based on the specific needs of the type of animal participating be made upon handler request.

Performance Space Requirements

There is no set space size requirement for submission entries in the Poised for Success Freestyle program.

Use of living rooms, patios, yards, training facilities, parks, rooftops, or any other available spaces are all permitted and encouraged.

In a case where a space is so small that getting the whole team into the camera view is difficult, please contact us to discuss options such as setting the camera up high to get an "overhead" view of the team.

Music

In the Debut, Overture, Melody, and Harmony Divisions, use of music is required in the Music and Play (Debut) and Artistry Legs for each Division title. For the other legs, music is not required unless it is expressly stated that music must be used for a particular option. However, you may always incorporate music, as long as it is playing so that it is heard by both the dog and handler.

Music may not be set as an overlay in the Overture, Melody, or Harmony Divisions, unless a music overlay is part of a particular option.

In the Dynamic, Master Performer, and Category Specialist Title Divisions, music must be playing while filming, but music may be added to certain performances as an overlay. See the "Guide to the Dynamic Division" for details.

See the specific guidelines for Etude Events for music use. Some events allow the use of a music overlay, but others do not.

Please keep music copyright laws in mind. Your video needs to play on an online video sharing platform, such as YouTube or Vimeo, in the United States. I highly recommend doing a test upload with any music that you plan to play to ensure that it will come through in the upload.

Please contact me directly if you wish to submit your video through any other video platform, to ensure that I will be able to access your video. Some handlers do upload to Facebook, and other platforms, by special arrangement.

You retain ownership of your submission videos at all times – before, during, and after submission.

Handler Attire

For the Debut, Overture, Melody, and Harmony Divisions, as well as for the Etude Events, no particular attire is required for titling submission entries, unless use of particular attire is specified to complete a particular option. Casual clothing that one would normally wear for training is acceptable, or you may choose to wear distinctive attire.

More distinct performance attire is recommended for the Dynamic, Master Performer, and Category Specialist Title Divisions, appropriate to the category that you have chosen for your performance submission. That said, handler costumes are never required.

Dog Attire

Dogs may wear decorative collars, bandanas, or decorated harnesses. Please ensure that your dog is comfortable in the attire that you choose, and that your dog can move freely and comfortably.

Although such attire is permitted, it is in no way required, not even for themed performances.

Dogs may perform in flat buckle collars, martingale collars (adjusted so the collar does not tighten on the dog's neck), or without any collar.

No other collars of any type are permitted for titling submissions.

Tags are permitted, as long as they do not interfere with performance in any way.

Dogs may perform in harnesses, as long as the harness does not impede the movement of the dog in any way.

If needed for your dog's comfort or safety, items such as dog booties, sweaters, or hats are permitted.

Leashes

Leashes are permitted, but optional, in all categories at all levels. When used, a 4 – 6 foot leash is recommended.

When used, the leash should remain loose and should not be used to cause the dog to move. When used in Freestyle performance, keep in mind that "the leash is a decoration".

Cues

At Poised for Success, we have respect for all cue styles. Physical cues, verbal cues, and concurrent physical and verbal cues are welcome. Use of props or targets to cue the dog are welcome. Natural body language cues are welcome. For blind and/or deaf dogs, tactile cues are welcome. Hand targets and target sticks can be used for senior dogs who need extra support.

Handler Dancing

Handler dancing is **optional**! If you like to dance along with your dog, you are very welcome to do so. Just take care not to steal the show! If you prefer not to do any dancing, but simply handle your dog through the dance, that is perfectly fine as well!

This is your art – do what works for you and your dog.

Food and Toys

Food and/or toys may be used to reinforce your dog in all Divisions throughout the progression of the Titling Program.

Typically, food/toys must be concealed from the dog until the task is finished, but there are some options, particularly in the Artistry Legs, where food/toys may be visible to the dog, even in the hand.

Pay close attention to the requirements in the guidelines. Unless otherwise stated, food/toys should be concealed from the dog.

