

HOW TO CHOOSE THE BEST DANCE STUDIO FOR YOUR CHILD

Every student who takes dance, whether for improved fitness, coordination, confidence, an aspiring professional career, or even just for fun, must be trained to the highest standards to ensure positive results.

The formative stages of training are extremely important because incorrect technique may result in physical difficulties. (For example, stretching improperly may cause injuries)

When choosing a studio for your children, or for yourself, don't simply make a decision based on a phone book ad, flyers posted around town, or the price of the classes. Instead you should consider these important points:

First, search web sites. Most will have a schedule and general information. Make sure to take note of the faculty, then, call ahead to arrange a visit. Most reputable schools will invite you to tour the studios. Are classes fitness based, inspiring and enriching?

Arrive early, so you can meet the teacher. You may wish to observe with your child. Notice... is the studio clean, light and airy? Do the studios have mirrors, barres', and sound systems? The studio floors should be "Marley" or wood, never concrete. Is the staff friendly, eager to answer your questions and accommodating? Is parking available?

Second, note the interaction of the children with the teacher. Are students encouraged in a positive manner? Are they taught to understand music? Are they working together as a team as well as individually? Are they dancing for enjoyment and freedom of expression? Is dance terminology used? Are there performing opportunities? Is a Dance Company associated with the studio? Dance wear and proper, ballet, tap or jazz shoes should be required. Regulation colors may also be part of the dress code, for a more consistent look.

Are multiple dance styles offered? Is ballet stressed as a fundamental part of a dancer's training? Are there multiple levels of classes and workshops offered at the more advanced levels? Does the school host Dance Camps and Workshops?

Third, inquire about the cost of tuition. Many people look for the least expensive classes, without comparing the quality of the programs. Most recreational-type classes, offered at recreation facilities are introductory classes at best. They may cost less than that of a private dance studio, but are usually taught by less experienced teachers.

Fourth, and perhaps most important, consider the experience, training and teaching background of the faculty. Also take note of professional training and performance history. Also consider that a professional dancer is NOT ALWAYS the best teacher. Rather, someone who loves children and desires to share that love will be more patient and attentive as a teacher.

Finally, when entrusting your child's welfare to a private teacher, choose a studio that inspires the children, conducts orderly classes as well as has a strong emphasis on learning proper technique.

Unfortunately, low standards still exist among some teachers. With more education, consumers can help raise the standards, by making the best possible choices when deciding on a Dance Studio.