



THE PORT PERRY DANCE ACADEMY COMPETITIVE DANCER PROGRAM

A Guide for Students and Parents

About This Handbook

The Port Perry Dance Academy is first and foremost an educational institution. Our success comes as a result of providing solid training, quality service and from an underlying belief in the strength of our organization and training methodologies.

From our inception in September 2000 the Port Perry Dance Academy has been a leader in dance education. Our Competitive Program is one of the tools we use to help our students learn and experience theatre, become independent and become motivated to achieve.

We have created this handbook to offer our dancers and their parents a clear understanding of their commitments and responsibilities to the Competitive Dancer Program and the Port Perry Dance Academy. We recommend that parents read this document in its entirety and ensure that they read and understand all emails, handouts and other communications that come from our office.

For Our Dancers

Congratulations! You have been accepted into the Competitive Dancer Program. The first step to becoming a successful dancer is making a solid commitment to your classes, rehearsals, and performances. Strong technique is a key ingredient to your success and class is where you develop that technique. Come to each class prepared to learn and without personal distractions. Class time is your chance to focus on yourself, so try to leave your concerns or worries at the studio door. True progress is made when you look at each class, rehearsal, or performance as an opportunity to become better at what you

love to do. Dance full out, stretch a little further, become more aware of your technique, and make the most of every class.

A Competitive Dance Team member (performer) will be selected by the faculty only. Performance Company membership is a privilege that must be continuously earned. It is not a right.

The Competition program is about a journey. It is not a destination. The most successful outcome is to achieve a personal best level of performance while supporting your team mates to achieve their personal best through continuous improvement and sincere effort. The purpose of this program is to build a higher level of leadership, self-confidence and self-reliance. You will challenge yourself to make your dream and your team's dream into a goal and then to work together to achieve that goal.

Respect for the teachers and choreographers with whom you work is essential. This is not negotiable. Listen to each correction given, whether it's directed to you or another dancer. A correction is an honour; it shows you how much a teacher cares about your progress as a dancer. Always say thank you when a teacher or choreographer offers you constructive criticism. Nothing can stop those students who apply themselves in every class and appreciate their teachers' knowledge and experience.

Dancers will support and encourage their team members at all times. They will endeavour to help their team members to continuously improve by sharing their talents with them.

All rehearsals are dedicated to choreography or "cleaning" the choreography. A dancer who misses a rehearsal holds back the progress of the entire group. Repeating the choreography from a previous session for those who were absent takes up valuable rehearsal time, which could result in a performance that is not up to par. When we clean choreography, we may also change it. Dancers who miss a cleaning session may not be properly prepared for the upcoming performance and could end up letting themselves, their team, or their school down.

Performances and competitions are your opportunity to show the world the results of your dedication and hard work. To make the most of this opportunity:

- Arrive at performances at least one hour prior to the scheduled time, unless otherwise advised by your teachers.
- Be sure you are properly warmed up.
- Performers must report any physical injury to the Directors of the academy immediately
- Present yourself in a professional manner, with costumes pressed, shoes cleaned, and all accessories accounted for.
- Go out there and show the audience how much you love to dance!

➤ True progress is made when you look at each class, rehearsal, or performance as an opportunity to become better at what you love to do.

Performers represent the academy and the profession of dance as a whole. As such, they will provide leadership and be a positive role model for all students at the academy at all times.

Attitude, punctuality, behaviour, attendance, grooming and general deportment must be exemplary at all times. Performers who are unable or unwilling to adhere to these standards may be temporarily or permanently suspended from the dance team at the discretion of the Directors without refund.

Attendance at all classes, practices and rehearsals is expected. A maximum of 3 missed classes is acceptable between September and December. Absences in excess of this amount for medical, academic or emergencies will be assessed on their merit by the Directors. Attendance is essential to successful teamwork and to achieve optimal performance quality. Rehearsals are mandatory.

Performers are expected to be at all performances/competitions and rehearsals unless they give 6 weeks written notice of another engagement. If more than one performance or one rehearsal is missed you may forfeit your place on the team without refund.

It is the performer's responsibility to arrive on time for all performances and competitions fully prepared and equipped with all the necessary shoes, costumes, tights, make-up, grooming and hair requirements.

Performers are expected to attend extra classes, rehearsals etc. which may be scheduled in addition to the regular class schedule at the discretion of the faculty.

For the Parents: *"We're in this together"*

We believe that children's success depends on the support of their parents or guardians. Because your commitment to the process makes an enormous difference, we encourage you to be a part of your child's dance education.

