

## THE IMPORTANCE OF SAFE MOVEMENT IN DANCE

As a movement-based performing arts activity, dance comes with inherent physical benefits and risks. The benefits are many, such as increased stamina, muscle strength, coordination, and flexibility.

Yet these positives and more can be negated by dance lessons that do not pay attention to safe movement. It is a dance educator's responsibility to educate themselves on safety in the classroom, and to teach students how to respect, protect, and maintain their physical body—their instrument.

Follow these steps to keep safety at the forefront for your students:

### 1 Implement a safety-first class structure

Understand (and share with your students) that warming up, stretching, and cooling down are not-to-be-skipped parts of class and help prevent muscle tears and other injuries and reduce soreness.

### 2 Be mindful of students' physical growth

More understanding about anatomy and safe teaching methods leads to better outcomes. "Old" ways of teaching dance, such as hands-on forcing a child into a split or recommending students "bounce" in stretches, are now universally recognized as causing far more harm than good. Avoid overstretching, repetitive movements, and overuse, all of which can cause long-term damage that will cut short that dancer's confidence, progress, and even career prospects.

### 3 Work within appropriate ranges

Never allow children to be placed in class levels or choreography beyond their physical abilities—this is particularly true of pointe, where serious injuries lurk around students without proper strength and technique. With advanced lifts and acrobatics, insist on the supervision of an acro-certified instructor and proper spotting.

### 4 Create movement-safe choreography

Even if a child can perform a skill, that doesn't mean it is safe. Showcase students' progress in exciting yet developmentally correct ways, such as challenging them with unusual musical choices, complex patterns or canons, or artistic use of props. Choreographic advancement needs to be progressive, earned, and physically safe.

Source:  
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