

Understanding Dance Competitions

Dance competitions are privately run events hosted by various companies throughout the year. These events take place in theatres or hotel ballrooms across multiple cities. Some competitions are local to B.C., while others operate across B.C. and Alberta—or even nationally throughout Canada. At each event, two to three adjudicators (judges) watch the routines, providing recorded feedback and assigning scores. This feedback is shared with each studio after the competition concludes.

Following each performance session—typically two to three hours—all participating dancers gather on stage for an awards presentation. Judges may hand out special awards with creative titles for routines that particularly stood out. In addition, every dancer receives a medal, pin, or ribbon based on their group's overall score.

Competitions divide dancers into levels based on factors like years of training and/or hours danced per week. Age categories also vary between competitions. For example, a dancer might compete in the "Age 8" category at one event and the "Age 7–9" category at another. Each competition classifies entries differently, and no system is perfect. Like many studios, we have aspects we appreciate—and others we don't—about each one.

Because of the variation in categories, levels, and judging panels, there are no universal standards in competitive dance. Judges rely heavily on their training, experience, and professional judgment. Dance involves both objective technique and subjective artistry, so scores can be difficult to interpret. Even our own faculty—some of whom are adjudicators—might assign different marks for the same routine.

As a general guideline, scores typically reflect a combination of:

- Technical execution
- Timing and unison
- Musicality
- Performance quality

Judges do not assign separate scores for choreography or costumes. However, these elements contribute to the overall impression of a performance and can influence the final mark.

Joining Our Team

Competition dancers train multiple days per week,* much like other high-level athletes. Their training focuses on developing refined technique, strength, flexibility, cardiovascular endurance, and stage performance.

Our competitive team functions like a family. With many dancers training together several nights each week, they build meaningful friendships and a strong sense of belonging. This spirit of connection often extends to their families as well—parents form lasting bonds, share in the journey, and create a supportive network within our broader dance community.

For dancers who are invited to join our competitive program, there are strict attendance requirements, and all dancers, even our youngest ones, are expected to practice at home regularly.

*Competitive tap and hip hop programs are offered independently, without a requirement for ballet or additional technique training.

Before accepting a competitive placement, please consider the following:

- This program demands a higher level of discipline, independence, and effort in class; dancers receive direct, accountable feedback in class to ensure they are meeting expectations.
- If you anticipate trips or vacations that could interfere with the dance year, we recommend not accepting the placement.
- If you are unable to support or assist your dancer with their at-home practice, or if you believe your dancer may not be able to maintain 95% attendance, please reconsider.
- It is the responsibility of each dancer to learn all that is presented, even when not in class, and to ensure they are prepared each week.
- Sometimes competitions have an extra show or final dance-off on their last day for groups with the highest marks. For groups that qualify, dancers will be expected to be available.
- All dancers will be required to take summer technique classes to ensure they come back in September ready to move forward. We will try to be flexible about summer classes and provide as much notice as possible about the dates.
- Once a dancer commits to a group and begins choreography, we need them to make the full commitment, unless there is a serious injury or health issue. *Dancers that leave a routine mid-year will be charged \$200 in order for the instructor to change the choreography.*

Joining our competitive team should be a family decision, not just the dancer's. Your entire family must be committed to supporting the program, as it requires significant dedication from everyone involved.

All *Mini 2*, *Junior*, *Intermediate*, and *Senior* dancers will be required to purchase a team jacket to wear at all times during competitions. If preferred, we can add the cost to your monthly fees.

Each season, some dancers may be invited to participate in additional groups, solos, duos, or trios. These invitations are based on our ongoing assessments of a dancer's work ethic, commitment, and ability, and involve much discussion among faculty. Please note that these opportunities may change from year to year. Young dancers may feel disappointed if not selected, and older dancers may notice a change in the number or type of routines they're invited into.

We strongly believe that dance is for everyone, but that doesn't mean competitive team participation—or every routine—is the right fit for every dancer. Each season brings growth and change, and our goal is always to work collaboratively with families to provide every dancer with the tools and guidance they need to succeed.

Competition Scheduling & Attendance

- We release general competition dates in September, and kindly ask that you avoid planning vacations immediately before or after these dates, as they are occasionally subject to change.
- Specific competition days and performance times are typically provided to us 3 to 6 weeks before each event. Please note that dancers may be required to miss school to attend a competition. If your dancer is in multiple routines, these may be scheduled on different days.
- On competition day, dancers are expected to be ready at least 60 minutes before their performance to allow time for warm-up and rehearsal. If your dancer requires help with hair and makeup, please plan to arrive approximately 1.5 hours prior to their scheduled performance time.
- While it is not mandatory to stay for the awards ceremony, most dancers enjoy the full competition experience and prefer to stay and participate.

