

SkateWA Announcer's Manual

Announcing at competitions is pretty easy. While some potential announcers are daunted by the task, there's really little to it. Just a few pointers:

You Don't Sound Funny On The P.A. System

What you hear is exactly what everyone else always hears. Because you hear your own voice partly by bone conduction in your head, you don't hear what we hear. We're used to your voice, even if you're not.

Speak Slowly

Most P.A. systems are not great at voices, and although you may not realise it, wetendtospeaklikethis.

Make . sure . each . word . comes . out . separately, and you'll do well.

Take Your Cues From The Event Referee

The referee has full control of the event, and if you keep an eye out when things are about to get under way, you will know exactly when the referee wants to start the event. Most times you will know when the next skater should enter the floor (and so on) but if ever in doubt, wait for the referee's signal.

There Is A Standard "Patter" You Can Use

You start the first event with something like "Welcome to League 3. We are starting today with event 1, Novice Level 1 solo dance. Skaters in the first group may now take the floor for their warmup". (In large events, skaters will be separated into warmup groups, typically six in size)

Then when you are signalled to commence, you say something like "We now commence the competition for event 1. Please welcome to the floor skater number 1, Amelie Aarvark, representing Morley Panthers".

Then when the skater is ready, you start their music.

In set dance, once they have finished and are leaving the floor, you stop the music.

When they leave the floor, say something like "Thank you, Amelie", then you either announce the marks, or in solo dance, and once you know the judges are ready, you introduce the next skater.

Music For Set Dance

There is a convention to be followed that fixes the way music is played in set dance.

There are three tracks in each rhythm and tempo set used for each dance. Use the first for the warmup, then the first again for the first skater, continuing for subsequent skaters with the second third, first, second, ...

When you have a set dance event with multiple warmup groups, use the next track in sequence after the one used by the last skater in the previous group for the warmup, and again re-use it for the first skater of the next group.

There is logic in this convention. The first skater in a group is always at a slight disadvantage compared to the rest, and having the same music for warmup and competition compensates a little.

Announcing The Marks

In solo dance, marks are announced for all skaters at the end of each dance. In other events, they are announced after the skater or skaters clear the floor.

The marks will be shown by all judges. Read them out slowly, and if you have any problems reading any mark (due, for example, to its being obscured by some object, or its reflecting light from some source), just say so. Don't be afraid to call the shots, if you need to in order to do your job.

When Things Go Wrong

Things always go wrong.

You will make mistakes – just remember, it won't happen often, and you will make a lot fewer mistakes than the skaters on the floor ... and all sorts of little things go wrong on the judging panel too. We just fix them and move on.

"I'm sorry, I'll read that again". How often have you heard that? Lots, I'd expect. As announcer, you will join the enormous bunch who have said it.

Skaters will find themselves skating to the wrong music – sometimes you will have played the wrong track, but more often the skater's coach will be at fault. Just make sure that the skater does not come to you, but goes to the referee. Then you can follow the referee's guidance on the matter.

Finally, any piece of hardware is a collection of faults held together with chewing gum. We always have backup music hardware on hand. Once we ran a league competition almost entirely on a smartphone (and it worked OK). So, in the immortal words from Hitchiker's Guide To The Galaxy,

DON'T PANIC

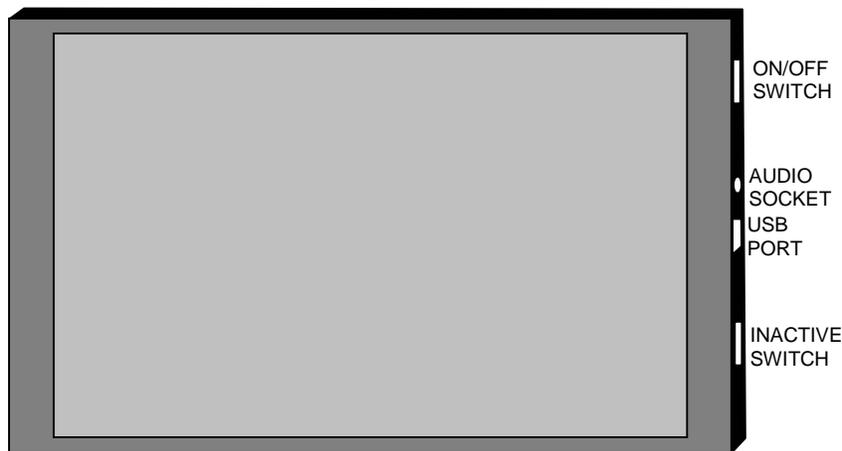
Using the Neos Music Tablet

With an eye for long-term viability of our music system, we have moved to a tablet computer for the playing of our music files at competitions. The chosen hardware is NEOS “flek10” 10.1 inch (256 mm) tablet, which runs the Android 6.0.1 operating system. Because most mobile phones and tablets use Android, it should be familiar territory for most users.

Turning The System On

Firstly, for use at competitions, you will need to connect the charger. It connects via the Micro USB socket at the right side of the display (when it is set up in landscape orientation).