In the Etude Events, food and toys may be visible to your dog throughout the performance in the Debut and Laude classes. Food and toys may not be used in the Performer class until the performance is finished.

Safety

Handlers are urged to keep safety in mind at all times.

- Props should be stable and strong enough to hold the dog's weight if the dog is putting paws on the prop.
- Dogs should appear confident and comfortable when performing jumps.
- Avoid having dogs jump on hard or slippery surfaces.
- If performing or working outdoors, obey leash laws, and use a leash if working near potential hazards, such as traffic.
- Puppies (under a year old) should not demonstrate jumping options.

Judging of Entries

Every effort will be made to judge according to criteria as written in the Guidelines for each Division or Etude Event. However, keep in mind that judging Canine Musical Freestyle always has a subjective element to it.

All decisions by the judge are final, unless a procedural error has been made. An explanation will always be provided when a particular option or entry needs to be redone and resubmitted.

Each Titling Program scoresheet will indicate the name of the judge for your submission. Please feel free to contact us at pfsfreestyle@gmail.com with any questions or comments that you have about your judged submission.

Creating the Freestyle Picture

Freestyle is unique among dog sports. The performance is not centered only on what the dog is doing. The focus is on the dog and handler creating the picture of the dance together. Therefore, in all entries, both dog and handler must be visible throughout the performance.

This can certainly be a challenge in a small space. It is acceptable if the top of the handler's head or the dog's feet briefly "vanish" when the team moves in close to the camera. It is okay if part of the dog or handler gets lost when the team moves to the edge of the camera view. It is fine if dog or handler are briefly blocked by a prop, or by one another. But the overall effect of each video clip must be that both dog and handler are fully visible throughout the majority of the performance. Please guard, most especially, against the handler's head or upper body being cut off throughout the majority of the video.

Video Submission Guidelines

Filming

Videos can be filmed using any device (video camera, digital camera, phone, tablet, etc.). With devices that offer both portrait and landscape modes, please use the wider, horizontal "landscape" mode-instead of the vertical, narrow portrait mode.

Use of the vertical, narrow "portrait" format will not cause an entry to NQ if everything that needs to be visible is visible, but use of the wider picture presents a more artistic performance.

Submission Formats

Videos can be submitted for judging as one full video compilation, or as a video playlist.

For the Debut, Overture, Melody, and Harmony Divisions, please label the options performed using captions on the video compilation, or titles of individual clips on the playlist. Use of the option number on your label is not required.

A separate compilation or playlist should be created for each leg within a Division, as each one is a separate submission.

Editing

In the optional Debut Division, and in the Overture, Melody, and Harmony Divisions, editing is usually not permitted where a single skill or a sequence of skills is demonstrated. However, some options do allow for skills to be filmed separately and edited together for submission. See each individual option in these Divisions for details.

In the Dynamic, Master Performer, and Category Specialist Divisions, handlers may choose to participate either in the Theater Track, in which editing is not permitted, or in the Silver Screen track, in which editing is permitted. For more information, see page 4 in the "Guide to the Dynamic Division".

In the Silver Screen track, performances can be filmed in pieces, and those pieces can be joined together to form the performance. Use of video transitions, slow motion, special effects, music overlays, captions, and other editing features is allowed. Different pieces of the video can take place in different locations. Props can appear and disappear throughout the course of the performance. Use of a brief introductory "scene" is permitted. However, the dog and handler must appear together throughout the performance.

Editing rules vary from one Etude event to another. Please refer to the guidelines for each Etude event for editing rules.

