

Tips
on running a
Successful

After school
Dance
Club

Keep the class moving

A common mistake in teaching classes with young children is to spend too much time on a single activity. Primary children get bored and restless quick, their attention span doesn't last very long, especially after having to focus all day at school, they "Just wanna have fun".

For students under six years old, five minutes on any one thing is usually the maximum.

Try not to spend longer than 10 or 15 minutes in any one formation or on any one portion of the class. (In a circle, across the floor, standing in lines, etc.). Children are easily distracted and their attention wanes quickly.

Always plan more activities than you have time to include, if you see that you are "losing them," do the kids and yourself a favor by wrapping it up and moving on to the next activity.

Music

Your choice of music will play a big part in your class, so choose wisely. Children are more likely to enjoy the class, when music they know is being played or has a good beat.

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RULE!!!!!!

Know your music and the tune you are about to play; listening to the lyrics, you don't want no unexpected lyric surprising you all.

Add variations/interest

When teaching basic dance skills, repetition is important. Keep skill practice interesting by layering your instruction with imagery.

Occasionally to play and pretend, that will also enhance their understanding you can ask children to pretend that the wind is blowing their arms out (for demi second), or encourage them to become pancakes and "flip" as they practice three-step turns.

Bringing their attention to a special *quality* within the movement can improve their focus as well. For example, encourage them to "*eat up the space*" with large movement in leaps, make their whole body sharp like a knife during marches, or point out the level changes in jumps/sauté and have them try to make their highest level higher each time

Recruit a misbehaving child

A misbehaving child can be like a little thorn in your side. Remember that saying “keep your enemies closer than your friends, this tip is similar. Instead of constantly reprimanding the child, *enlist* his/her help in some way. Ask her to be your helper when handing out props, or recruit them to take the register. Sometimes your faith in the student as you offer them this responsibility is all the incentive they need to behave better.

Avoid making promises you can't keep

Children are a lot like elephants – they never forget! Therefore, I've found it best not to make too many promises that I can't (or won't remember) to keep. When there is turmoil over who gets to be group leader, it may seem a grand solution to promise a child that “next week” they'll be the leader. The problem is that you'll rarely remember that appeasing promise. Instead, the victim of your faulty memory will remind you after you've already broken your promise and then more promises will need to be made.

Some teachers use a detailed chart or system for choosing line leaders. I make it clear in our classroom rules/procedures that this is a privilege they can lose due to poor behaviour. Should this occur, they must choose the new line leader that will take their place. I try to be fair, When a decision is met with discontent, I reply kindly but firmly “*I know it is disappointing not to be chosen this time but you'll get a turn another day!*” (Notice I didn't say “*next time.*”)

Offer positive feedback at every opportunity

Children respond well to positive feedback. Continually be on the lookout for things that are being done well. This gives the class a chance to model the appropriate behavior. If the majority of the class is messing around, look for that one child who is doing SOMETHING (anything) right and single them out rather than reprimanding the whole class. You'll definitely get more mileage out of saying something positive (“*beautiful arms, Faye*” “*that's a high jump, May!*”) than overstating negatives. [Try to be specific.](#) “*Good job*” doesn't have much power all on its own so really keep your eyes open for specific things that are being done properly.

Stay in control

With *older* children it is sometimes necessary to limit your demonstration or participation in the actual moving/dancing portions of class. Young children, however, take all of their cues from you. If you are asking them to pretend they are in a dark forest as they creep around the room, then you must be in that forest with them at least part of the time. If you want them to perform with 100 percent of their energy, then you have to give 150 percent.

Modeling behaviour

Showing children how to behave. Ask the students what is the proper way to sit or stand while waiting on their spot or number, then show them, and then have them practice it with you.

Bonus tip on vocal volume: I sometimes like to whisper when children are getting too noisy because it adds an element of surprise and because they have to quiet down to hear me.

Freedom Offer “Dancer’s Choice”

The freedom to choose is empowering, particularly for children who are learning to become independent in their thoughts and decisions. Try to include a chance for your dancers to make a choice at least once in each lesson. This can be as simple as occasionally allowing children to choose if they’d like a blue spot or a red spot to stand upon (just make sure when offering these types of choices, you have enough of each so that no child gets “stuck” with something)., However, be careful about offering unlimited possibilities. Children do best when they have an “either/or” alternative.

You can also offer opportunities for children to make decisions in their movement. For instance they may choose between dancing sharply or smoothly (quickly/slowly, happily/sadly) around the room. They may choose to make a round shape or an angled shape (balanced/off-balanced, big/small) when they finish their exercise across the floor

Follow best practice

Health and safety policy

Check with facility/school you are teaching at, what are their policies?

Accident Book – who to report an incident to.

Work toward an event

School fetes

Dance showcase in assembly

Get qualified and be part of an association: you can put your kids in to medal text and exams.

Put on a end of term show case for the parents

Choose a charity and do a sponsored dance

Safeguarding

A register should be taken at the beginning of the class. Safeguarding children should always be paramount; you should ensure all children are safe whilst with you.

No child should be handed over to anyone other than the known parent/carer unless an agreement has been made with the teacher or school.

No child should be allowed to go home on their own unless they have been authorised to do so by parent/carer. If a child needs emergency medical attention the school should be told.

All teachers should have a current DBS check (Disclosure & Barring Service

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