**Competitive Dancer Guidelines and Tips**

Before we start our competitive dance season, here are a few guidelines and tips to get you ready. I’m sure most of us know this already, but it’s always good to have a reminder. If you have any questions, please contact Ms Meghan.

**BEFORE GETTING TO THE COMPETITION**

- Check and double check that you have each and every part of your costume. Don’t forget to check for shoes, tights, hairpieces, and other small accessories. It helps to make your own checklist beforehand, so that you always a quick way to check that you have everything packed!
- Make sure that your name is on every piece of every costume, including shoes!
- Stock up on the little things that no dancer should ever be without – bobby pins, safety pins, hairspray, extra elastics, sewing kit, etc. Nearly everything can be found at dollar stores, and is guaranteed to be put to use at every competition!
- Pack a water bottle and some small healthy snacks in your dance bag. Competitions can run late, and you want to keep your energy up!
- Most importantly, take care of yourself! Get plenty of rest, eat nutritious meals, and try not to get too nervous. You will always dance your best when you are feeling your best!

**AT THE COMPETITION**

- Be in the change room completely dressed and ready to go (makeup, hair, etc. all done) 1 hour earlier than your scheduled dance time. This means that unless you driving to the competition in costume, you need to allow time at the venue to get dressed. We need time to warm-up, run through the dance, and get focused.
- Share the dressing room space. Competitions are busy places and the dressing rooms fill up fast. Just remember that everyone is a squished as you are, and try to share as best as you can.
- Along the same lines, share the rehearsal space. Your teacher will let you know when it is your turn to run through your dance. Try to give your fellow dancers as much space as you can.
- Be kind while backstage. Dancers from other studios love to hear “great job!” or “good luck!” On Stage is gaining a reputation on the competition circuit of being a polite, pleasant studio to work with...let's keep it up!
- Practice proper audience etiquette. When in the audience, cheer for everybody. It’s okay to cheer louder for your own teammates, but all of the performers deserve your applause. Avoid yelling out names of dancers or cheering excessively loudly. Similarly, respect fellow dancers by remaining quietly seated throughout their performance. There is always a short pause in between numbers in which you can enter and exit the auditorium. Parents, this goes for you too!
- Be kind to your teachers! We have most likely been at the competition venue since 6:30am with very little time for resting or eating. We do it because we love working with you, and want to support you...so please respect us by being polite and courteous!
- It is possible that you will encounter some dancers who are angry, rude, etc. We all have our bad days, so please try to just ignore what was said and focus on the positive.

**AT THE AWARDS CEREMONY**

- If you have it, please wear an On Stage windsuit or any studio logo clothing during awards ceremonies – show your studio spirit! You can also wear studio colours (black/yellow/white). Keep in mind however that this is not a pajama party – though they may be comfy it doesn’t look very nice when you accept your award wearing PJ Pants and a baggy old t-shirt!!!
- Sit quietly while waiting for your dance to be announced. Listen respectfully and applaud while the other performances are being awarded.
- In a group, Ms. Meghan will choose one or two dancers to stand up and accept the award. This helps to avoid ‘traffic congestion’ and stepping on anyone’s fingers or toes!
- When accepting the award, make sure to look the judge in the eye, smile and say thank you.
o If ribbons/pins/etc. have been awarded, wait until you are off the stage to distribute them to your teammates. Handing them out on stage causes a commotion and is not very respectful to the teams still receiving their awards.
o If asked when accepting awards, please try to remember to use the full studio name as well as your teacher/choreographer’s full name.
o Though I am sure you all know this, please be gracious and a good sport. You dance differently every day, and different judges are each looking for different things in a dancer. Whether you place first or last, you should be proud that you have worked hard and shared your love of dance with the audience!!

AFTER THE COMPETITION
o Double check that you have re-packed all the pieces of your costume. You don’t want to be preparing for the next competition and realize you’ve left part of your costume at the last one!
o Tidy up your dressing room space as best as you can. Remember, someone else is going to have to use that same room tomorrow, so leave it as clean as you found it.