Titles Offered in the Freestyle Titling Program

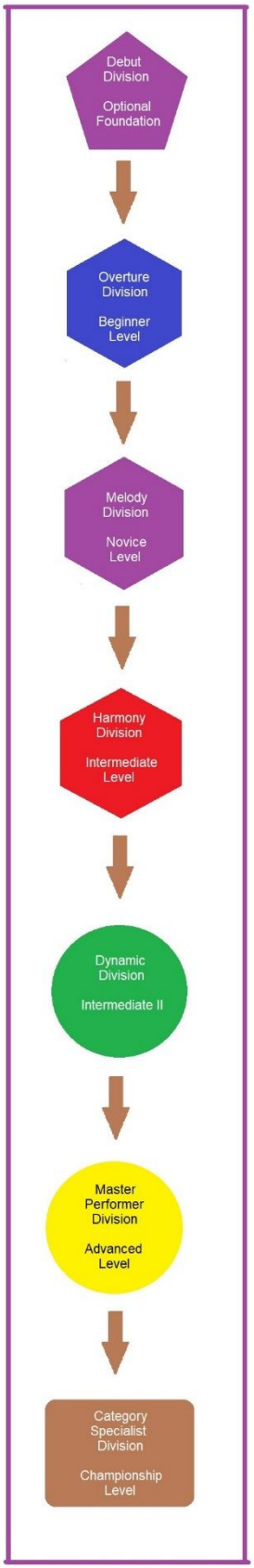
The Poised for Success Freestyle Titling Program is designed to be a Freestyle training program and titling program all rolled into one.

The optional Debut Division is a perfect starting point for puppies, dogs who are new to training, and for senior dogs. The Debut Division is open to all dog and handler teams, even those who have other titling program titles.

The Overture, Melody, and Handling Divisions each consist of three legs for which dog and handler teams perform various Freestyle skills that can later be put together to create full performances for the Dynamic, Master Performer, and Category Specialist Divisions.

With the exception of the Debut Division, which can be completed by any dog and handler team at any time, the titles must be earned in the following order presented in the diagram below.

Visual Overview of Poised for Success Freestyle Titling Program



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There is a separate document for each Division that describes the requirements for creating entries for each Division. These documents can be found on the Poised for Success Freestyle website at:

https://www.poisedforsuccessfreestyle.com/forms%2Dand%2Dguidebooks

Registration and Entry

Dogs must be registered to participate. The registration fee is just $5.00.

Entries are $15.00 per leg in all divisions and $15.00 for each Etude entry.

Payment information, registration forms, and entry forms can be found on the Forms and Guidebooks page of the Poised for Success Freestyle website.

https://www.poisedforsuccessfreestyle.com/forms%2Dand%2Dguidebooks

A space is provided on the entry form for the link to your submission video or playlist.

Unless otherwise indicated, all entries will be judged, and you will receive results via email, within three weeks of receipt entry.

Non-Qualifying Entries

In the event that a submission does not qualify, the judge will describe the issue, and the handler may fix the portion of the submission and submit a re-try. Retries must be submitted within one month unless other arrangements are made.

For the Overture, Melody, and Harmony Divisions, there is no fee if you need to fix up to two errors.

A resubmission fee of $7.50 (1/2 of a full entry fee) will be charged if three or more options need to be resubmitted in order to qualify.

For the Dynamic, Master Performer, and Category Specialist Title Divisions, a resubmission fee of $7.50 (1/2 of a full entry fee) will be charged for any performances that need to be re-judged.

The resubmission fee for Etudes is $5.00.

Titles

The following titles can be earned in the Poised for Success Freestyle Titling Program:

Division	*Title*	*Abbreviation*
Debut Division	Debut	PFS-Debut
Overture Division	Overture	PFS-O
Melody Division	Melody	PFS-M
	Melody (Laude)	PFS-ML
Harmony Division	Harmony	PFS-H
	Harmony (Laude)	PFS-HL
Dynamic Division	Dynamic Silver Screen	PFS-SS-D
	Dynamic Silver Screen (Laude)	PFS-SS-DL
	Dynamic Theater	PFS-Th-D
	Dynamic Theater (Laude)	PFS-Th-DL
	Dynamic Ovation	PFS-D(Ov)
	Dynamic Ovation (Laude)	PFS-DL(Ov)
Master Performer	Master Performer Silver Screen	PFS-SS-MP
	Master Performer Silver Screen (Laude)	PFS-SS-MPL
	Master Performer Theater	PFS-Th-MP
	Master Performer Theater (Laude)	PFS-Th-MPL
	Master Performer Ovation	PFS-MP(Ov)
	Master Performer Ovation (Laude)	PFS-MPL(Ov)

Category Specialist Titles

For Category Specialist titles, the designation "SS" or "Th" will be added for Silver Screen or Theater Track. The designation "L" will be added for Laude Class teams.