You will also need to connect the output audio socket to the SkateWA amplifier, using a 3.5mm-to-twin-RCA connector (3.5mm plugs are the usual ones used for tablet output; the RCA connector has a circular collar about 1 cm diameter with a large central pin)



Note that the Neos tablet does not have a “rocker” – style sound volume control. You control volume within the music player software, and can also access it via the Android settings (The “cogwheel” icon, under “Sound & notification”). Also note there is a switch bottom-right that seems to have no function.

The on/off switch is the button near the top right corner. Just hold it down until the “NEOS” logo appears on screen. You will then see an Android logo. When the display appears (showing only the date and time), swipe a finger upwards on the screen to get to the Android display, which shows the SkateWA logo as wallpaper.

You should see two icons at the top of the screen,

- Music Folder Player Full: this is the music player you will use
- Solid Explorer: a very capable file manager, used for moving any files around

Playing Music

Tap the “Music Folder Player Full” icon, and you will see a window with one folder displayed. The folder (“Competition Music”) holds the full set of music files.

Tap “Competition Music” and you will see folders, essentially one for each discipline for which music is required. Just a few points –

- There are separate Freedance and Solo Freedance folders. Don’t look for Solo Freedance music in the Freedance folder.
- The folders for Freeskating Short Program and Freeskating Long Program are separate from the Freeskating one. For skaters in the international grades Cadet, Youth, Junior and Senior, their music will be in the first two.
- Of the Dance folders, most grades use the same music. The exceptions in 2018 were Masters, for which there were separate Masters Solo and Masters Couples folders, and Youth, where the folder held three sets of tracks, one set being used by both solo and couples skaters, the others being specific to each. Watch out for such exceptions in future years.
- There is a folder simply called “temp” which where any late submission / correction files provided on the day will go. They will be moved to their correct folder, if required, once the competition is over.

To play any track, tap the discipline folder, then the grade folder. A list of names or skaters for whom music has been submitted will be there.

Playing Background Or Warmup Music

There are two folders for the job “Background” (coincidentally, at the top of folder list) and “Warmup” (coincidentally, at the bottom). The “Background” folder holds quieter tracks that you might use for a figures session, and the “Warmup” folder’s tracks are livelier.

To make a random pick from either, press on the folder name until a menu pops up. In it will be the option “Shuffle sub-folders”. Press this and the tracks in the folder will be played in random order.

The display will fill with the tracks in the folder. To get back to the main list of folders, the back-pointer button at the bottom of the display should work. Alternately, scroll to the top of the list and use the back-arrow button.

With the setting of the player to “musician” mode, playback will stop before each subsequent track commences, so the music will not play continuously through the folder. That is a limitation of the music player.

You can remove “musician” mode: select “Preferences” under the three-bar menu, top-left, then “Behaviour”. You will see “Musician Mode” in the menu that results. Select this; if you change from “Pause after the end of a track” to “Off”, the tracks will play through. But if you do this, remember to set it back to the “Pause after the end of a track” setting afterward, or another track will start up at the end of each skater’s music.

Getting Music From A Submitted USB

There is a short connector attached to the tablet’s power lead, with a Micro USB plug at one end and a standard USB socket at the other. This is what is known as an “OTG connector” (where

“OTG” is short for “on the go”), and it allows the contents of a USB memory stick to be transferred to the tablet.

To transfer music, remove (temporarily!) the USB power connector, and plug in the OTG connector. Then plug the USB memory stick into the OTG connector’s socket.

Open the Solid Explorer file manager. You should see a split-screen display. Commonly the left half will show the “temp” folder in the competition music display, but if necessary –

- If the “Internal Memory” display is not shown, press the three-bar menu icon above the left-hand window, and tap the “Internal Memory” item in the menu that slides out from the left.
- Tap the “competition Music” folder item
- Scroll down to and tap the “temp” menu item

To see the USB stick’s contents, tap the three-bar menu icon above the right-hand window, and then tap the “USB Drive 0” item in the menu that slides out from the left. The USB drive’s files will be shown in the right hand window.

Navigate through the folders present, if necessary, and press on the file wanted. At the bottom right of the window will appear a left-arrow; tap it, and you will be given the option of copying or moving the file. Tap “Copy to”, and the file will be copied into the “temp” folder, becoming visible in the left window.

Now when you return to the Music Folder Player, play the track from the “temp” folder.

After the copy, remove the OTG connector and store it safely. **DON’T FORGET TO RECONNECT THE POWER CORD.**

Copying Music From A Desktop, Notebook Or Tablet PC

Should you ever need to do this, it can be quite simple – as long as one issue is covered.

You need to configure the tablet to appear to a host computer as a USB storage device. It has been set into this configuration, but should it ever change, the following steps may be needed:

- There is a small battery icon near the top right corner of the screen. Press this until a menu drops down.
- When you release the pressure, a menu option indicating “USB computer connection” will appear. Select this by tapping it.
- You will see a list of two options. Select “Media device (MTP)”.
- Now when you use a USB connection from your computer to the tablet, it will appear as a disk drive, as would any small USB stick. The music folder will be located in the “Internal storage” folder.

Shutting Down

When you have finished, you turn off the tablet by pressing down on the of/off switch until the tablet display shows a “power off” dialog. Select the “off” option, and make sure you return to the bag it all came in,

- the tablet
- its stand
- the power supply and cable
- the OTG connector