



PORTLAND METRO PERFORMING ARTS

WWW.PDXMETROARTS.ORG

503-408-0604

Help Your Child Get The Most Out Of Their Dance Lessons

1. Starting at the Right Age

Enrolling in an age appropriate class is the key element. If a child is put into formal ballet, tap or other lessons too soon they may feel overwhelmed, frustrated and want to stop lessons. The last thing anyone wants is to turn a child off to dance just because they had an unpleasant experience which could have been prevented. Waiting until the right age will allow them to progress much faster.

PMPA age recommendations

Age 2½-4—Parent/Child Dance

As adults we sometimes forget how intimidating new experiences and environments can be. Parent-Child Dance will help ease the transition and make dance class a positive experience now and in the future. A child is not a small adult. They need to experience dance in a setting that will build confidence in their own movement skills rather than moving in set positions.

Age 3 ½-Kindergarten—Pre-Dance, Pre-Tap

Pre-Dance gives children an opportunity for learning in a setting, independent from their parents. Our classes assist with the constant readjustment and re-learning of physical skills necessary because of the rapid physical changes. Especially at this age, a child's self-esteem is largely based on their confidence in their movement skills. This creative exploration of movement, music, shape, design and patterning provides a solid foundation for future learning.

School Grades 1 & up—Ballet, Tap, Modern, Jazz, Highland, Mexican

By first grade a child is physically, conceptually and socially ready for a more focused class with exacting technical demands. Each dance form has a specific technique that often includes repetitive movements. Younger bodies lack the structural development to safely sustain the necessary body positions, movements and shapes. Having the capacity to understand the concepts presented is not only critical to the dance form but also the student's safety. Finally, having the attention span and patience with the process of learning generally comes with the beginning of first grade.

2. Have Fun

Dance should be something that you enjoy for a lifetime. Relax! Your child will not benefit from being pushed into dance forms that are not age appropriate or beyond their correct technical level. Try not to put unrealistic expectations on yourself or your children to progress too quickly. Everyone learns at a different pace and the key is to be able to enjoy the journey.

3. Arrive Ready to Dance

A little pre-planning the day before class can make it a more pleasant and productive experience for everyone, especially your child. This is particularly important for students who come to dance class directly from school.

Dancewear—Enlist your child's help in packing their dance bag or setting out everything they need for class. See that they are in their class uniform or similar appropriate clothing. Please no costumes, tutus, jeans, boxer shorts or other baggy clothing. They compromise the safety of the dancer and prevent the instructor from seeing the line of the body and giving adequate correction. A flyer with specific dancewear requirements for each class is available at our office.

Hair—It is essential that all dancers with long and medium length hair fasten it securely in a bun or hair clip; flying hair can cause injury and interfere with class work. Short hair should be kept off the face with a headband or barrettes. If you need help with your child's hair please let us know.

Arrive on Time—While we realize it is not always possible to accurately predict the flow of traffic, develop a plan that will allow an extra 15-20 minutes prior to the start of class for just such days. When children arrive late or without enough time to properly get ready, it not only creates stress for your child but disrupts class for everyone.

Visit the Bathroom—Make sure that, before every class, your child visits the bathroom, gets their drink of water or whatever else would cause them to leave class. This is especially helpful for the little ones. It is hard to concentrate on class when children have other things on their mind.

Be Free of Distractions—We only have a short time each week for class, so we need to make it count. It is a time where all attention needs to be on the instructor and the information being presented. Bringing toys, friends and costumes to class diverts the attention of every student in the class. Each year we have special times set aside for visitors.

4. Attend Visitor's Week

We encourage you to attend your child's class during our mid-term and end-of-term Visitor's Week. Parental praise is the most coveted award; there is no substitute for a pat on the back for a job well done. Hard as it may be, we ask that you respect that during the other weeks of the term, your child is engaged in serious learning and deserves to be focused on their class-work. If a parent is in the classroom on a weekly basis, the child has two authority figures in the room. As parents we cannot help but respond with smiles of approval when our child does something wonderful and register disapproval for inappropriate behavior. A parent's very presence divides a child's attention and creates a distracting situation. Class time should be a special moment for each child. Independence means that they have something very special that only they can share with you and Visitor's week is the time to do it. You will be amazed at the degree of improvement that takes place from term to term.

5. Progressive Training

Insure that your child will be able to advance technically in a thoughtful and appropriate manner. At PMPA we use a progressive program of training for all dance classes. Ballet classes are based on the system developed by the world famous Vaganova Choreographic Institute in Russia that ensures that no important part of learning will be left out. This is a time tested system that is widely recognized throughout the dance world. Our students who have gone on to professional careers have been well prepared by their training here.

6. Performances

Performances, while an essential part of dance training, should not substitute for weekly dance class training. It is important that students learn "how to dance", rather than just learning "a dance". Constantly performing here, there and everywhere disrupts the process of learning. PMPA has appropriate performance options for all levels of students. The Open House Concert, held each year in June, is an informal concert that provides even the youngest dancers with a positive un-pressured performance experience. Dancers wear their class uniforms rather than expensive costumes with limited use. Upper Division students are welcome to audition for Metro Dancers' season of performances including the full-length ballet. It is also helpful to take your child to live concerts or watch them together on TV as often as possible. Seeing advanced dancers onstage provides encouragement for students to continue their own training. All PMPA students also receive discount tickets to a variety of performances throughout the year.

7. Proper Facilities

Dancers need a resilient floor with a non-slip surface covering and a large mirror area. PMPA dance studios are designed to provide maximum resiliency as well as stability. Our large studio is a sprung wooden floor with a unique interlocking grid system that has been copied by universities and several private studios. The Marley floor covering provides an excellent non-slip surface that eliminates the need for rosin. We have a large expanse of mirror in both studios. Our newly remodeled small studio and dressing rooms add to the functionality of PMPA Center.

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