

Four Things Every Parent Should Know Before Choosing a Dance Studio

If most dance studios seem to have qualified teachers, friendly staff, experience teaching children and performance opportunities for all students, doesn't that mean they're pretty much all the same? Does it really matter where you enroll? Before you make a final decision about where to take your child for dance instruction, consider the following four things. They can make a huge difference in the quality of instruction your child receives and the overall enjoyment and satisfaction of being involved with a dance program.

1. What type of dance floor is used?

Dance is a very physical activity that involves a lot of jumping, which can put stress on the bones and joints. Most dance shoes do not provide any cushioning or support, so the shock of dance movement can place a lot of pressure on a dancer's knees and back. The best way to prevent potential injury is by choosing a studio with a professional floating or sprung dance floor.

The top layer of the dance floor is also an important factor. A vinyl composite "marley" floor is accepted worldwide as the best surface layer for recreational to professional dance. A Marley floor allows dancers to slide, with a degree of "controlled" slip, but is not slippery so there is less risk of falling. Very few studios use professional Marley floors because of the expense involved, and usually opt for a regular floor tile or wood for a studio floor.

At *Step Ahead*, our dance floors are a combination of the floating and sprung dance floor for abundant cushion and comfort while dancing. Our floors are layered with ½ inch of cushiony foam, 2 layers of ½ inch plywood flooring, with a Marley surface on top. These special floors help reduce the risk of injuries and allow students to dance longer without getting tired.

2. What is the size of the class?

Dance classes with fewer students allow teachers more time to devote to personalized attention for each child. In classes with younger students it is easier for a teacher to maintain control and make sure each student understands the concepts and instructions, while at the same time having fun. Smaller class sizes make sure that no fundamental concepts are being missed. It also allows teachers to ensure that students are not developing bad habits or improper technique.

Step Ahead limits all of our class sizes for preschoolers to just 8 students per class. Class sizes for ages 6 and up is just 12 students per class.



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3. What are the “extras” required for the year end show?

Most studios put on a year end show in a professional theater. Students that perform in the show must have a costume for their dance number. Some studios may require the parents to sew their child’s costume, find their own seamstress to make the costume, or pay extra for costume fees. This can be inconvenient and frustrating for parents who are busy or can’t sew. Most studios also require parents to purchase tickets for the recital performance.

At *Step Ahead*, costumes are ordered through the studio, so there are no seamstresses to find and no additional effort on the part of the parents. And, families who choose our Preferred Payment Plan for tuition payments have no extra fees in the middle of the dance year. Everything is included in equal monthly payments. Each student will receive 2 free tickets to the show for parents. If they would like to invite other relatives or friends, those tickets may be purchased, usually for about \$10 each. All seats are reserved.

4. Can I get immediate assistance and customer service?

In many studios the teacher or the studio owner conducts classes and does the administration. By trying to do two jobs at once, the class may suffer as the teacher has to use class time for customer service issues, or the studio may have no customer service available if the teacher is in a class. To have a good experience it is important to choose a studio that can assist you with details like costumes or schedules, even if a teacher is occupied in a class. *Step Ahead* has office staff on hand during all regular class times, so you can get immediate assistance.



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