



Too many times, as directors, we are guilty of allowing all of the wrong factors to affect our judgment when choosing routines and music for contest. This bad judgment continues when we prepare and polish the routine without ever analyzing how the judge will be able to score and what they will not be able to score. If the meaning of the choreography is unclear, re-evaluate the choreography so that everyone will see the meaning and beauty of the routine and its interpretation of the music.

From a judge's point of view, they may truly *like* one routine better than another and the *likable* routine scores less. Why? Because the score sheet did not allow them to score in the areas that appealed to them. Many times, you will find an average routine, without a lot of excitement, may outscore an entertaining routine, simply because it was technically correct and meet the requirement of the scoresheet.

Before you ever start listening to music, look at a costume catalog, or hire a choreographer, you need to see the score sheet by which your team will be judged. Look carefully at each area of the score sheet and the point values, then begin to visualize the routine through the judge's eyes. If you plan to attend more than one contest with more than one company, make sure to review each scoresheet as they will most likely differ slightly from company to company. It is even a good idea to speak to one of the company administrators, in advance of your choreography, to find out what their general judging philosophies are and what areas you will want to emphasize in your choreography.

Many other factors play an important role as well, including the facility where the contest is held, including lighting, color of floor, color of background, level where the judges are seated, angle where the judges are seated. Make sure to check these factors prior to ordering costumes and creating formations and patterns. You would not want to choose a silver costume for a gray floor, nor a yellow costume on a yellow wood floor. If the judges are sitting low, your formations may not show up effectively.

When polishing the routine in the final stages, make sure to look at each category on **TECHNIQUE, PRESENTATION, CHOREOGRAPHY**, and **PRECISION**. Look at their point values as well as the individual comments. Make sure to see the finished product through the judge's eyes. Go through a 'mock ' judging process with your team's practice video. Also, it is always a great idea to invite other dance educators to come and critique your team routines prior to your first contest of the season.

***These steps will assure higher scores at contest
with greater effect for your routines.***