Placements & Invitations

Class placement is a highly individualized process that involves many factors, and we take great care in making these decisions. Our goal is to challenge each dancer appropriately while ensuring that choreography is attainable and allows them to shine on stage.

Our faculty regularly discusses each student's progress, and it is our policy to provide every dancer with opportunities that match their development. While we value the importance of pushing dancers to grow, we are also mindful that placing a dancer in a level that is too advanced can lead to frustration and a loss of confidence. In some cases, this can even diminish a dancer's love for the art.

We strive to place each dancer in an environment where they can feel confident, motivated, and capable—supporting both technical progress and personal growth.

If there is any uncertainty about a dancer's readiness to move up, we may recommend remaining at their current level for an additional year to help build a stronger foundation and promote long-term success.

Parents As Partners

We believe that a large part of a dancer's success depends on the support of their parents or guardians. Our program relies on a positive atmosphere for everyone involved: dancers, their parents, and our faculty members. Showing respect for all students, parents, and staff leaves an important impression on our dancers and creates a healthy learning environment.

Please avoid comparing your dancer's progress, class levels, or choreography placements to others in the program. Watch for this behavior in your dancer as well, and encourage them to focus on their own accomplishments. While looking to others for inspiration is beneficial, negative comparisons can be distracting and stop your dancer from putting energy towards becoming stronger themselves.

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

*After performing, your dancer may be hard on themselves for small mistakes and after awards they may be disappointed. By acknowledging their feelings and then reminding them of their accomplishments we can help them process these emotions and move forward.

Attendance & Commitment Expectations

A dancer who misses class holds back the progress of the entire group. **Repeating the learning from a previous week for those who were absent takes up valuable time when the group should be moving forward.**

Each week, updated choreography videos will be uploaded to our Google Drive for review and practice. However, these videos are not a replacement for in-person attendance. Dancers are expected to keep up with the material, and those who fall behind may be required to schedule private sessions at a rate of \$65.00/hour. This ensures that every dancer remains on track and allows the choreographer to continue progressing with the piece.

Please note that repeated absences from choreography or technique classes may result in removal from one or more routines prior to competition.

Sportsmanship & Studio Spirit at Competition

We take great pride in the positive attitudes, encouragement, and team spirit shown by our dancers—and we ask that all audience members reflect those same values. This includes family members and guests who attend competitions with you.

We have a zero-tolerance policy for criticism at competition. You may not agree with a score or placement, question the level placement of another studio's dancers, or feel that a routine's content is inappropriate. While it's natural to have personal opinions, we ask that any disagreements remain private. Please remember that competitive dance is subjective, judges are human, and respect for all performers is essential.

We also encourage families to support as many of our studio's routines as possible. Cheering on other dancers helps build a strong studio community and gives you a chance to connect with other team members and their families. No matter the level, group, or age—we are one team.

Thank you for helping us create a respectful, inclusive, and uplifting environment at every event.

Competition Etiquette & Expectations

To ensure a respectful, supportive, and distraction-free environment for all dancers, we ask that all families, dancers, and guests follow the guidelines below:

- Only enter or exit the theatre between routines. Opening and closing doors during a performance is distracting to both dancers and the audience.
- Turn off your cell phone or keep it on airplane mode.
- Remain seated during performances, and ensure your dancer does the same.
- No talking while dancers are performing. Every family deserves the chance to enjoy their dancer's performance without distractions.
- Absolutely no photos or video recording during performances. This may result in dancer disqualification. Most competitions now include professional photos and videos in your entry fees.
- You are welcome to take photos/videos during award sessions and in designated areas like the lobby, where competitions often provide backdrops and props.
- Do not speak negatively about other schools' dancers, teachers, or parents.
- Swearing, rude behavior, alcohol consumption, and vaping are strictly prohibited at competitions and in the studio—this includes all dancers, parents, and guests.
- Respect dressing room privacy. No photos or videos are permitted in change room areas.
- Do not contact competition organizers directly. Most competitions require communication to come through a studio representative. If you have a question that is not answered on the competition's website, please reach out to us—we're happy to help.
- Dancers, please remember that you represent Danzmode at all times. This includes how you treat your teammates, faculty, and your parents—show them the same kindness and respect you would show your teachers.

Ballet, Technique & Competitive Programs By Level

Petite Program

Kindergarten to Grade 1

Petite-level dancers attend classes twice per week, marking the beginning of our competitive prep program. At this stage, dancers begin developing foundational acrobatic skills, are introduced to jazz technique, and gain confidence performing on stage. A key goal for petite dancers is understanding that dance now comes with higher expectations—both in terms of behavior and accountability. Disruptive behavior may have consequences, as dancers learn the importance of focus, respect, and discipline in class.

