Newcomer judge's cheat sheet · West Coast Swing J&J

Prelims → clean basics
Finals → also tie-breakers

Mindset: reward a dancer who is **on time, upright, connected and clean** in the basics. Complexity is not required — a clean sugar push beats a messy trick. Newcomers should mostly be enjoying themselves.

BOTH ROLES

TIMING

- **Critical timing** — the free foot strikes its target **on the beat**.
- **Strike on 1** — both partners, a clear start of each pattern.
- **Delayed weight transfer not necessary** — weight may still arrive with the strike; transitional timing is a novice skill.
- **Rhythm** — correct, clear and consistent steps and triples in basic patterns.
- **Weight transfer in triples** — a real triple, not a shuffle.

✗ Every triple replaced by touch-steps · drifting off the beat · rushing

TECHNIQUE

- **Posture** — upright, stable over the feet.
- **Eyes up** — not watching the floor or the feet.
- **Frame** — held, not collapsing or floppy.
- **Stretch** — visible stretch in the anchor, kept through the end of the pattern.
- **Pitch** — basic V (stretch) / A (compression) body angle.
- **Slot** — keeps the line of dance.

✗ Looking down · hunched shoulders · wandering off the slot

TEAMWORK / CONNECTION

- **Body, not arms** — lead and follow come from the body, not from pulling or pushing with the arms.
- **Connection** — couple keeps a clear compression/stretch connection.
- **Recovery** — when something goes wrong, they get back on time and stay calm.

CONTENT

- **Good, clean basics** — sugar push, left side pass, underarm turn, sugar tuck, basic whip.
- Few patterns done well > many patterns done badly.

SPORTSMANSHIP

- Fair play, respect for the partner, the floor and the other couples.

TIE-BREAKERS (MOSTLY FINALS)

When several couples have the basics, look at **novice-level** elements:

- Transitional timing — gradual weight transfer, rolling through the feet.
- Catching an obvious phrase change.
- A bit of variety in patterns and footwork (e.g. anchor variations).

EXTRA BY ROLE

Leader

- **Body lead** — gives direction by stepping back, not by pulling the arm.
- **Frame** — soft arms falling with gravity, held with the back muscles, shoulders down.
- **Clean basics** — sugar push, left side pass, underarm, sugar tuck, basic whip, free spin.
- **Keeps the slot** for the follower.

✗ Arm-led yanks · late or unclear preps

Follower

- **Connection with distance**, not with the biceps.
- **Anchor** — keeps the stretch; doesn't lose it when rotating.
- **Underrotated on 4**, then a slow opening on 5-and-6.
- **Arm responds** to lateral lead (e.g. free spin).
- **Turns** — small steps, travels with the turn, no rushing the spin speed.

✗ Anticipating the pattern · overspinning · big steps

Legend: ■ timing ■ technique ■ teamwork ■ content ■ sportsmanship.
✗ = typical newcomer faults.