

This is Roller Derby! WFTDA New Beginner Curriculum FAQs

This document addresses common questions or concerns on the new curriculum presentation. It will be updated regularly with new questions and answers.

You can find information on:

- ❖ Timeframe & Implementation
- ❖ Testing and Game Requirements
- ❖ Safety & Injury Prevention
- ❖ Exclusion and Favoritism
- ❖ Role of Officials
- ❖ Transfer Skaters

Please note: The goal of the new curriculum is to train and develop new participants for WFTDA full regulation roller derby.

Advanced skills and assessing levels beyond starting WFTDA regulation play or selecting skaters for a team is beyond the scope of the new curriculum (as it was for the MSRs).

See this graphic to understand what this mean for you and your league:

Responsibilities WFTDA	Responsibilities Leagues
Is providing recommendations for how to develop and bring new participants into the sport;	Are responsible for creating a program that works for them;
a curriculum for developing progression and a clear understanding of different levels of skills that promote early contact and game play in a safe environment;	are responsible for training policies and procedures (eg. coach/team selection, return to contact play, etc.); and supporting their coaches and training staff;
is providing guidance on assessing game readiness;	responsible for making a decision for when a skater is eligible for gameplay;
is NOT setting baseline skills for entering into a WFTDA-sanctioned game, but is recommending safe skills for playing Roller Derby (via the Risk Management Guidelines).	are responsible for identifying appropriate level opponents.

Timeframe & Implementation

“When is the new curriculum in effect? When should we expect the MSR’s to be unnecessary?”

- **Our timeline is to have the curriculum done by the end of the year, so we expect it to be able to be used in 2021.** But as MSRs are not required for new skaters, we recommend starting to look at changing your system for beginners now. We are releasing presentations and frameworks in the open community, so make sure you continuously check in to get an idea of the direction that we're going and you might be able to start a plan based on that.

“It is difficult to work out the kinks in a new system if we are not able to practice together and put it into place.”

- **We will provide some help in the transition and beyond** as we understand that currently leagues are not practicing and leagues won't be able to test the new principles as they are developed.. We will be releasing a transition and backlog product plan, as well as open a community workspace for WFTDA members to get support.
 - Please note we are aware of the language barrier and are working on a plan for translations for the curriculum and the documents.
- As this new curriculum is recommended and not required, the intention is for leagues to experiment and find how to make it work for them. There's no time limit so everyone can take as long as they need to find what does work for them and implement it.

“Coming back from the pandemic, leagues might not know where to start and how to get back, as teams will be completely different. Who and how to choose to play and based on what if there are no more MSR’s?”

- Coming back to roller derby will be different. **We will all need a new language to replace the MSR’s, but we might also be looking at a different game, system and set up.** The Ranking and competitive system is currently being looked at by the WFTDA.
 - Instead of changing the skill requirements every time the game changes, we aim to restructure the system to ALLOW for the evolution of the game. We offer a flexible model that allows us to adapt as the game adapts.
- Make sure you also check out the [WFTDA Recommendations for Return to Full-Contact Skating](#) for planning your training return.

“Does this replace “bootcamps”/ beginner trainings?”

- **Current structures for bringing in new players will need to be reviewed in light of the new curriculum by leagues.** It is not time-bound and encourages game play from Day 1, which is already quite different from many intake programmes.
- There is no strict timescale for moving to the new curriculum, so leagues can continue with existing plans and establish new structures when they have had more time to assess and apply the curriculum to their league environment.

Testing and Game Requirements

“What about the 27/5?”

- **There are no more requirements for any speed or endurance testing.** Leagues can decide on their own how and if they want to assess these, but we strongly encourage this not to be a deciding factor for becoming a league member, team selection, gameplay readiness etc. Furthermore we recommend considering why you would be using a speed requirement and what purpose it serves.

“So is WFTDA allowing WFTDA leagues to create their own minimum skills test?” /

“Since there is no longer an MSR for skaters, each league is expected to create their own policies regarding which skills are needed to bout, correct?”

- **Theoretically yes, but WFTDA is advising against a minimum skill test.** We want to shift the perspective on skill assessments and move away from assessing a skater to pass a test to assessing a skater's learning and skill development. The focus of leagues should be on “teaching to play the game” and to work with participants to analyze their skills and progression together. We encourage leagues to create a thoughtful tryout process as a way for how to assess skaters who are not beginners and do NOT recommend adding a test or using these skills as a barrier for players to participate in a game.
- There will be resources for which skills can help participants achieve the objectives at each development level and provide ideas for what to focus on when coaching. We identify game levels with different options to play (variations of) roller derby, so participants can be included in play early on.

“I like the skill cards. Is this something that the team is expected to create or is this something WFTDA will create to guide teams on skills to test?”

- **WFTDA is proving the skill cards, but the collection will be limited in the beginning and grow over time.** Leagues are welcome to create their own or contribute to the library.
- Please note that these skill cards are not intended as a tool to test the skill, but as a guidance on coaching the skill.

“But if it is not the same among all leagues how do we know that it is fair and safe for skaters passing?”

- **MSR testing vs. tryouts:** MSRs don't show if you can play the game. The tryout process in leagues usually does though. We encourage leagues to create a thoughtful tryout process as a way for how to assess skaters who are NOT beginners.
 - WFTDA will look into helping leagues with resources and best practices.
 - Leagues should also use the [recommendations to return to \(contact\) skating](#), including their mental health recommendations.

