



DANCE



A beginner's guide



Have a child starting dance?

Congratulations! Dance is a fun, unique sport that has a place for everyone. Dance promotes many benefits for kids. Including coordination, listening skills, increased agility and flexibility, not to mention improved balance and spatial awareness.

Humans have been dancing for tens of thousands of years. However, we only have physical evidence dating back to India, around 9000 years ago. Today, many western dance styles were created during the European Renaissance. Travel and immigration to the Americas brought many of these styles to the United States. Additionally, influences from Asia, Africa, and the Oceania have continued to help evolve dance styles practiced here in the United States.

Regardless of your past experience with competitive or recreational dance, you and your family can find a home at any studio. This guide will provide an introduction to how the sport works, the gear needed, and learning key terms. This guide has all the information you and your child need to join one of America's favorite youth sports.



WORDS OF ADVICE

Get to know the sport.

There are multiple paths your dancer can take in the sport. From starring as a Sugar Plum Fairy in the Nutcracker, to having their own solos in competitions. It is important not to stay in the dark - ask the teachers or studio staff any questions you have about the upcoming competitions, class or recital requirements.

Be positive and respectful.

Unless otherwise appointed, your job at the studio is to support and cheer for your kid. Focus on the positives as he or she learns the sport and avoid any instruction from chairs in the lobby.

Practice, practice, practice.

No matter what level your dancer is at, practicing new steps and choreography at home is important in their dance development.

Become familiar with instructors.

In recreational dance, your child's teacher will likely change yearly. So, introduce yourself to the dance teacher and get to know his or her philosophies. Then communicate anything you feel he or she should know about your child early in the season. Once they move to the competitive track, it will be common for a dancer to have the same teacher for years. A good dance teacher will be open and honest about goals, expectations, and methods.

Commitment.

At most studios, they are looking for a 6-9 month commitment with the end of the season culminating in dance recitals. Many will also offer

Summer Classes, workshops, or intensives to help you to continue progressing on your dancer's journey.

Play other sports too.

Encourage your child to hang up their ballet slippers occasionally to try other sports and avoid dance fatigue. Certain dance skills—like body awareness, quick reactions, and conditioning—can be practiced by participating in other sports.

Focus on life skills, not scholarships.

Dance, like any other sport, is not a financial plan for college. Fewer than 1% of high school athletes receive athletic scholarships, and only 3% of dancers become professionals in the sport.

Encourage your child to focus on the valuable lessons they can learn from dance, like how to handle winning and losing, overcome the challenges while learning new choreography, how to manage relationships with teachers and teammates, and the benefits of being active. Above all, focus on having fun!

Pick the right program for your child.

There are many dance disciplines and programs to choose from that vary in cost, time commitment, and competition level. Talk to your little dancer and discover what dance styles they would be interested in most to maximize their enjoyment participating in the sport. Choose a program that suits your child's interests and skill levels. [See: "Ways to Dance - page 8"]

For more information, visit:
sportsengine.com/dance/words-of-advice



FUNDAMENTALS OF THE SPORT

Before your child puts on their dancing shoes, it's helpful to understand the basics of the sport and what to expect.



Levels:

Each studio will have a slightly different track to advancing through the levels, but age and experience are always considered. Recreational dancers tend to be placed with dancers their own age, while competitive dancers will be on teams with similar dancing abilities. It is best to consult with your studio on the necessary progressions needed for advancement.



Time:

On average, dance recitals are 2-3 hours, but this can depend on the size of studio, and number of dancers performing. Competitions are similar, averaging 3-4 hours.



Scoring:

Most dance competitions are scored using a point system not unlike how schools grade out of 100.

Three judges are given 100 points each, and the total score out of 300 is taken to determine the adjudication score.

Out of 100 points, a judge can give a certain number of points. Typical categories that students are scored on are:

- Technique**
- Performance**
- Presentation**
- Choreography**
- Overall Impression**

For more information, visit:
sportsengine.com/dance/fundamentals



Tupac Shakur, also known as 2Pac and Makaveli, was an American rapper. He is widely considered one of the most influential rappers of all time. But before becoming a full-time rapper and hip-hop artist, Tupac Shakur was a ballet dancer. He attended Baltimore School for the Arts, where he took ballet, poetry, jazz, and acting classes. He played the role of Mouse King in the Nutcracker play where he had to do arabesque moves.



THE DISCIPLINES

These are some examples of types of dance disciplines to know about as your child gets ready to be a dancer.



Tap

Tap dance is a form of dance characterized by using the sounds of tap shoes striking the floor as a form of percussion. Students are taught rhythms, timing, and leg/foot coordination done to all types of music.



Jazz

Jazz dance is a high energy, fast moving, stylized technique influenced by rhythms of jazz music. Jazz teaches acting, expression, technique and how to move with the beat of the music. Dancers will learn leaps, turns, kicks and center combination work to upbeat and popular music.



Ballet

Ballet is the fundamental “backbone” of all dance training. A classical dance form demanding grace and precision and employing formalized steps and gestures. Students will learn elegance, technique, discipline, flexibility, confidence, and endurance.