Our program relies on a positive atmosphere. This atmosphere is generated through our faculty, dancers and their parents. It promotes a positive learning experience for all involved. **Cooperation between all parents is expected.** Showing respect for the other parents, along with the students and faculty, makes an important impression on the children. You are a role model for your child in how to interact with others in a professional setting.

The Competitive Program is a self-contained program in dance education. The program consists of several levels (A through Mini). Each dancer is positioned on a team by virtue of their level of expertise and physical development. **Every team member participates in all skills classes targeted for their team.** Your child's presence at all classes,

rehearsals, and performances is imperative. The spirit of teamwork and the lesson of dedication are a big part of our school's educational process.

Parents and teachers may look at a child's learning from different perspectives. However, they share a common goal: to assure that every child receives the best possible training, both physically and mentally. Mutual respect between our faculty and our dancers' parents provides the children with the ultimate care and education.

The Focus Is Not Simply on Competition

Since it is our goal to instill a passion for performing rather than merely the desire to win awards, competitive dancers have performance opportunities other than competitions. For example, performances are often held at Nursing Homes and at Community Benefits when the opportunity arises. We believe the lessons learned through concert performances and giving back to our community are just as valuable as the competition experience.

Our solid reputation for quality reflects our attitude toward competition and our goal to develop in each student a genuine respect for dance as an art form. We consider participation in competitions not simply part of our students' training as dancers; it's also an important part of how we influence them as people. With the right focus, the experience gained in competition can be an excellent source of self-confidence. If the dancers feel good about a performance and understand that they become better each time they go onstage, they are truly growing through the competition experience. Hitting that stage and doing the best they can is what it's all about; whether they win—or which award they win—is secondary.

Through participation in competitions, we hope to instill in our students an appreciation for other dancers and schools. We are not out to beat anyone; instead, we hope to motivate both students and faculty by exposing them to the highest caliber of talent available. Only then can we inspire our dancers and teachers to continue to strive to improve what they do and how they do it. For us, competition is an education!

➤ **We believe the lessons learned through concert performances are just as valuable as the competition experience.**

Understanding Dance Education

As a parent, the financial support of your student is important, but of equal—perhaps even greater—value is your emotional support. Encourage your child to be the best that he or she can be without regard to what others may achieve. Dance is an individual art form; each child needs to achieve at a pace that's comfortable and safe for him or her. No two students will progress at the same rate, even if they experience the exact same training. It's important to encourage the children to focus on themselves, give their all, be satisfied with their own accomplishments and strive to build on their successes.

It is important that parents understand the difference between encouraging and coaching their dancer. Parents should avoid coaching their dancer.

Dance education encompasses far more than technique or the steps your children will learn. We believe the discipline of dance training gives young people a better understanding of commitment by offering them the chance to learn, experience the spirit of teamwork, and understand what hard work can accomplish. Our goal is to educate the minds, bodies, and souls of our students, to teach them the skills needed for a successful life, whether or not they stay involved in dance.

➤ The financial support of your student is important, but of equal—perhaps even greater—value is your emotional support.

Class or Choreography Placement

The school faculty meets regularly to discuss the students' progress and/or placement. It is our policy to offer appropriate opportunities to every child.

Placement decisions are derived from many years of teaching experience. Often a child is placed in a particular group or class where he or she will feel confident. Confidence promotes the development of self-esteem. Some dancers who are placed in a higher level become discouraged, only to lose their passion for dance. Others respond to the challenge of being in a class with dancers who are more proficient by pushing themselves to work harder. Placement is highly individual and the factors that go into the decision are complex. Please see the school's director if you have questions or concerns about your child's placement. All new members are on a probationary period of 6 months at the discretion of the Directors.

Dos and Don'ts

Some parents may compare their child's progress or class or choreography placement to that of others in the program. Watch for this behavior in your children as well, and encourage them to focus on their own accomplishments. Looking to others for inspiration is a good thing; however, a negative focus or comparison distracts from the energy that could be focused on becoming a stronger dancer. In addition, speaking negatively about your child's teachers, fellow dancers, or other parents in front of your child—or other students—could result in problems far beyond your original concerns. Often children will react to their parents in a way that imitates the parent's behavior with other adults or authority figures.

Children learn important lessons from their teachers and parents, acquiring important behavior patterns through their example. Our school's faculty takes that responsibility seriously. It's our philosophy to encourage our students to feel, think, and act respectfully to their peers, the adults in their lives, and themselves.

