

# Student Parent Handbook

## Flat River Dance Company A Guide for Students and Parents

### About This Handbook

Flat River Dance Company believe that our success comes as a result of providing solid training and quality service, along with an underlying belief in the strength of our organization. We have created this handbook to offer our dancers and their parents a clear understanding of their commitments and responsibility to the FRDC.

### For the Parents

*“We’re in this together”*

We believe that children’s success depends on the support of their parents or guardians. Because your commitment to the process makes an enormous difference, we encourage you to be a part of your child’s dance education.

Our program relies on a positive atmosphere for our faculty, our students, and their parents; it promotes a positive learning experience for all involved. Cooperation between all parents is expected. Showing respect for the other parents, along with the students and faculty, makes an important impression on the children. You are a role model for your child in how to interact with others in a professional setting.

Your child’s presence at all classes, rehearsals, and performances is imperative. The spirit of teamwork and the lesson of dedication are a big part of the dance process.

Parents and teachers may look at a child’s learning from different perspectives. However, they share a common goal: to assure that every child receives the best possible training, both physically and mentally. Mutual respect between our faculty and our dancers’ parents provides the children with the ultimate care and education.

### Understanding Dance Education

As a parent, the financial support of your student is important, but of equal—perhaps even greater—value is your emotional support. Encourage your child to be the best that he or she can be without regard to what others may achieve. Dance is an individual art form; each child needs to achieve at a pace that’s comfortable for him or her. No two students will progress at the same rate, even if they experience the exact same training. It’s important to encourage the

children to focus on themselves, give their all, and be satisfied with their own accomplishments.

Dance education encompasses far more than technique or the steps your children will learn. We believe the discipline of dance training gives young people a better understanding of commitment by offering them the chance to learn, experience the spirit of teamwork, and understand what hard work can accomplish. Our goal is to educate the minds, bodies, and souls of our students, to teach them the skills needed for a successful life, whether or not they stay involved in dance.

## CLASS PLACEMENT

*WE CARE ABOUT OUR STUDENTS!*

*WE TAKE THE TIME TO INDIVIDUALLY EVALUATE EACH STUDENT'S SKILL AND PROGRESS LEVEL FOR CORRECT CLASS PLACEMENT EACH YEAR.*

At Flat River Dance Company, we are very careful to place each student in an appropriate class where they will be sufficiently motivated and challenged according to their physical ability, talent level, and the number of times that they study per week. We believe that dance when taught with care and discipline is an excellent activity for all children and teens. Our program builds self-confidence, self-discipline, concentration skills, memorization skills and perseverance. Our program is designed so that students can master realistic and attainable dance skills based on their age and experience levels. All our years in the dance business has shown us that when our students achieve, it bolsters their self-esteem. They are proud of themselves!!

Parental support is very necessary in helping students understand that they are a unique individual whose level of natural talent and physical ability differs from their friends or others in their dance classes. Students will not all progress at the same rate. In maintaining a high quality of dance education, it is therefore sometimes impossible to keep the same students together in a class year after year. Many students may need extra help and a slightly slower pace to help them master new steps in a class. The most important thing is that a student "enjoys" the class and "feels comfortable" in it. A "comfortable" learning environment is sure to yield progress. Remember, it is very common to see two children of the same age and with the same number of years of dance training with extremely different capabilities.

WE WOULD PREFER TO DISCUSS THE PLACEMENT OF EACH CHILD PRIVATELY WITH EACH PARENT AND STUDENT.

1. **PLEASE DO NOT BE A “COMPETITIVE” parent** and want your child in a certain class because “you” think it is more advanced or a “harder” class. Class placement is the teacher’s decision. After all, that is what he/she is trained to do. We cannot stress enough that since every child is not equally talented, they cannot all show the same progress rate.

2. **BEWARE OF BECOMING THE CLASSIC “DANCE MOM” or “STAGE PARENT”** who pushes his/her children beyond their capabilities just to be able to “brag” about the “difficult’ classes that they are taking or how “advanced” their children are. Children of these type parents usually become so frustrated with dancing that they “quit” and never realize the joy of dancing. These children usually always themselves as “failures” because they can never live up to their parents’ “impossible” expectations for them. What a shame! Pushing a child too hard and too fast may also do harm to their body through injury. Dance training takes time and patience.

3. Flat River Dance Company prides itself on having a **“friendly” and “family like” atmosphere** with enough “healthy competition” to make each dancer develop into the best that he or she can be. Although we provide excellent instruction for each and every student, we feel it is also our responsibility to encourage any students that the teachers see who have exceptional talent. From time to time, our teachers must make decisions whereby certain students are chosen for solos, special classes, special parts or special auditions. These decisions are not easily made and are thought out carefully. The parents and teachers must work together to help students understand that not all students can be chosen for all things. We want our student body to be “happy for” and not “jealous of” each other. Flat River Dance Company sincerely tries to give all our students a *“special dance experiences.”*

4. **The teacher’s judgement must be respected first and foremost.** It is normal for every parent to view his or her child as “the best dancer in the class”. But remember – THE TEACHER IS LOOKING AT YOUR CHILD THROUGH TRAINED, EXPERT EYES. Please be respectful of the teachers judgement.

