

How to Teach Baby Recital Dances:

Baby Dance Choreography is a learned skill. Don't assume that because a teacher has danced professionally or attended a prestigious college dance program that they understand choreography for baby dancers, they do not! Experience is the ONLY teacher for this.

Spatial Awareness

- Single line-marley tape
- Glow tape line onstage
- Hold hands and pull apart until their arms are extended
- "Pretend dancer" in between each "real dancer"
- Dancers practice in the same space each week in class
- Enter and exit stage

Spatial Awareness versus Spots

- Putting spots on the floor for each dancers to stand has not worked well for us; dancers tend to stand on someone else's spot and they end up fighting over that one spot on the floor while the empty spot is right next to them
- Spatial awareness is as important as teaching the steps in the recital dance and will continue to be crucial in their dance training as they grow up

Choreography

- Changes to choreography should be made 2 months before the recital date. Young dancers will not handle any choreography changes close to the performance. If it is not working, change it right away!

Perfect practice makes perfect

- Face them away from the mirror or cover mirrors one month prior to your show
- They will give half of what you give them so when you teach babies you have to give 200% energy and enthusiasm for the movement as well as exaggerate your arms and steps.
- Only work on the recital dance for 10 minutes max in each class. This should be a part of what they are learning and running the dance 2-3 times in each class will keep them excited and eager to come back to class the next week
- Start teaching baby dances yesterday! :) Give them as much time as you possibly can
- When teaching them, talk through the dance until you see their attention start to fade. At that point do the dance with the music and continue past the section that you taught them. They should be able to follow along with you and do that dance.
- If the dancers cannot follow along then the dance is too fast, changes too quickly, is too complicated, doesn't appeal to their age level and/or doesn't have a chorus repeat
- Give them movement that "reads" to audience. If you can't tell what the arms are supposed to be up close then it is not working on that age group
- Sing the song with them with arms while seated before you stand up to teach the dance.

Sometimes when they are standing and facing the mirror they become distracted and miss the choreography. They can only learn if they are focused. When standing they are also thinking about what their feet are doing. Learning the words with arms first is best.

Final Comments

- Teachers are onstage with our 2-3 year olds only. If the choreography is suitable for the age group and the teacher has had enough time and skills to teach the dance all 3 year olds and up should be able to dance without assistance onstage.
- Beware of coaching from the side wings as the dancers will be looking into the wings instead of out to the audience the entire dance.
- Put your strongest dancers in the middle as they will tend to trickle down the line.
- Sit down with your hands behind your back and watch the class do the dance one month before the recital. This will give you a true assessment of what they know without your help and what you need to work on. You will automatically want to help them, so that is why you need to put your hands behind your back.