Successful *Petite* dancers typically:

- Need only occasional reminders about studio rules
- Show enthusiasm and eagerness to learn new skills
- Fully participate in group activities
- Actively engage in extended tasks
- Take turns independently
- Follow three-step instructions with ease
- Strive to work to their full potential
- Complete classes without complaining of fatigue or requesting breaks
- Continue developing basic gross motor skills
- Focus on coordinating arm and leg movements
- Begin to understand the connection between music and movement

	Petite 1	Petite 2	Petite 3
<i>Weekly Schedule</i>	One days/week	Two days/week	Two days/week
<i>Ballet Program</i>	Pre-Primary RAD 1 x 45 minutes	Primary RAD 2 x 45 minutes	Primary RAD 1 x 45 minutes, 1 x 60 minutes
<i>Technique Program</i>	Acro (45 minutes)	Jazz (45 minutes) Acro (45 minutes)	Jazz (45 minutes) Acro (45 minutes)
<i>Competitive Program</i>	**	**	Learned in class
<i>Competition Commitment</i>	**	**	3 local competitions (March-May)

Mini Program

Grades 1 - 3

The Mini program supports both physical and emotional development as dancers transition toward full participation in competitive dance. At this level, dancers begin training in hip hop, increase their weekly commitment from two to three days, and progress from learning one competitive routine to two. Key goals for Mini dancers include developing the ability to practice independently—both in the studio and at home—and strengthening active listening skills to fully process and apply instructions.

Successful *Mini* dancers typically:

- Need minimal reminders about studio rules
- Pay full attention to instructions with active listening
- Are prepared and focused when it's their turn to perform
- Ask questions to clarify their understanding
- Show enthusiasm and excitement for learning new skills
- Complete longer and more complex classes without showing fatigue
- Demonstrate proficiency in movements that cross the midline
- Have a solid foundation in moving in opposition
- Are developing an understanding of planes of movement
- Are working toward memorizing choreography and applying corrections for one or two routines
- May need occasional reminders or review for more complex steps
- Are developing rhythmic awareness and consistently find the beat in music
- Practice independently in class without needing reminders
- Regularly review and practice routines at home with reminders

	Mini 1	Mini 2
<i>Weekly Schedule</i>	Two days/week	Three days/week
<i>Ballet Program</i>	Grade 1 RAD 2 x 60 minutes	Grade 2 RAD 2 x 60 minutes
<i>Technique Program</i>	Jazz (60 minutes) Acro (60 minutes)	Jazz (60 minutes) Acro (60 minutes) Hip Hop (30 minutes) Tap (30 minutes)
<i>Competitive Program</i>	Jazz (45 minutes)	Jazz (45 minutes)
<i>Invitational</i>	**	Lyrical (30 minutes)
<i>Competition Commitment</i>	4 local competitions (Feb - May)	4 local competitions (Feb - May)

Junior Program

Grade 4 - 6

The Junior program emphasizes both technical progression and the development of performance skills, including expression and stage presence, as dancers begin working on more complex routines. Dancers are introduced to additional styles such as tap and contemporary, and are expected to take full responsibility for themselves—this includes doing their own hair and learning how to apply their competitive makeup. Key goals for junior dancers include the ability to dance with full energy and focus in every technique and choreography class, as well as a strong understanding of the importance of respect—for themselves, classmates, teachers, a

Successful *Junior* dancers typically:

- No longer require reminders about studio rules
- Fully engage with more complex instructions and corrections
- Ask questions to clarify understanding when needed
- Avoid negative behaviors such as eye rolling, whispering, arguing, sighing, interrupting, or sarcasm
- Demonstrate a solid understanding of muscle control and body mechanics
- Practice each routine in the studio with full energy and performance quality
- Complete longer and more demanding classes with sustained stamina
- Coordinate hips and shoulders effectively in movement combinations
- Consistently remember choreography and apply teacher feedback
- Independently count music, understand unison movement, and perform canons
- Take responsibility for their own warm-up and work independently in class
- Regularly review and practice routines at home with minimal reminders

