

Five Things Every Parent Should Know Before Choosing a Dance Studio

If most dance studios seem to have qualified, friendly teachers, experience teaching children, and a big show at the end of the year, aren't they all pretty much the same? Does it really matter which place you enroll? Yes. There are five main things that can make a huge difference in the quality of instruction your child receives, the amount of extra work and hassles the parents must deal with, and the overall enjoyment and satisfaction of being involved in a dance program. Here are five things that every parent should consider before deciding on a dance studio for their child.

1. What type of dance floor is used?

Dance is a very physical activity that requires a lot of jumping, which can put stress on bones and joints. Most dance footwear does not provide any cushioning or support, so the shock of dance movement can place a lot of pressure on the knees and back of a dancer. Many studios dance on tile or even concrete floors. Some even dance on plywood. Our new main studio room has a beautiful hardwood floor with an appropriate amount of "give" for dancing. The floor has a controlled slip finish to make sure that dancers will be safe while they are learning the art of dance.

2. Is there a limit on class size?

If the dance class has fewer students in it, each child will receive more personalized attention, learn more, and have more fun. With the younger students it is easier for a teacher to maintain control of the class and make sure each student understands the concepts and instructions. Our smaller class size makes sure that no fundamental concepts are being missed. A smaller class size also allows our teachers to ensure that students are not developing bad habits or improper technique. Our studio limits pre-dance and K-combo to seven students. All other classes are limited to ten students.

3. What is the extra cost involved for the year-end show?

Most studios put on a recital or some type of show at the end of the year. Students who perform in the show must have a costume for their dance number. Some studios require parents to sew their own costumes or are left to find their own seamstress at their own time and expense. Also, many studios charge an admission fee for their show, which also applies to parents who have paid for classes. Our studio custom orders costumes from a professional costume company. Most costumes cost between \$60 and \$80. Hairpieces and tights are included in the costume price. Students must have dance tights that are the appropriate color. No additional fees or extra cost is involved. All students are given two free tickets to the recital so that their parents can enjoy the show without additional cost.

4. Are parents allowed to watch the dance classes?

In many studios a "parent watch day" or an "observation day" happens once a month or every other month. This is a very common practice and one that our studio has done in the past. However, as we have watched the difference in the behavior and attentiveness in the students on "observation day" as opposed to regular class days, we have found that this is an ineffective way for parents to actually see what happens in a normal class. When extra people are in watching the class, the students generally do not learn as much and are very easily distracted by their audience. Our studio facility is equipped with a video camera which is running during all classes. The television in the waiting room can be tuned in to the class at any time. This addition will keep a consistent level of learning without distractions, but also allows parents to watch class without being seen by the students.

5. What kind of shoes and clothes are required for class every week? Where do I get them?

All reputable dance studios have some kind of dress code for their weekly classes. Many studios give parents a list of the required dress and expect that the items will be found at a local dance store, or that

they can be ordered online. Dance shoes and apparel are difficult to fit and the sizes are not the same as regular kid shoes and clothing, usually resulting in costly mistakes. On the “Classes” page of our website, there is a list of required dress for each class. All of the items required for our students are available to order through our studio including tights, leotards, jazz pants, dance skirts, & dance bags. We order all of our dance shoes for our students to insure proper fit and style. We stock shoe sizers at the studio so that students can be fitted correctly without the hassle of driving to a dance store.