

How to Choose a Dance School

Here are some tips to help you get started! No matter what your future goals in dance, it is always important to carefully find a school that will provide your child with the best dance education. In the United States there is not universal licensing or regulations regarding dance studios, potential families and students should ask questions. Here are a few points to consider when choosing a school for your child.

1. First congratulations, you have taken the great step by checking online about dance education. Asking other parents who send their children to classes can help you compare schools. Settling for the convenient location is not always the best option for your child's growth.
2. First Impressions: Don't choose a studio just by a website. Plan a visit in person, ask to observe classes and the school environment. Set up an appointment to meet with the Director, not just front desk help. This can reflect on how much care will be placed in developing a mentoring relationship throughout a student's training.
3. Structured Program: Look for a structured program for each level. Some form of evaluation or examination is desirable to see if the students have completed the curriculum and skills for their current level before promoting them to the next. Children develop at varying rates and placing a child in a level they are not adequately prepared may cause frustration, create poor technique, and possible long-term injuries.
4. Teacher Qualifications: Finding qualified teachers is a critical element in searching for a dance school. Exposure to a poorly trained instructor in the early stages can lead to injuries and poor habits that are difficult to reverse. Look for someone who has danced with a professional company, has a degree in dance, and/or has taught at reputable schools. Keep in mind, professional dance experience does not always make for a good teacher. In the end, teacher quality and passion for their students determines the results for each student. Be sure to look at student alumni successes not just in dance but also as beautiful individuals. For children ages 3-7 teachers with a child education degree is helpful as well.
5. Professional Focus: The purpose of a truly professional dance school is to ensure your child's continuous, safe growth as a dancer and person. Many recreational schools tend to devote class time to preparing for a competition and the annual school recital, rather than firmly establishing proper technique. Ask when rehearsals are for productions (if any) and when students begin working on their recital pieces.
6. Performance Opportunities: Dance is a performance art and students should have opportunities to perform throughout the year. While exposure to professional dancers through guest artist involvement is delightful, look for a program where student performance is stressed at all levels. Do the students have the chance to progress over the years? Look for a school that gives their students several performance opportunities as well. A school that encourages student performance is focused on educating and training dancers to be well-rounded individuals.
7. Flooring and Studio Environment: The studio floor should have proper covering (Marley is preferable) and should be a raised and sprung floor to prevent injury. It is easy to be dazzled by "glitzy" studios and waiting areas. Quality teaching and joyful performance are what is important, not size or architecture of the facility.
8. Disciplined Environment: A dance school should have a sense of structure and adequate basic facilities. Rooms should have barres, and mirrors on at least one wall. A set list of dress code including shoes and proper hair styles suggests the school is a structured and a positive learning environment for all ages. The focus is the students dancing, not some costume.

9. Remember ask to watch a class or inquire about a trial class. Notice how the teachers engage the students and how the students respond in turn.
10. Tuition: Annual tuition costs including shows or costume fees should be clear. If significant cost differences exist between schools, compare the quality of the programs offered, the number of classes offered and the professionalism of the faculty. While it may be tempting to start with the cheapest program available, remember that the end results may be far from positive, if not harmful.
11. Student Achievements: Look at the achievements of current students and alumni in comparison to the number of years the studio has been operational. Are any students dancing professionally? Are students attending nationally recognized summer intensives? Are there additional performance opportunities, and/or competition opportunities?

Testimonials

Ms. Courtney, I want to thank you for everything you've done for me these last couple of years. I can't wait to come back to visit and take more classes! I learned so much beyond ballet by taking your classes and speaking with you. Thank you for taking the time to work with me to improve not only as a dancer, but also grow as a person. I learned so much about self-respect, confidence, and motivation through your teachings. I really admire and have taken in the amount of care and attention you put into working with your students.

Thank you for everything,—Maiya (Sep 2020)

Just a quick note to thank you for being such a wonderful teacher. Maddy was terrified to go back to class this morning and when I picked her up at noon she was beaming with joy. You are so skilled at that delicate balance of challenging them to be their best, yet reassuring them that you care for them. Brava!—Amy (June 2020)

I know this is a hard time. I hope you and your family are doing well.

I just wanted to send you a little note to say thank you for thinking outside the box to find a way to bring dance to your students. Not only are you allowing them to keep up with dance but you and your teachers are bringing a little joy to the day!

Take care! Traci (May 2020)

Our daughter, Adrienne, has been going to Cleveland City Dance for 8 years and has been company member of City Ballet of Cleveland for 6 years. We couldn't be more pleased with the instruction she's getting in all genres of dance - ballet, modern, jazz and lyrical. There is strong focus on technique and artistry. Director Courtney Laves-Mearini and all teachers are utmostly devoted to every student's personal growth, not only as a dancer, but also as a responsible, persevering, and compassionate individual. Adrienne considers Cleveland City Dance as a second home where she has forged close friendships. For all these reasons, we would not hesitate to drive an hour to this studio.

Annie Tan, MD (May 2020)

See also [Choosing the Best Dance Class for Your Child](#)