If you have questions or concerns about your child's dance education, don't panic—and please don't talk only with other parents when questions arise. This generally leads to the promotion of misinformation, confusion and other issues that will detract from your and your child's dance experience. Ask for information from the source i.e. directly from the Director or studio representative. Make an appointment to speak directly to your child's teachers or the director of the school. Please conduct all communication through the school office rather than approaching your child's teacher or the director between or during classes or calling them at home.

If you do request a conference, please listen carefully to what your child's teachers have to say. They spend a significant amount of time with your child and can offer expertise in the field of dance education.

➤ **Class placement of students is highly individual and the factors that go into the decision are complex.**

For Dancers and Parents

Dance Team Guidelines

Members of the Dance Team are expected to adhere to all policies that govern the entire school population in addition to those specific to the Dance Team. These guidelines are subject to change without notice at the sole discretion of the Directors.

Image

The children and parents involved in the Intensive Program participate in many outside activities, each of which becomes a reflection of the school's philosophy.

Please keep the following in mind:

- We never speak negatively about teachers, dancers, or parents from other schools.
- We never create conflict with the directors or judges of events in which we participate.
- We never recruit dancers from other schools.
- The school director handles all communication with the directors of our outside activities.
- No parent or dancer may call or question the directors of any event. If you have a concern, please contact the director of our school.

➤ **Competitive dancers are required to wear appropriate shoes and dance clothing for all classes and rehearsals. Make sure shoes are clean and polished/maintained for each performance.**

Classes

All dancers are expected to attend their regularly scheduled classes in addition to all rehearsals and performances. A total of five class days per season may be missed.

Any team member with poor attendance may be dismissed from the program without refund at the discretion of the Directors.

Dancers will receive a class schedule in September. The program includes ballet, tap, jazz, acro and musical theatre. There may be additional classes, including master classes, in which it is expected that all team members participate. There may be an additional charge for some master classes.

All dancers must show respect for their teachers at all times. Inappropriate behavior could result in dismissal from the program.

Examinations

All Dance Team members are required to take and pass required examinations as determined by the Directors. Examinations involve proper exam attire (see school dress code), additional fees for the cost of the examination, examiner's incidental fees and exam preparation classes (as required).

Rehearsal and Other Information

Rehearsals are an important part of the commitment to the Competitive Program. All dancers are expected to work hard and arrive early enough to give themselves time to warm up.

Additional rehearsals may be scheduled at the discretion of the teacher/choreographer. All dancers are required to participate.

No Competitive dancer may miss more than three rehearsals during the season. (A season starts in September and ends after the national competition in July). Any dancer missing more than three rehearsals runs the risk of being cut from the routine without refund.

Dancers who need to be excused are required to notify the school 24 hours prior to the scheduled rehearsal. Any dancer excused from a rehearsal is responsible for learning any missed choreography prior to arriving for the next rehearsal.

All Competitive dancers must attend rehearsals in proper dance attire and appropriate shoes.

➤ It is expected that all dancers will be on their best behavior during rehearsals and work as team players at all times.

Tuition and Expense Policy

Part of the commitment to the Competitive Program is being up-to-date with all accounts related to participation. Students will be pulled from their routine if their account is not in good standing.

ABOUT COMPETITIONS

Attendance

When a competition runs over the entire weekend, we encourage our dancers to attend as much of the event as possible whether or not they are competing on a particular day. We work as a team, always available to support each other. Performances/competitions often occur during the school week as well as on weekends. Performers may be required to miss school or sacrifice a weekend(s) to accommodate the performance/competitive schedule. Performers can anticipate competing in four-to five Canadian competitions in Ontario and possibly one International event (United States) in any given school year. We also try to give back to our community by doing one or two community events where convenient. The attached Itinerary is an example of what your schedule could look like.

Solos, Duets Trios, Small Groups

All team members who wish to compete in solos, duets, trios or small groups in any discipline must be a member of the corps for that discipline. Individuals who compete in solo, duet or trio routines which are entered in an open category must be a member of the corps most closely related to that routine as decided by the academy's Directors.

Independent Entries

No dancer may compete in any competition as an independent entry without the permission of the school Director.

Cash Scholarships

Soloists will receive a school credit for the amount of any cash scholarship awarded. It will be applied to lessons, costumes, entry fees, or other expenses related to dance training.

Cash scholarships awarded to dancers who perform duos, trios, or ensemble pieces will be utilized for master classes, guest choreographers, and other activities.

➤ Please attend all meetings and read all newsletters, emails and postings to keep updated about any additional commitments.

Costume payments are the sole responsibility of the parent or guardian. Costume deposits are due on October 15. Parents may use our installment program to pay costume fees.