5. **The number of times a student studies per week matters** and may also have an important influence on how quickly he or she progresses. For instance , a student who has studied jazz dancing for five years on a once a week basis may find himself in a class with a student who has studied jazz for only three years but has also been taking two additional ballet classes and a tap class each week. Naturally, the second student has been dancing more intensively and this will tend to speed up his progress.

6. **Ballet is the most important dance form** to be studied as it is the basic technique from which other dance forms derive. Ballet encompasses all the fundamentals of dance movement while developing posture, grace, flow of movement and poise. **You cannot become an advanced dancer in any subject without the study of ballet.**

7. **ATTENTION PARENTS OF NEW STUDENTS** - BEWARE OF USING PHRASES LIKE “My child has had X number of years at \_\_\_\_\_ School of Dance and was in their most advanced classes.

Therefore, she should be in your most advanced classes too!” This may or may not be true. There is no certification required in this country to open a dance school and because of this, the training ranges from excellent to horrible. Dance World Academy has established itself as an institution of “excellence in dance training.” Please give the Director and teachers the opportunity to observe your child in class for a few weeks, so that he or she may be placed at the proper working level.

If you have questions or concerns about your child’s dance education, don’t panic—and please don’t talk only with other parents when questions arise.

Make an appointment to speak the director of the school. Please conduct all communication through the school office rather than approaching your child’s teacher or the director between or during classes or calling them at home.

If you do request a conference, please listen carefully to what your child’s teachers have to say. They spend a significant amount of time with your child and can offer expertise in the field of dance education.

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- Class placement of students is highly individual and the factors that go into the decision are complex.

## Guidelines for Parents

1. Parents of younger students please attend to your child's bathroom needs before class.
2. Please make sure child is dressed and hair is up before class.
3. Any snacks should be eaten before arriving to the school.
4. Due to the open design of the studio and foyer, we ask if you are waiting for your child at the school to wait quietly as to not distract the students. **No one is permitted in the studio at any time unless invited by the teacher or staff.**
5. Please make sure your child is properly attired for class. They will not be permitted to participate otherwise. This includes their hair.
6. Please drop off and pick up your child promptly before and after class. Remind your child to always wait inside studio to be picked up.
7. Teachers may have several consecutive classes to teach each day. If you have a question please ask the office manager on duty in the office.
8. If someone other than the parent/guardian is to pick up your child please inform the FRDC staff ahead of time.
9. Parents are expected to read the policies and procedures posted in the lobby and on our website ([flatrivverdancecompany.com](http://flatrivverdancecompany.com) )
10. Students who are consistently late to class or misses more than three classes in a semester may run the risk of not being allowed to perform in our productions. Please make class attendance a priority in your child's dance education

**For Our Dancers**

Welcome! You are a Flat River Dance Company dancer. The first step to becoming a successful dancer is making a solid commitment to your classes, rehearsals, and performances. Strong technique is a key ingredient and class is where you develop that technique. Come to each class prepared to learn and without personal distractions. Class time is your chance to focus on yourself, so try to leave your concerns or worries at the studio door. True progress is made when you look at each class, rehearsal, or performance as an opportunity to become better at what you love to do. Dance full out, stretch a little further, become more aware of your technique, and make the most of every class.

Respect for the teachers and choreographers you work with is essential. Listen to each correction given, whether it's directed to you or another dancer. A correction is an honor; it shows you how much a teacher cares about your progress as a dancer. **Always say thank you when a teacher or choreographer offers you constructive criticism.** Nothing can stop those students who apply themselves in every class and appreciate their teachers' knowledge and experience.

A portion of class time is dedicated to choreography or "cleaning" the choreography. A dancer who misses a class holds back the progress of the entire group. Repeating the choreography from a previous class for those who were absent takes up valuable rehearsal time, which could result in a performance that is not up to par. When we clean choreography, we may also change it.

Performances are your opportunity to show the world the results of your dedication and hard work. To make the most of this opportunity:

- Arrive at performances at least one hour prior to the scheduled time, unless otherwise advised by your teachers.
- Be sure you are properly warmed up.
- Present yourself in a professional manner, with costumes pressed, shoes cleaned, and all accessories accounted for.
- Go out there and show the audience how much you love to dance

**Dancer's World:**

### 1. Why don't dancers wear underwear with their costume or leotard?

If you are wearing underwear with your costume or leotard, it will show. Our leotards and costumes are modestly cut, however, all of the moving your dancers do causes them to shift. Underwear poking out, draws much more unwanted attention than not wearing underwear at all. This is why there is a gusset in the dancers' tights.

### 2. Why do we have to do our hair & make-up for dress rehearsal?

This is your teacher's chance to get one last look at everyone and make sure that the class looks polished and that there are no surprises on the performance day.

