

Dear parents and students,

Welcome to American Ballet Academy. I truly hope you come to love and enjoy this studio as much as I do.

I know that many of you come to dance for different reasons. Some of you hope to find fun for your child, others want fitness, and some even may want to pursue professional careers in dance. Regardless of your reason to be here today, I hope you will find that ABA can meet your goals and desires.

There is a lot of information included in this handbook. Some of the information covers questions I am frequently asked, and other information goes over aspects about ABA and dance that I feel are extremely important to understand. I know to some of you it may seem like a lot. However, I ask, please read it all carefully. It will help you understand what to expect while at ABA, and thus help you find the entire experience more enjoyable. As your child becomes older, please share this information with them as well. Please keep this handbook accessible for reference in the months, and hopefully years to come.

In the meantime, I hope you find American Ballet Academy to be a place where you can bring your child to have fun and learn. If you ever have any questions, please feel free to come and talk to me.

Sincerely,

Annie Joslin, Director
American Ballet Academy

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Why Choose Dance, Specifically Ballet

With the overabundance of activities offered today deciding which extracurricular will be best for your child is difficult. Of course, there are some activities that are better suited for certain individuals, and not everyone will enjoy everything. I truly believe that anyone can benefit from dance, and specifically ballet, in one way or another.

The benefits from dance are endless. Not only does a child learn the art while staying fit and active, but students also grow tremendously in personal skills that will help them throughout their entire life. Fitness is important. Yes, there are many sports that can help a person stay healthy. Ballet is often seen as one of the most well rounded activities. Ballet dancers must be agile, strong, fast, and have a tremendous amount of endurance. The awareness they have of their bodies, as well as the space around them, must be to perfection. Ballet requires that a dancer execute the most difficult of moves with the appearance of ease and beauty. Dancers are always noticed and complimented for the graceful poise.

The personal skills gained from dance are endless as well. Dance teaches people perseverance; it is an art that takes years to master, and thus a great amount of determination. Dance teaches team work while allowing individuals to strive to be their best. In order for a group dance to be successful the dancers must work together to achieve accurate execution of movement, timing, and spacing. However, there are also many opportunities for solos, thus having dancers strive to be their personal best. Moreover, the mere nature of dance, and the fact that it is usually practiced in front of mirrors, makes it such that dancers are acutely aware of their body, body placement, execution, and can visibly see what areas need work, and the progression they achieve over time. It is something that no matter how long you dance and how advanced you become, there are always things in which you can improve. Dance teaches confidence and presence. It teaches a person how to take criticism, to learn from it and work with it. Ballet also teaches respect; the studio environment demands respect both from the students and the teacher. All of these personal skills learned in the dance studio can be carried over into the rest of a dancer's life, thus helping them in so many things beyond just day-to-day class.

People often times wonder if they should enroll their child in ballet, or a different form of dance. I firmly believe anyone who is interested in dance should be enrolled in a ballet class. Ballet is the foundation of all dance forms, just like piano is the foundation for all music. Just because a student is enrolled in ballet class does not mean that a dancer has to limit themselves to ballet training. The most versatile dancers often times are the most desirable. However, those with strong ballet training are always noticed because of their precise technique, body posture, and wonderful presence. Also, with strong ballet training it is much easier for an individual to learn a new dance form due to the awareness they have of the body and the mechanics behind it. Obviously, for those with the desire to dance, ballet training is of the utmost importance.

There is concern that dance is not an activity that can lead to a career, or anything useful beyond a person's youth. Like anything, the dance world is extremely competitive. The number of people that are able to pursue a performing career in dance is very small. However, dance careers are possible, rewarding, and the number of avenues in which a person can follow a profession in dance increases daily. In addition to performing careers there are opportunities to teach, choreograph, and direct. There are positions in arts management and arts philanthropy. There are arts and dance historians, dance critics, and dance medical specialists. Also, dance can lead to other areas of interest such as theatre production or physical therapy. The professional opportunities in the dance world are endless. And, even if your child decides they do not want to pursue a career in dance, the appreciation that they gain for the art is life-long, and they can always find a dance studio in which they can continue to dance for their personal enjoyment.

Dance is fun. Bonds created between dancers are strong, and thus create wonderful friendships. The studio is a safe place where no matter what is happening outside, a person can come into class and enjoy themselves. Obviously, dance is a wonderful gift to give to any child. It is my hope that you not only enroll your child in dance, but support their involvement, and encourage them to continue in an activity that will allow tremendous personal growth and gratification for a long time – possibly lifelong.

