

MAGIC 'N MOTION DANCE & BATON STUDIO  
Ten Tips For Dancing Mothers & Fathers



There are some definite do's and don't for parents of beginning students. Much of what we say about beginners applies to advanced students too. However, by the time a student of dance or baton can be classed as "advanced" parents have usually developed many of the following attitudes helpful to their child's progress:

1. **BE OPEN-MINDED:** Do not enter your child into a dancing class with a fixed idea of what should be taught or how it should be done. If you do, you will probably be disappointed and as a result become very critical of your child. The teacher in charge is experienced and able to conduct the class in such a way that each student will progress to everyone's satisfaction.
2. **BE SINCERE:** Enter into the dance or baton program wholeheartedly. Many parents have a "we'll try it and see" attitude in the back of their minds. This plants a doubt in your child's mind as well, and their confidence and self-esteem suffer greatly which in turn affects their accomplishments. Don't criticize the school or teacher in front of your child; instead discuss anything you do not understand privately with the teacher. One on one meetings with your child's teacher can be arranged through the office.
3. **BE PATIENT:** Don't expect miracles. There is no such thing as "Instant Dance" like "Instant Coffee". It all takes time and effort. The rate of progress varies greatly with individuals, so do not be critical of your child if she appears slow at first; or behind the other dancers. Those other dancers may also be taking 6 classes per week. Neither be boastful if she advances through the basics very quickly. Sometimes the slow learner becomes a very rapid learner and accomplished student after establishing a strong foundation; and the reverse is also true – the quick student in the beginning can quite often require extra help in retaining the work taught and applying it from one technique to the next. "Learning to Learn" is one of the more obvious benefits of group dance education!
4. **BE OBJECTIVE:** Naturally, all parents are very close to their children and tend to be over-critical when mistakes are made in class, or else are completely blind to all shortcomings and regard their child as "perfect"! Do not let your own ego drive you into being severely critical or lull you into a feeling of superiority. These attitudes handicap the student's progress because they interfere with the teacher's ability and freedom to conduct his or her class and do the best for each child.
5. **ENJOY THE PROCESS OF LEARNING:** You will be surprised at the results if you don't make a chore out of dance lessons. Also the student that follows through her dance education to please his or herself, knows that in doing this he or she pleases you as well. She does not have the idea that since you are giving up time or making supreme sacrifices, she owes you a certain caliber of achievement. This makes learning a difficult technique doubly hard, and is too much pressure for a child. Frustration on both sides is the only result.
6. **BE PUNCTUAL AND DEPENDABLE:** Make it a point to be on time for lessons and establish early the practice of not skipping any lessons. Even if your child is feeling "sick", your child will still benefit from attending class even as an observer. It is surprising how regular attendance influences the development of dependability even at the early age of four years. If you are lax, and offer excuses for missed lessons that even your child knows are "weak", you are encouraging irresponsibility and working contrary to the very thing you want to accomplish.
7. **BE CO-OPERATIVE:** Be co-operative in the matter of supplies and equipment. You will not be asked to buy anything foolish or unnecessary. The correct shoes, leotards, batons, and at times costumes, are of great importance to the overall success of dance education. When viewed in their true light, the costs of a good dance education are probably the least expensive of all the cultural arts, especially when considered as training for the profession of teaching. A cultural arts education whether it be dance, drama or music, should never be considered a luxury but rather an important part of your child's development.

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Be co-operative in the matter of personal grooming. Hair should be neatly fastened at all times. Students with short hair should wear a head band to keep their hair tidy. All students must wear proper attire for their classes. Most classes require a leotard and tights, and during the winter months ballet students (Grade 4 and up) may wear a pair of leg warmers to keep their muscles warm and prevent “chills”. All students should “cool off” after class and then dress properly for the outside weather. Keep all your dance and baton belongings in a case clearly marked with your child’s name. Only shoes in good or excellent condition will be considered for “re-selling”. Students in Rhymes ‘N Rhythms, First Step, Second Step, and Combination classes should bring their dance bag into class with them.

Be co-operative when you come to watch a class during parent viewing weeks. Please remain in class for the whole lesson. Some parents slip in late, and slip out early. This is very distracting to the younger students. If you cannot watch the whole lesson, it would be better to wait until next time. If younger brothers and sisters get too restless during the class, they become another distraction for the younger student, and should not be brought to class on “visiting day” unless it is absolutely unavoidable. Be co-operative in the matter of public performance. These are necessary to the building of self-confidence in your child, and are wonderful for keeping the interest and enthusiasm alive. As opportunities for appearances in performances become available your teacher will keep you informed.

8. **BE POSITIVE:** You’ll be amazed on what keeping positive attitudes and perspectives will produce. Don’t let yourself or your child get caught up in negative discussions. As positive attitudes will produce positive results, the opposite is also true.
9. **KNOW THE PRINCIPLES OF PRACTICE:** Enforced practice for beginners is likely to dampen the interest of the child and is a “last resort” effort at the best of times. Encourage your child to dance or twirl for you as much as possible – but it does not have to be labeled as “practice” in the beginning stages. As students and classes progress, techniques improve to the point where scheduled practice will be recommended by the teacher.
10. **ENCOURAGE THE CONTINUANCE OF STUDY:** Once in a while we all get a yen to try “something new”. This is fine, but think twice before allowing your child to drop her lessons or a class and flit from one activity to another – particularly after a year or two. (This is when the repetition of foundation steps and techniques, although necessary, can become “boring”.) The real benefit of dance education may be greatly diminished by this. Also, if your child is struggling with a class and has expressed an interest in “quitting” think twice. The problem may not be as your child is expressing. Instead, speak with your child’s teacher and get his or her take. Children live in a society of instant gratification – dance gives many rewards but before those rewards are received comes much time and hard work. If a child is allowed to “quit” before the “rewards” are revealed, the lesson is lost.

Character building is a never ending progress, and whether or not your child ever dances or teaches professionally is beside the point if she has developed other personality traits through dance training that are admirable in his or her adult life: Dependability, Responsibility and Self-Confidence.

It would be humorous, if not tragic, to hear of the countless “stage mothers” who dream of their child being nationally known as a TV star, photographer’s model, etc, and so they enroll in dancing schools with visions of stardom in a year or two. They do not realize that it takes more than “talent” to reach the top. And in the final analysis, the actual economic gain or professional career is secondary as far as the child’s welfare is concerned. A strong character foundation developed by common sense attention is sound moral and social values develops the type of personality necessary to achieve “stardom” in any walk of life.

Your teacher can be depended upon to do a very satisfactory job, but he / she has the right to expect parental co-operation. So we say to dancing and twirling moms and dads:

Relax, be patient, enjoy your child, and place complete faith in your teacher and her methods of teaching. Your trust and co-operation will pay dividends long after the “dancing days” have ceased.

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