### 3. Why do dancers wear leotards?

A dancer's wardrobe is so because it allows the teacher (and dancer) to view the placement and alignment of the body. If the dancer's body is covered in T-shirts and anything covering the knees, it makes it much more challenging to make corrections. The body is a dancer's instrument and teachers are looking at the alignment of the body from head to toe and everything in between.

### 4. Why do dancers wear buns?

With the hair pulled away from the face and off of the neck, the teacher and student have a better view of the alignment of the neck. Keeping the hair in a bun also keeps long hair out of the eyes when turning.

## Dressing Rooms & Changing Room:

There are dressing rooms on the student lobby side of the building and a changing Room in the Lounge on the office side for your convenience. Please be aware that the lockers are for level 4 and 5 students **only**. You can also utilize the space below the benches and chairs for storage as well.

Dancers who miss class may not be properly prepared for the upcoming performance and could end up letting themselves, their classmates, or the school down.

## Class Etiquette

As part of a student's training, it is important for the student to learn and respect the rules, traditions, and class etiquette followed by the dance and theatre world.

1. Please arrive promptly.
2. Be sure to leave time to be dressed for class.

3. If student is late to class, it is the teacher's decision whether the student may take class or watch and take notes.
4. Regular attendance is very important. The majority of the class performance choreography is taught during the class.
5. If student needs to leave class early, please let the teacher know before class starts. At the appointed time, the student should thank teacher and then leave the studio quietly.
6. If a student is absent from three or more classes they may be at risk of being taken out of the upcoming performance.
7. Respect for the teacher, other students, the studio, the theatre, and guest artists will be expected of all students.
8. Students may not enter the studio area until invited by the teacher. Students may wait quietly in the foyer or dressing room.
9. The dress code is expected to be followed. If a student is not in the proper attire the teacher will ask the student to correct the problem before continuing the class. If a student is repeatedly not properly dressed, FRDC will send the parent/guardian a letter by e-mail to address the issue. (THIS INCLUDES ALL HAIR REQUIREMENTS)
10. Please do not wear warm-ups, leg warmers, skirts, shorts, t-shirts, sweat shirts or headbands of any kind (aka JUNK) into the studio. The teacher may give the students permission to wear junk from time to time. Consider this the exception not the rule.
11. Hanging on barres is not allowed.
12. Cell phones should be turned off during class. No devices permitted in the studio.
13. Bathroom needs should be taken care of before class time.
14. No street shoes allowed on studio floor
15. Gum, food or drinks are never allowed in studio area.

## **Dress Code**



**For Ballet:** The dress code is based on classical standards of ballet. Dress codes help students focus better in class because they are not distracted by loose or cumbersome clothing. Proper dress code also allows the teacher to correct alignment and placement. Additionally, dress code prepares students for performance, and they feel pride in themselves when appearance is neat and clean.

The following are the dress code requirements:

**Leotard** - Any solid colored leotard

**Skirts** - Are allowed at the discretion of the teacher.

**Tights** - Pink footed tights/convertible tights

**Undergarments** - no undergarments should be worn under leotards and tights. Tights serve as underwear beneath their leotards.

**Ballet shoes** - Pink ballet slippers with soft, pliable sole; elastic sewn on shoe prior to class (not tied and wrapped underneath); drawstrings cut and tucked into shoe (no bows on top of shoes).

**Pointe shoes** - all pointe shoes must be reviewed and approved by School Director prior to sewing them or wearing them for class. **Although pointe shoes are exciting for younger dancers, they can cause serious injury if one's ankles and feet are not ready for them.**

**Please do not allow younger dancers to try on pointe shoes.** Pointe work begins in the Intermediate level with permission and advisement of the School Director and a minimum age of nine.

**Hair** - secured off face; **a bun is required for all ballet levels** and up for safety of eyes. Please have plenty of hairnets, hair pins, clips, and hair bands available to neatly put up hair; hairspray and hair gel should be used. A separate smaller bag kept in your dance bag is recommended to store hair supplies.

**Gentlemen** - black ballet shoes, black tights, dance belt, black shorts for young boys, solid white t-shirt (no writing or designs), hair neat and secured off face if long.

**Warm-ups** - Form-fitting warm-ups (tight solid-colored ballet sweaters, leg warmers, ballet skirts) are permitted only at the discretion of each teacher

Dress Code, continued. . .

## **Jazz & Contemporary**

**Leotard** - Any solid colored leotard

**Tights** - Any solid color worn full footed or Capri length

**Shoes** - Black jazz shoes for Jazz I, dance paws or bare feet for Jazz II, Contemporary IV & V

**Hair** - secured off face, in a high ponytail.

## **Hip Hop**

**Tops and Bottoms:** Any color sweatpants or jazz pants with a t-shirt or tank top.

**NO JEANS!**

**Shoes:** Black dance sneakers (hip-hop shoes) or NEW sneakers used for dance

**No street shoes permitted on the dance floor**

**Hair:** MUST be pulled back in ponytail, braid or bun.

**Accessories - Absolutely NO watches, bracelets, or necklaces. Small stud earrings are okay, no large earrings. Absolutely NO sweatshirts, sweatpants, oversized shirts, or loose fitting clothing.**