ABA Philosophy

“American Ballet Academy is a dance studio seeking to spread the love of dance through education, quality instruction and community involvement. With an atmosphere of support and encouragement, students work to their potential while developing competence and confidence both as dancers and individuals.”

This is the mission statement of ABA. It is important to realize that not all studios have the same philosophy and approach to teaching dance. Finding a studio that is congruent with your personal desires will help prevent frustration and disappointment later on.

Ultimately, the goal of ABA is that everyone who enters the studio, be that parents or dancers, has a positive, memorable experience from which they gain more appreciation for ballet and the arts. We try to foster an environment that people can enjoy coming to, build friendships, grow as individuals and dancers, and learn to love dance. It goes without question that it is impossible to please everyone. That is part of the reason for this handbook – so that everyone knows what to expect. It is always encouraged that if anyone ever has any questions or concerns that they contact the director. ABA does its best to remain fair while working with specific individual’s circumstances.

ABA is not a performance based studio. This does not mean that ABA does not do performances; we have two shows a year as performances are an important part of dance. Instead of focusing primarily on performances, and thus the rehearsals leading up to them, ABA stresses technique and proper execution of movement through class work. Ultimately technique and the execution of movement is what allows a student to perform the more advanced movements that are eventually desired and demanded. Of course, it is also important to properly prepare dancers for their time on stage. ABA tries to balance the amount of time needed for this preparation while still giving dancers the technique needed to advance (This means that class time is valuable and that all classes are run very efficiently so that we can accomplish both!!!). With perfecting technique a student will eventually be more marketable, and thus more likely to have a performing career, or a different career in dance.

Community involvement is also important to ABA. ABA does not make any profits from the performances it puts on. Instead, the proceeds are donated to other local non-profit organizations. I hope to not only make a difference in the lives of the dancers who come through ABA, but also to have a positive impact on the community as a whole. Moreover, it is hoped that eventually students will realize that they are helping the community with their dancing, and will feel good with what they do, and that parents will be more supportive of their dancer’s participation knowing that they are dancing for a cause. Finally, having a common goal helps not only bring individual classes together, but the entire studio. Please read further information about ABA’s community involvement later in the handbook.

Discipline of Dance

As with any activity in which a person wants to excel, dance requires tremendous discipline. Of course, it is desired that people enjoy themselves when they come to ballet class. However, the dance environment is not one of a school yard or a game room. It is exceedingly important that students take dance seriously while having fun; when dance is approached with the wrong attitude people are much more likely to be injured. The long-term safety and health of all students that come through ABA is one of my biggest concerns. The focus required can take some students a while to master. However, it is with developing their focus that they will find that they are able to enjoy dance for dance’s sake in addition to the social aspect, and ultimately obtain the most improvement.

In addition to concentration during class time, students are encouraged to practice at home. Just a little practice, even stretching and mental practice, can go a long way toward how much an individual will progress. I ask that you encourage your child to find a little time to practice on their own.

Whereas dance does take discipline, there is nothing that says that is all they can do. Quite the contrary. I want each student to be as well-rounded of an individual as possible. Moreover, dance should not be forced (if you occasionally have to persuade them that is usually ok, but if it becomes a week to week fight to bring your child to class you should consider if the activity is right for their personality and goals). This will only make your child despise dance in the long run.

Finally, it is important for people to realize that dance is in many ways its own sport. With a lot of activities it is possible to do a tremendous amount of cross training with the practice of one sport helping the progression of the other. Dance is different. That does not mean that a person will not benefit from participating in other activities. It is just important to realize that dance is a training of the body that is extremely specialized, and the body regularly needs to be tuned in order to not lose too much ground.

In order to keep your body in the condition necessary to maintain and advance, regular long breaks are highly discouraged. Specifically, it is not desirable to take the entire summer off from dance. Whereas this applies to young children because they quickly forget material they have learned, it is especially true for the more advanced, serious dancer whose body has been acutely trained. This does not mean breaks are not allowed; vacations are also extremely important as they give the mind and the body a chance to refresh. I just ask that before you take an extended amount of time off over the summer, or any other time, you consider the possibility of allowing your child to dance as much as possible, even if it is a lesser amount, so that their body doesn't need re-training in the fall. Of course, if you do decide to take time off at some point during your child's dance training you are always welcome back. Just realize that your child might find themselves a little rusty in some areas, and that some of their friends may have improved, and possibly advanced.

