

The rules used to judge a diving contest have changed very little since its introduction as a sporting event over a century ago. So it might appear that judging a diving contest is an easy task! The reality, however, is that due to the ever-increasing difficulty and international popularity of diving, judging diving is not as easy as it appears.

Should one diving technique be judged differently than another?

Should a judge use an absolute or flexible scale? How do you judge divers in the same event with widely varying degrees of talent and style?

These are all good questions to keep in mind when learning to judge diving, but to begin any discussion of judging starts with an understanding of the scoring system and the five basic elements of a dive: The Starting Position, The Approach, The Take-Off, The Flight, and The Entry.

SCORING SYSTEM

Scores in all diving meets use a range from one to ten, in 1/2-point increments. The score of each dive is calculated by first adding the total awards of three judges. This is known as the raw score. The raw score is then multiplied by the degree of difficulty of the dive and you have the total diver's score for the dive.

Diving meets must be scored using a minimum of three judges but can be scored using as many as nine judges. Collegiate diving contests allow the use of two judges in a dual meets.

Using the simplest method of scoring: when more than three judges are used, the highest and the lowest scores awarded are dropped and the raw score is determined by the remaining three awards. This same manner of determining the raw score can be used for a seven or nine member judging panel.

In most international competitions where a judging panel contains more than five judges, the dive score is calculated using the 3/5 method.

This process involves multiplying the sum of the middle five awards by the degree of difficulty and then by .06. The result is the equivalent of a three-judge score.

SAMPLE SCORING FOR A FIVE JUDGE PANEL

1. Scores: 6.5, 6, 6.5, 6, 5.5

2. Low (5.5) and High (6.5) Scores Dropped
3. Raw Score = 18.5 (6.5 + 6 + 6)
4. Raw Score (18.5) x Degree of Difficulty (2.0)
5. Total Score for the Dive = 37.0

Because of the subjectivity involved in judging, it is advisable to have more than three judges involved in a contest. This helps to eliminate any bias that one or more judges might have and give an accurate representation of dive.

CRITERIA FOR JUDGING A DIVE

- 0: Completely Failed
- 1/2 - 2: Unsatisfactory
- 2 1/2 - 4 1/2: Deficient
- 5 - 6 1/2: Satisfactory
- 7 - 8: Good
- 8 1/2 - 9 1/2: Very good
- 10: Excellent

Note: This is the FINA judging scale. High school and NCAA competitions use a slightly different scale.

FIVE BASIC ELEMENTS OF A DIVE

When judging a dive, five basic elements need to be considered with equal importance before awarding a score.

Starting Position: A dive is to be judged once the diver assumes the starting position on the springboard or platform. This may be standing facing the water for forward approaches, with the diver's back to the water at the end of the springboard or platform for backward approaches, or in preparation for a forward or backward handstand take-off on the platform.

Depending on the dive, the diver should be standing straight with the head erect, and the arms straight and steady in a position of the diver's choice.

The Approach: The diver shall, on front approaches, move to the end of the springboard in a smooth motion showing good form. Using no less than three steps, the diver shall execute a forward hurdle from the last step. A hurdle is the jump to the end of the board and must be executed from one foot. The back approach is characterized by a series of arm swings used to initiate momentum. At no time during the back approach shall the diver's feet leave the springboard or platform. If the diver begins the approach

from the starting position and stops, the diving referee will declare a balk and two points will be deducted from each judge's score. If the diver again starts the approach and stops, the dive will be considered failed and no points will be awarded.

The Take-Off: After completing the forward approach and hurdle, the take-off should show proper balance and control, and initiate a safe distance from the board. The diver must leave the springboard from both feet. On a platform take-off, the diver may leave the platform surface from one foot.

The Flight: The flight of the dive should be smooth and graceful and at no time should the dive move to the left or the right of the springboard or platform, or shall any part of the diver touch either the springboard or platform. During the dive, the body shall be carried in one of the four acceptable positions: tuck, pike, straight, or free.

The Entry: The entry into the water, whether it is a head-first or feet-first entry, shall be vertical or as close to vertical as possible. The diver's body shall be straight, the legs together, and the toes pointed. The arms must be extended over the head and in-line with body on head-first entries. On feet-first entries, the arms shall be straight and at the diver's side.

Judging diving is a subjective endeavor. What that means is that it is essentially personal opinion, so the more informed a judge is of the rules and the more experience they possess, the more consistent the scoring will be.