Hip Hop

Hip Hop refers to street dance styles primarily performed to upbeat, funky music. It includes a wide range of styles, including breaking, locking, and popping. Hip Hop is known for its fast, athletic movements that help with coordination and strength.



Acro

Acro dance is a style of dance that combines classical dance technique with precision acrobatic elements. Acro’s unique choreography seamlessly blends dance and acrobatics into this new art form. Acro teaches agility, balance, flexibility, strength discipline, and concentration, and is wonderful accompaniment for any dancer.



Lyrical

Lyrical combines ballet, jazz, and contemporary dance techniques, teaching the student to communicate emotion through music. Lyrical is a fluid, technical form of dance that allows the student to explore their musicality and the close relationship music shares with dance expression through choreography and performance.



THE EVENTS (CONT.)



Contemporary

Contemporary is an expressive style of dance that combines a variety of dance genres. It utilizes both the strong and controlled legwork of ballet and modern dance's stress on the torso and employs contact-release, floor work, fall and recovery and improvisation characteristic of modern dance. Contemporary allows for the dancer to be creative and free.



Musical Theatre

Musical Theatre is perfect for those who love to sing, act and dance! This discipline teaches dialogue, music, dancing, singing, and acting through a variety of games, exercises, and repertoire from Broadway Musicals.

For more information, visit:
sportsengine.com/dance/disciplines



Did you know that Break Dancing, officially known Breaking, will make its Olympic debut in Paris 2024?

For more information, visit: <https://www.nbcolympics.com/breaking>



DANCE SLANG

There could be an entire dictionary to assist you with the slang used in a dance studio, but here are a few to get you started.

Comp Season: Refers to the competition season. Competitions typically start in January, with Nationals held in the summer.

Full Out: Dancing with 100% of your energy and performance.

Plie: A smooth and continuous bending of the knees outward with the upper body help upright

Choreography: The composition and arrangement of movement for dances.

8-Count: The manner in which music is counted and broken down.

Ball Change: Ball change is a dance move that consists of two steps: a partial weight transfer on the ball of a foot.



For more information, visit:
sportsengine.com/dance/slang



The town of Strasbourg, France witnessed a dance mania that lasted a month and killed dozens of people; it was The Dancing Plague of 1518. To this day, it is an unsolved mystery.



GEARED UP FOR SUCCESS

Many dance studios have a dress code for class, so to make sure your superstar is suited up correctly, communicate with your new studio where you find the best apparel. There is a great chance your dance studio will have its own pro-shop or online retailer they recommend.



Leotard/Leo

A tight-fitting, one-piece garment made of a stretchy, lycra type of material. Most commonly worn by girls or women for ballet, and always a mandatory uniform in dance studios per a studios dress code.



Dress Codes

Dress codes are essential in many dance studios and can change the attitude and performance of dancers. Having a dress code ensures that all dancers will have adequate mobility during class or rehearsal. Improper clothing can impact technique, precision, ability to grip the floor, and visibility.



Costumes

Worn for both competitions and recitals. The entire group will wear the same costume, going with the 'theme' of the dance and music. Each dance performed typically requires a different costume.



Shoes

Special shoes are worn for each dance discipline. These shoes have been designed to complement the movement needed for each dance. Dance shoes should not be worn outside, as dirt and grease cause damage to a studio floor making it unsafe to dancers.

For more information, visit:
sportsengine.com/dance/gear



Did you know each pair of pointe shoes is handmade? They are constructed of layers of burlap, or buckram felt that is joined with glue. Once a dancer receives their pointe shoes, they pick what shoe will be worn on which foot. Shoes are identical when delivered but are 'broken in' to the dancer's foot.



WAYS TO DANCE

Availability of dance programs can depend on your community's interest and available studios. However, many communities offer a variety of programs that will fit your child's interests and abilities. With a little research, you will be able to find a program that suits your child.

Competitive Dance

Age: 5-18	Good for: Dancers looking to increase their skills and compete at the highest level.
Commitment: Competitive dancers require a high level of commitment to time and finances, depending on their level and age. This track involves several weekly practices and travels on a state, regional, and national level.	Structure: Generally, dancers will start in recreational classes, then try out for the competitive team. Commitment level tends to increase with the competitive level. This format is geared toward developing skills and high-level competition.

School Dance Team

Age: Middle and high schoolers	Good for: Skilled dancers looking to represent their school and dance with their classmates.
Commitment: School dance can be a moderate commitment. Dancers practice most days of the week. While the sport is seasonal on the school level, most will still practice year around.	Structure: Dancers may be required to try out and placed on a varsity or junior varsity team according to performance.



WAYS TO PLAY (CONT.)

Community/Recreational Dance

Age: Young kids to adults	Good for: Those focused on having fun, being active, and dancing with friends.
Commitment: Recreational dance costs less than the competitive track and requires less time. Expect to have class one to two times a week with no pressure to continue from year to year.	Structure: Learning the basics and enjoying the sport is prioritized over competition and skill development. Dancers do not have to try out and can choose a class that fits into their schedule. In general, anyone and everyone can participate.

For more information, visit:
sportsengine.com/dance/ways-to-play





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