Communication at ABA

Without a doubt, communication is extremely important in any situation. For this reason, I put out a monthly newsletter, *Dance Dialogue*. It will be available sometime the first week of every month September-June. Read this newsletter carefully, as it will probably answer many of your questions, especially in regards to upcoming events. You can find these both in folders around the studio and online. The newsletters are designed to give out important information regarding the studio, classes, and performances. Of course, there are always small questions you might have that are not covered in the newsletter. Usually email is best (americanballetacademy@gmail.com). However, always feel free to call us at the studio. By using these forms of communication it is possible to prevent interference during class time, and thus allows us to run class as efficiently as possible. In the case of emergency, of course feel free to talk to us!

Tuition Payments and Holidays

For current tuition rates and the holiday schedule, please refer to the calendar year's brochure or the ABA website. Please note, no formal bill is handed out. However, you will be reminded if no payment is received. The following is the policy for tuition payments: During the academic year, tuition is based on a four week, ten month calendar year divided into equal monthly payments. Tuition is due the first lesson of each month. Calculated into this payment schedule are holiday breaks (please refer to the holiday schedule). No refunds or credits are given for missed classes, although lessons can be made up within one month or by arrangement with the instructor. A \$25.00 charge for payment made after the 10th of the month or for returned checks will be assessed.

Also, remember... Please put your child's name on all checks, or put money in an envelope with their name on it!

Scholarships

As ABA strives to give as many people as possible the experience of dance, there are a few need-based scholarships available. To apply for a scholarship, please talk to the director.

If you, or anyone you know, are interested in helping a child in dance, please talk to me about how to donate to the scholarship fund. This fund will be partially matched by ABA, and will allow us to give dance opportunities to many other individuals.

Observation Policy

I do allow parent observations at ABA. However, I want you to all know, this is very much a privilege; many dance studios do not allow observations with the exception of perhaps one or two observation weeks a year. If guests in the studio become a distraction I will have to change this observation policy. So that ABA can continue to allow observations, I ask the following:

- There are limited numbers of seats available in the observation area. Please take turns observing, and sit in the waiting area if there are no seats available.
- Please keep volume down. The doors will be closed if it becomes too loud in the observation area.
- Try to keep little hands clear of the observation windows
- No flash photography

Class Structure, Placement, and Advancement at ABA

Every studio is designed differently. This is important to realize because if your family moves and you join a different studio you may not be in the same “level” as you were here. You should always consult the instructor as to what level your child should be enrolled.

ABA has a young dancer program comprised of Creative Movement and Pre-Ballet levels and a Pre-Professional program, which starts with Ballet I. All young dancer and pre-professional programs follow the curriculum set forth by American Ballet Theatre. There are jazz classes for those ballet dancers interested in trying something new.

Creative Movement/Pre-ballet is a wonderful place for any young child to start. Ages range from 3-8. These classes are designed to give students an introduction to dance in a structured environment with teaching basic positions and movements. To help keep students attention and allow for fun in these classes, there is use of fun music and props – the students learn technique, steps, and placement without even knowing it.

The pre-professional levels of ballet require more focus and discipline than pre-ballet. These classes are completely ballet, and build upon each other. Dancers are able to see themselves improve tremendously while learning different steps and technique bringing both self-fulfillment and enjoyment. Students typically do not enter the pre-professional levels until they are between ages 7 and 9.

Modern classes, like ballet, build upon each other as the student advances. Because ballet is an important part of any dancer’s training, regardless of what their main interest may be, it is highly encouraged and expected that all students in the modern classes also enroll in a ballet class. It may seem that this is unfair, however, as your dancer progresses, they will be happy to have the technique that ballet training provides.