	Junior 1	Junior 2
<i>Weekly Schedule</i>	Three days/week	Three days/week
<i>Ballet Program</i>	Grade 3 RAD 3 x 60 minutes	Grade 4 RAD 3 x 60 minutes
<i>Technique Program</i>	Jazz (2 x 60 minutes) Acro (60 minutes)	Jazz (2 x 60 minutes) Acro (60 minutes) Contemporary (45 minutes)
<i>Competitive Program</i>	Jazz (45 minutes) Musical Theatre (60 minutes)	Jazz (45 minutes) Musical Theatre (60 minutes)
<i>Mandatory Tap</i>	Either technique (30 minutes) or competitive (45 minutes)	Either technique (30 minutes) or competitive (45 minutes)
<i>Mandatory Hip Hop</i>	Either technique (30 minutes) or competitive (45 minutes)	Either technique (45 minutes) or competitive (60 minutes)
<i>Invitational</i>	Lyrical (30 minutes)	Lyrical (30 minutes)
<i>Competition Commitment</i>	4 local competitions (Feb - May)	4 local competitions (Feb - May)

Intermediate Program

Grades 6 - 9

The Intermediate program supports dancers as they transition into more mature and expressive movement, while also taking into account their increasing academic responsibilities. At this level, dancers attend classes four nights per week for 3 to 3.5 hours each evening, with a gradual reduction in hours as they approach grade nine. Key goals for intermediate dancers include developing a strong understanding of performance dynamics and maintaining a consistent commitment to safe and sustainable movement practices.

Successful *Intermediate* dancers typically:

- Are mindful that they serve as role models for younger dancers
- Fully focus on complex instructions and combination exercises
- Practice independently and seek help when needed to develop their skills
- Show respect for the teacher's expertise
- Avoid negative or exclusionary behaviors
- Understand and apply safe movement techniques in class
- Maximize their functional flexibility and consistently demonstrate strong technique
- Execute complex movements with technical precision, power, and endurance
- Develop an understanding of contemporary movement styles
- Warm up independently without reminders
- No longer require review or reminders for advanced steps
- Are able to count themselves into a dance silently
- Regularly review and practice routines at home without reminders

	Intermediate 1	Intermediate 2
<i>Weekly Schedule</i>	Four days/week	Four days/week
<i>Ballet Program</i>	Grade 5 / Intermediate Foundations RAD 2 x 75 minutes 1 x 90 minutes (including pre-pointe)	Intermediate Foundations / Intermediate RAD 2 x 75 minutes 1 x 90 minutes (including pointe)
<i>Technique Program</i>	Jazz (2 x 75 minutes) Contemporary (45 minutes)	Jazz (2 x 75 minutes) Contemporary (45 minutes)
<i>Competitive Program</i>	Jazz (45 minutes) Hip Hop (45 minutes) Musical Theatre (60 minutes)	Jazz (45 minutes) Hip Hop (60 minutes) Contemporary (60 minutes)
<i>Invitational</i>	Lyrical (45 minutes)	Lyrical (45 minutes) Musical Theatre (60 minutes)
<i>Optional Technique</i>	Tumbling (60 minutes)	Tumbling (60 minutes)
<i>Competition Commitment</i>	4 local competitions, travel (Feb - May)	4 local competitions, travel (Feb - May)

Senior Program

Grades 10 - 12

Our Senior dancers have two program options:

1. Continue with the full ballet track to pursue their RAD Advanced Foundation or Advanced certificate.
2. Choose a competitive-only program focused on jazz, contemporary, and/or hip hop.

Unlike younger levels, senior dancers are not required to participate in a set number of competitive routines. Instead, they are given more flexibility to tailor their training to their personal goals—whether that's pursuing post-secondary dance, teaching, or continuing to dance at a high level. Senior dancers who are also taking dance company or classes in high school take a reduced technique program.

Successful *Senior* dancers typically:

- Fully understand and embrace their role as mentors and role models for younger dancers
- Maintain a consistently positive and professional attitude in class
- Demonstrate respect for both teachers and peers
- Accurately understand and count their choreography
- Prioritize safe movement practices at all times
- Fully integrate both motor and sensory systems into their dancing
- Dance with a high degree of functional flexibility and demonstrate strong, consistent technique
- Display advanced musicality and perform intricate, detailed choreography with confidence
- Execute complex movements with technical precision, strength, and endurance
- Participate in choreography discussions when invited, contributing thoughtfully
- Apply corrections immediately and consistently
- Practice independently without reminders

	Exam Focus	Competitive Focus
<i>Commitment</i>	Four days/week	Two days/week
<i>Ballet Program</i>	Advanced Foundations / Advanced RAD 4 x 75 minutes	2 x 75 minutes
<i>Technique Program</i>	Jazz (75 minutes) Contemporary (45 minutes)	Jazz (75 minutes) Contemporary (45 minutes)
<i>Competitive Program</i>	Jazz (45 minutes) Competitive Hip Hop (75 minutes) Contemporary (60 minutes)	Jazz (45 minutes) Competitive Hip Hop (75 minutes) Contemporary (60 minutes)
<i>Competition Commitment</i>	4 local competitions, travel (Feb - May)	4 local competitions, travel (Feb - May)