

4 Things Every Parent Should Know Before Choosing a Dance Studio

If most dance studios seem to have qualified, friendly teachers, experience teaching children and a big show at the end of the year, aren't they all pretty much the same? Does it really matter which place you decide to enroll your child? Yes. There are four main things that can make a huge difference in the quality of instruction your child receives, the amount of extra work and hassles the parents must deal with and the overall enjoyment and satisfaction of being involved with a dance program. Here are four things that every parent should consider before deciding on a dance studio for their child.

1. What type of dance floor is used?

Dance is a very physical activity that requires a lot of jumping, which can put stress on bones and joints. Most dance footwear does not provide any cushioning or support, so the shock of dance movement can place a lot of pressure on the knees and back of a dancer. The best way to prevent against potential injury is by choosing a studio with a professional "floating floor." A floating floor is a dance floor that rests on a system of high-density foam, to absorb the shock of jumping and landing. A high-density foam base is superior to a "sprung" floor, which usually consists of a wood structure built on the regular 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 and professional dance. Facilities such as The Sacramento Ballet, the Royal Academy of Dance in London, and Riverdance, all use marley floors as their dance surface. A vinyl floor allows dancers to slide, with a degree of "controlled slip," but is not slippery so there is less risk of slips and falls. Very few studios use professional vinyl floor covering because of the expense involved, so many opt for a regular floor tile or wood surface for a studio floor.

The Galt Dance Center has a floating floor suspended on over 900 high-density foam blocks. The blocks absorb the shock and impact of regular dance movements. This benefits students by reducing fatigue and preventing injury that can result from dancing on hard surfaces. The studio floor covering is professional quality dance vinyl that allows students to dance fully without fear of slipping.

2. What is the size of the class?

If the dance class has fewer students in it, each child will receive more personalized attention, learn more and have more fun. With younger students it is easier for a teacher to maintain control over the class and make sure each student understands the concepts and instructions. More control and more personalized attention ensures that students are not developing bad habits or improper dance technique.

Our studio limits all of our classes to a maximum of just 12 students per class with the exception of Hip-Hop dance. Creative Movement classes (ages 4-6) are carefully balanced to ensure that each child receives the appropriate instruction in order for the child to gain confidence and positive self-esteem.

3. Am I purchasing dance instruction or performance expenses?

A quality dance studio will teach students how to dance each step and build, with each lesson, the knowledge and strength a dancer needs to perform well. Many dance studios focus on putting on "shows" two or three times a year. Students do not learn dance technique but instead memorize routines. Dance lessons are spent rehearsing for shows instead of learning new steps and improving strength and technique. Although dance is an art form, it requires very technical precision that can only be learned with time, practice and consistent instruction.

An added surprise for parents who choose show-based studios is the expense and hassle involved in purchasing costumes and tickets for each show. Sewing and altering costumes can be difficult for busy parents or those who don't sew. Plus, costumes and tickets for the frequent shows can be expensive.

Galt Dance Center performs each spring but continues throughout the year to instruct students in technique during each class. Students learn quickly from expert instruction and advance quickly in their classes. Our studio handles all necessary costume fittings and alterations so parents don't have to worry, and we give each family 2 FREE tickets to the recital. This way you as a parent will not be faced with any extra work or expense.

4. Can my child experience a variety of dance styles at this studio?

Students who learn a variety of dance styles become better overall dancers and progress more quickly in their classes. Some dance studios teach only a few dance styles so that if a child decides to learn a new technique or tires of what he/she is learning they must look for another studio.

Galt Dance Center offers many styles such as ballet, tap, jazz, and hip-hop. Classes also include Creative Movement and Pre-Ballet for young children, combination classes and Pointe for the advanced ballet dancer.