An Ovation will be awarded to any team that earns a Category Specialist Title in both the Silver Screen and Theater tracks.

Titles	*Abbreviation*
Category Specialist Silver Screen	PFS-SS-Sp-(Category)
Category Specialist Theater	PFS-Th-Sp-(Category)
Category Specialist Silver Screen (Laude)	PFS-SS-SpL-(Category)
Category Specialist Theater (Laude)	PFS-Th-SpL-(Category)
Category Specialist Ovation	PFS-Sp(Ov) -(Category)
Category Specialist Ovation (Laude)	PFS-SpL(Ov)-(Category)

Category	*Abbreviation*
Specialist of Freestyle Dance	FD
Hand Held Prop Specialist	HHP
Specialist of Movement	M
Specialist of Heelwork to Music	HTM
Holiday Theme Specialist	HT
Specialist of Live Demonstration	LD
Specialist of Tricks	T
Specialist of Plot	P
International Theme Specialist	Int
Specialist of Precisions	PR
Specialist of Distance	Dst
Specialist of Expression	EX
Specialist of Transition	TR
Specialist of Outdoor Performance	OP
Specialist of Theme Through Choreography	Cho
Specialist of Theme Through Setting	Stg

Poised for Success Freestyle Champion Titles

Title	*Abbreviation*
Poised for Success Freestyle Champion	PFS-CH
Poised for Success Freestyle Champion (Laude)	PFS-LCH
Poised for Success Freestyle Champion Ovation	PFS-Ov-CH
Poised for Success Freestyle Champion Ovation (Laude)	PFS-Ov-LCH

Awards and Ribbons

Title certificates will be sent to handlers through email for all Poised for Success Freestyle Titling Program titles: Debut, Overture, Melody, Harmony, Dynamic, Master Performer, Category Specialist titles.

Q ribbons will be mailed for qualifying legs in in the Overture, Melody, Harmony, Dynamic, and Master Performer titles.

Teams who earn the optional Debut Division title will receive a titling medal.

Double flat title ribbons will be sent to teams who earn the Overture, Melody, Harmony, and Dynamic Division titles.

Title rosettes will be sent to teams who earn the Master Performer title, individual Category Specialist titles, and the Poised for Success Freestyle Champion title.

Teams who earn Etude event tiles will receive a printed certificate with flat title certificate attached through the mail.

Resources and Information

Poised for Success Freestyle Facebook Group:

https://www.facebook.com/groups/PoisedForSuccessFreestyle

Poised for Success Freestyle YouTube Channel:

https://www.youtube.com/@poisedforsuccessfreestylet96

Videos

A Different Way to Earn Freestyle Titles (Poised for Success Freestyle)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3bsWzQpphQU

Dive into PFS Freestyle (How to create your first entry)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7qg12xayb8M

What's in the Picture? (A guide to better video submissions)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6ll9u1sq-7k

What are the Foundation Freestyle Moves?

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X7snYBobmzI

What is Clicker Training? Part 1

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PU9NNU1nGwY

How to Start Clicker Training

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i5_yqIlvxAY

Training Freestyle Moves and Skills

The Switch Transition

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7qg12xayb8M

Opposite Circles Around a Hand-Held Prop

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8RYRSrzGKlY

Circle a Freestanding Prop

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=829v5vxikjQ

Spin

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pxv4LaUJon4

Target Stick Skills

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TruHAAufzHI