- **You can always choose what makes sense for you:** Leagues can always choose to have an endurance minimum, a different skating test, or any other skill measurements on their own as part of their training curriculum and league policy.
- Governing bodies of other sports **do not** require baseline skills for participation. The decision of requiring baseline skills, benchmarks, and/or determining player participation level is left to area organizations/associations (NGBs, leagues, coaches) to determine what (if any) they require for their participants.

“Less control via sanctioning may reduce safety standards.”

- The first MSRs (and the Skaters Rules Test) came out of 2009 when we did not have a global rankings system and no system to verify that games are safe. **To this day, we have never de-sanctioned a game because of the MSRs.** We do however have the Rules in place for when skaters are deemed unsafe.

“If there are no requirements, what’s keeping a team from rostering several newbies who haven’t mastered basic stops?” /

“I’m wondering if as the interleague, I may have to ask each team what their standard is for ‘ready for game play’ if they are new to us, as all leagues will be setting their own standards.”

- **We still provide a thoughtful plan for leagues to develop their skaters to be able to play full WFTDA regulation games.** We also want to highlight the trust we have in coaches and leagues to not roster unsafe players.
- We acknowledge that a game is **not** the environment to learn the fundamentals of roller skating or roller derby. Per the new Risk Management Guidelines we will still recommend safe skills for playing roller derby and that skaters know how to stop, fall small and be comfortable skating next to each other. (Please note this list is not comprehensive.)
- However, part of the Curriculum resources includes progression evaluation templates and guidance on how to have conversations about skill level and development. We anticipate that these tools can be used internally for supporting individual skaters and externally to highlight required skill levels between leagues for mixed scrimmages, guest skaters, transfer skaters, etc. We do however want to emphasize that these tools are not intended as another testing method.

Safety & Injury Prevention

“How can injury prevention be a priority when every derby league is using a different measuring stick to determine eligibility?” /

“As a player, how can I be sure the leagues I’m playing against aren’t putting myself or others at risk?”

- **The old MSRs promoted a false idea of safety.** The concept of a baseline skill requirement in the name of “safety” is not necessarily the right approach, and there are other ways to ensure safety, for example following a good curriculum and having confident coaches.

- **Safety is hard to quantify** - we already have what is legal gameplay or systems in place to ensure someone unsafe gets taken out of the game (expulsions etc.)
 - Resources such as the new Ranking systems with the calculator, the constant updated Rules (which actually do reflect the change in gameplay compared to the MSRs), and other policies or guidelines like Risk Management Guidelines have filled that need in a better fashion.
- If levels are uneven and one league thinks the other is unsafe, that is usually a question of what level you are playing at. So why should the MSRs be the system we use instead of a competitive play and rankings plan for our B-teams, our lower ranked leagues, newly ranked leagues etc.

“Will lack of minimum skills requirements affect our insurance coverage?”

- **No, this will not affect insurance coverage. But it will be important to keep mitigating risk.** We will add an update to the Risk Management Guidelines to make sure people are aware that skaters need basic skills before entering a roller derby game.

Exclusion and Favoritism

“But this will create favoritism/ support biases when developing /assessing/ selecting skaters...”
/ “This just means fewer people will get to play because elitist leagues can continue to be elitist, while lax leagues can allow unprepared skaters to play, putting them in danger.”

- This will not make more or less bias in the league. **A curriculum can support consistency, but if there are bias issues in the league, this won't be resolved by a document.** A league should have systems in place to minimise the impact of bias and take steps to address it.

Role of Officials

“Will the lack of basic standards make it harder to recruit, train, and retain officials?” /

“This is placing more burden on already burdened officials to identify unsafe behaviour.”

- We already have a system for what is legal gameplay with processes for removing unsafe players from the game. As this is already a role that officials play, it shouldn't increase their burden, as it is part of the Rules that apply no matter what.
- We operate from a position of trust and put that trust on our coaches and captains, instead of thinking they want their skaters to play even if they deem them unsafe.
- The proposed curriculum is inclusive of officials and we think that this integration is crucial also for recruitment, training and retainment of officials. We hope that by creating a culture of training together we can foster and strengthen the derby community.

“Will Officials see more penalties that could have been avoided had the teams properly trained and tested their skaters in minimum safety? Does this create a crap-shoot scenario for officials to navigate for every single game?”

- **Officials are NOT evaluating safe/unsafe skaters, but the Rules allow a process for managing unsafe gameplay and applying discretion.**

Transfer Skaters

“How to assess transfer skaters and pass them along safely?” /

“If someone moves to a different area, their new local league's requirements may be vastly different from their old league's, and they may not be permitted to play. Common baselines -- like WFTDA's minimum skills -- mean a person qualified in Location X remains qualified when they relocate to Location Y. Whether or not you qualify to play should not depend on where you live.”

- **The concept of the Minimum Skills as that common baseline didn't work everywhere, as the testing and understanding of the skills varied widely.** This is one of the reasons the review was started.
- We are hoping to give leagues a common development language so that they have the words to discuss and tailor individuals' development without resorting to "this one skill you can't do means you have to go train with the brand new skaters".