THE COMPETITIVE DANCER ‘LOOK’
o Hair needs to be completely slicked back. Use hairspray or spray gel as you are combing through your hair to keep it in place. Pesky ‘wispies’ can be glued into place with super strong gel. Check out the hair and makeup guidelines on the website for detailed instructions.
o If it can be bobby- or safety pinned, it should be! Hair pieces and hats need to be pinned down securely to prevent them from flying off mid-pirouette! Similarly, halter tops, belts, etc. need to be safety pinned to prevent any embarrassing costume mishaps. Always be sure to bring a bunch of bobby and safety pins with you.

TRICKS OF THE TRADE
o Clear nail polish works wonders to stop a run in your tights. Make sure you have some packed with your makeup in case of emergency.
o If you are wearing black tights, bring a black Sharpie marker with you. If you get a hole in your tights – and no, I am not joking – you can ‘fill it in’ with the marker. It sounds ridiculous, but it works!
o Of course, the two above suggestions won’t be needed if you pack an extra pair of tights 😊
o Eyelash glue is not just for false eyelashes! In a pinch, I have used it for earrings, rhinestones, even to re-attach the heel of a jazz shoe!
o Clear/invisible elastic is a dancer’s friend. It can be used to secure most halter, strapless, or backless dance costumes. Pack some extra though, as it breaks easily.

TIPS FOR PARENTS
o Encourage your children, and be their biggest fan. Be positive. Regardless of the outcome of the competition, your child values your opinion above all else. Encourage them to do their best, and love them for dancing their hearts out.
o Make sure that your children are easy to locate. They should be prepared to go on stage, and should not be gallivanting all around with buddies. They need to be prepared for any emergency rehearsals, or schedule changes.
o Make sure to have ALL items listed on the competition sheet... in excess! Please be willing to share if necessary - everyone has a forgetful day but please, don't always be the one asking or people will stop loaning you things.
o Remember, you are just as much a reflection of our studio as your children. You actions and behavior not only set a precedent for your child, but also represent the studio. We don't want to be "that studio" that has issues with everyone else... so please keep this in mind as you watch your child's performance, react to their score, etc. Lead by example.
o Arrive on time and prepared as requested. Especially on the first day of a competition, allow yourself plenty of extra time to find the venue and get settled. This will keep the kids calm and ready to do their best.
o Please don’t say, “my kid wants to go swimming, shopping,” etc. Competition is for dancing. Save that for when you are not competing.
Yes, it really does count, so please don't bother asking if their hair really has to be that tight, if they really have to wear eyelashes, or if they really need an elaborate costume. Generally costume and appearance factor into the judge's scoring, and I do not want the kids to be docked points for something so easily preventable when they have worked so hard.

All competitions have rules banning videotaping (on video or digital cameras) and taking photos (other than at the awards ceremony). PLEASE follow these rules, as you will be removed from the theatre and possibly even result in disqualification for our dancers. YES, I have seen this happen before!

Part of the learning experience of competitive dance is watching other dancers perform. I know that we all have busy lives, but it is so beneficial for your dancing child to be able to watch and be exposed to dancers from other studios, performing new styles and new steps. If you have an extra hour or two to stay and watch the performances...please do so!

**TIPS FOR DANCERS**

- Remember, you are there to dance! The experience should be fun, however, remember what you came to do. This may mean not having time to shop or go out to eat between numbers. You must promptly arrive at all scheduled rehearsals when at the event...preferably not right after you've tired yourself out swimming in the hotel pool.
- Stay for awards ceremony whenever possible. It shows your respect for your teachers, fellow dancers, and the judges who so kindly sat and watched you all day!
- **TREAT YOUR PARENTS RESPECTFULLY!!!** This means no arguing in the dressing rooms, and no fighting between numbers. Your behavior reflects poorly on the studio, and also is highly disrespectful. If it weren't for your parents, you wouldn't be where you are...or where you are dancing!
- Do your best, and encourage each other as teammates, however, don't act condescendingly towards those who may not have performed up to your expectations. Dance should be fun, and while competitions are serious, no one is perfect.
- As Ms Meghan has told you many times...it doesn't matter whether you place first or last. What matters is that you do your best, have fun, and share your love of dance with the audience!