The balance due for costumes must be paid in full by January 1st of the current season. THERE ARE NO EXCEPTIONS TO THIS POLICY.

If a competitive dancer is dismissed or leaves the program, an understudy will replace him or her. The student leaving the team is expected to turn in all costumes to the school office; they will be returned to the student after the last performance of the season.

TIPS: COSTUME COMMON SENSE

- ✓ Always have a second pair of tights available.
- ✓ Place costumes in a garment bag for travel.
- ✓ Carry hats in a hatbox or container to prevent them from damage.
- ✓ Hang and steam/press costumes before each performance.
- ✓ Place your name on all bags, racks, costumes and shoes.

There are additional costs associated with competing. Please read and understand the attached Estimate of Additional Costs as a guide as to what performers might expect.

There can be no refunds of costume, entry, Summer Intensive, Ballet Intensive or workshop fees.

Summer Program

The Summer Intensive Program is a required activity for all Competitive dancers. Master and guest teachers, in addition to the school's faculty, will offer a weeklong program in the third full week of August (dates are on our on-line calendar). Classes will take place at the Academy. In addition, students will be required to come in during Choreography Week in the last full week of August to start/complete Choreography as assigned. Full participation in the August Summer Intensive and regular season classes is mandatory in order to be/remain on the Dance Team.

Participation on the dance team is subject to being in good financial standing with the academy.

Fees For Summer Program

Fees for the Summer Intensives are communicated by email annually by June 31st.

➤ All Summer Intensive Program tuition is due on August 1st. Ballet Intensive payment is due on July 1st.

Final Note

WELCOME TO THE COMPETITIVE DANCER PROGRAM! We look forward to an exciting, rewarding season!

Appendix: Program Overview

The following table summarizes the key features of the Competitive Program.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this information please arrange for an appointment to speak with the studio Director.

Approx. Age	Team Name	Approx. Hours of Training per Week	Core/Required Classes/Styles	Group rehearsals (30 min per routine)	# of Competitions Per year	Required Exams*
5+	Muffins	3	Ballet (2), Jazz	Jazz	3 (Mar-May)	Yes
6+	Minis	6	Ballet (2), Jazz, Acro, Tap	Jazz & Musical Theatre	4-6 (Feb-July)**	Yes
8+	Company E	7-9	Ballet (2), Jazz, Musical Theatre, Acro, Tap	Minimum of two group routines as assigned by Director	4-6 (Feb-July)*	Yes
10+	Company D	7-9	Ballet (2), Jazz, Acro, Tap	Minimum of two group routines as assigned by Director	4-6 (Feb-July)*	Yes
12+	Company C	9-11	Ballet (3), Jazz, Acro	Minimum of two group routines as assigned by Director	4-6 (Feb-July)*	Yes
14+	Company B	11+	Ballet (3), Jazz, Acro	Minimum of two group routines as assigned by Director	4-6 (Feb-July)*	Yes as assigned by Director
17+ as of Sep 1 st	Company A	6+	Ballet (2), Jazz, Lyrical	As assigned	4-6 (Feb-July)*	No

* As determined by the Director

**Includes optional solo competition in Feb and optional finals in July (qualifying routines only)

➤ Dates and/or expenses listed in this handbook are subject to change. Please check the bulletin board and read your email regularly for updates.

Appendix: Costs

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this information please arrange for an appointment to speak with the studio Director.

Training	Cost	Notes
3-11 hours of class/week*	Please see website for rates	http://portdance.com/registration/tuition-fees-2011-12/
Dance competition Team Intensive (1 week of camp in August)	Please see website for rates	http://portdance.com/registration/tuition-fees-2011-12/
Choreography	Please see website for rates	http://portdance.com/registration/tuition-fees-2011-12/
Accessories	Variable	Budget for earrings, tights, shoes, hair product, support garments etc.
Costuming	Variable	Please contact office for a specific quote
*Team Suit (Jacket and Pants) Optional	\$75.00 approx	As part of the competitive team it is strongly recommended that you have at least a team jacket to wear onstage when receiving competition awards/ribbons. The team jackets are approximately \$75.00. It is not necessary to buy a new jacket or suit each year.
Competition Entry fees	From \$45.00	Please contact office for a specific quote
Travel costs	Variable	Attending competitions can mean travel costs such as gas, food, accommodations. One venue charges a \$5.00 fee for unlimited entry to the venue. All others are free.
RAD Ballet exams	~ \$95.00	At discretion of Director
*Jazz/Tap/Acro exams	~ \$90.00	At discretion of Director