

How to make the most of Predance class A Guide for Parents

The predance teachers at the Newcomerstown Dance Center are ready and excited to start our new dance year. Most of our teachers are also moms, so we understand the stressors that can make weekly dance class difficult for the parents of preschool age children. Getting dressed, hair done, shoes on, getting to class on time, remembering the dance bag, etc. are all part of the weekly grind. Just remember, you're doing a good thing. And aren't they cute in their leotards? They'll be even cuter in their recital costume at the end of the year!

The following is a list of answers to frequently asked questions about toddler and preschool behavior and how to make the most of their dance classes.

What can I do to help my predancer at home?

Frequently asking questions like "What did you learn at dance class?" or "Can you show me something from dance class?" will help jog their memory in between lessons. Also, listening to music and clapping to the beat will help them when it comes to learning their recital dances. Most preschoolers have not mastered the concept of "the beat," but will improve with help.

Why can't I come in the dance room and watch class?

Preschoolers are easily distracted. The teacher only has 45 minutes a week with these students, and we expect quite a bit from them. Having extra adults in the room makes it more difficult for the children to pay attention to the teacher. Having mommy sitting in the back of the room saying "listen to the teacher" usually doesn't work, and distracts the other students in the class as well. We want our dance parents to have the freedom to stay and watch on the monitor, or leave and come back at the end of class.

Why does my child throw a fit when it's time to get ready for dance class, but is all smiles when class actually starts?

Most preschoolers are homebodies. They don't want to leave their toys, tv, siblings, etc. to go to class. They also don't want to stop what they are doing to change into leotard and tights. Once they get to class, they have fun! If you have trouble motivating them to get ready for class, try this: Get them ready at the dance studio. Just plan on being 5 or 10 minutes early for class. Bring dance clothes and hair supplies in their dance bag.

Why does my child seem so distracted during class? Is she not paying attention?

If it looks like all your child does is make silly faces in the mirror or stand and watch everyone else, that doesn't mean they aren't learning or paying attention. Give them time. Some of our best predancers spent their first few classes standing stone still, crying, or just being silly. It just takes some children a few weeks to be comfortable enough with their surroundings to fully participate. Don't worry, this is totally normal!

What should I have or not have in my child's dance bag?

It is best to keep it simple. Predancers should have ballet shoes, tap shoes, and some extra hair ties. Some parents keep an extra set of dance clothes in the bag "just in case." Leave toys, books, games, makeup, etc. at home.