It is important for both parents and dancers to understand that there is a big jump between the different levels at ABA. For this reason, it may often seem that there is a wide span of ability in any one class. I require that a student is able to execute the movements in their class to near perfection before

they are moved up. This ability range is good; the new students will be motivated to build their technique to meet the level of the more advanced students and the more advanced students build their self-confidence because they are more easily able to demonstrate and execute movements of the class. Because there is a large jump between levels at ABA students are usually moved up slowly; it is not uncommon for someone to be in the same level for – 2+ years. Typically they will be asked to start coming to a class of a higher level once a week in addition to the level they are currently enrolled. This gives the students the opportunity to continue to work to perfect the class work of their level while experiencing and preparing themselves for what will be asked of them as they move up. Remember: the instructor will decide when it is time for a student to be moved up; it does not necessarily happen after a certain amount of time, or as an entire group. The instructor will base this decision on the progression of the student, and the focus they have in class. I understand that this can be discouraging at times if friends are separated. Please try to explain to your child that it is important to not advance too quickly (this can lead to unnecessary injuries), and encourage them to keep practicing so they too can advance. Also remind them that everyone at ABA is friendly, and there are many different people that they can be friends with. To help develop these relationships with students outside of class, and to have fun as an entire studio, we have semi-annual parties – please read more about these later. In class I will always do my best to make sure everyone is included. If you ever have any questions or concerns about placement, what your child should practice, or student participation and involvement, don't hesitate to talk to me.

Attendance

As you have all heard me say, dance is in the word *attendance*. I personally love this coincidence as it is extremely important that those enrolled in dance classes actually attend class regularly. I know it is easy in the everyday rush to push ballet aside thinking you will make it next time. However, doing this slows the progression of your child, and makes performances extremely difficult. Obviously there are instances when a student can't attend class due to illness, school/church activities, family emergencies, or other events – of course these circumstances are very understandable and respected; I do not want dance to become a burden. At any time that you are unable to make it to class you are not only encouraged, but you are asked to come in for a make-up class. These make-up classes are free! Basically my request is that if you make a commitment to dance that you do your very best to uphold this commitment. (This will also set a good example for your child).

Dress Code

Dress codes for dance classes are put in place for a number of reasons. First, they allow for proper execution of movement. Second, they make it possible to properly assess the movement and alignment of the dancers. This assessment is not only important so that dancers can progress correctly, but to prevent injuries. Finally, dress codes are part of what develop the atmosphere of respect in a dance studio; by wearing the proper attire, dancers show respect to the art form they are studying.

At the most basic level the dress code at ABA is very simple: for girls: solid colored leotard, pink tights and pink leather or canvas ballet slippers and hair in a tidy bun, that will stay in the whole class for ballet class. For Boys: White fitted dance shirt, black boy's ballet tights (they are not opaque like girl's tights) white socks, and white leather or canvas ballet shoes. A dance belt may also be required, depending on their age. For Modern class: dancers should be barefoot with form fitting clothes (shorts can only be worn with tights underneath). There are also other requests to be noted. Students are asked to not wear tutus in class. I know that many times students are given these tutus as presents, especially younger students. Instead of wearing them to class please encourage your child to practice with this attire at home. Whereas it is acceptable for pre-ballet students to wear short chiffon skirts (unless they become a distraction – if they are a distraction I will ask them to remove their skirts), pre-professional levels are asked to NOT wear skirts until they reach Ballet V. It is acceptable to wear ballet wrap sweaters. T-shirts,

sweatshirts, pants, and shorts are not acceptable. Also, please remember – undergarments should not be worn under dance attire (This does not include a dance belt for boys). As many of you are aware, it is not possible to wear undergarments under costumes for performances due to the lighting that allows lines and colors to be seen. It is important that all dancers are accustomed to this expectation so they are not distracted and uncomfortable at performance time.

I know many people are extremely conscientious of their money and how they spend it. In no means do I feel it is necessary to spend extreme amounts of money on dance clothing and supplies. There is a wonderful dance store in Salem called “The Dance Store.” There are also a number of vendors in Portland area that sell dance attire. My favorite is Dance Togs in Beaverton. For everyone’s convenience, I also have a little “store” at the studio. The hours are set every year, depending on my dancer’s schedules. Please check the newsletter for the most recent hours. The store is most important for shoes. Wearing good quality, proper fitting, leather or canvas dance shoes is very important for the young dancer’s training. Because I understand that money is a concern I don’t mind in the least if leotards and tights are purchased at places where you can get a better deal. Please, if you have different shoes than those sold at a dance store, don’t rush out and buy a different pair now. Just make sure next time you purchase shoes that will most benefit your child’s progression. I thank you in advance for understanding the importance of quality dance shoes. If you have any questions please feel free to come talk to me.

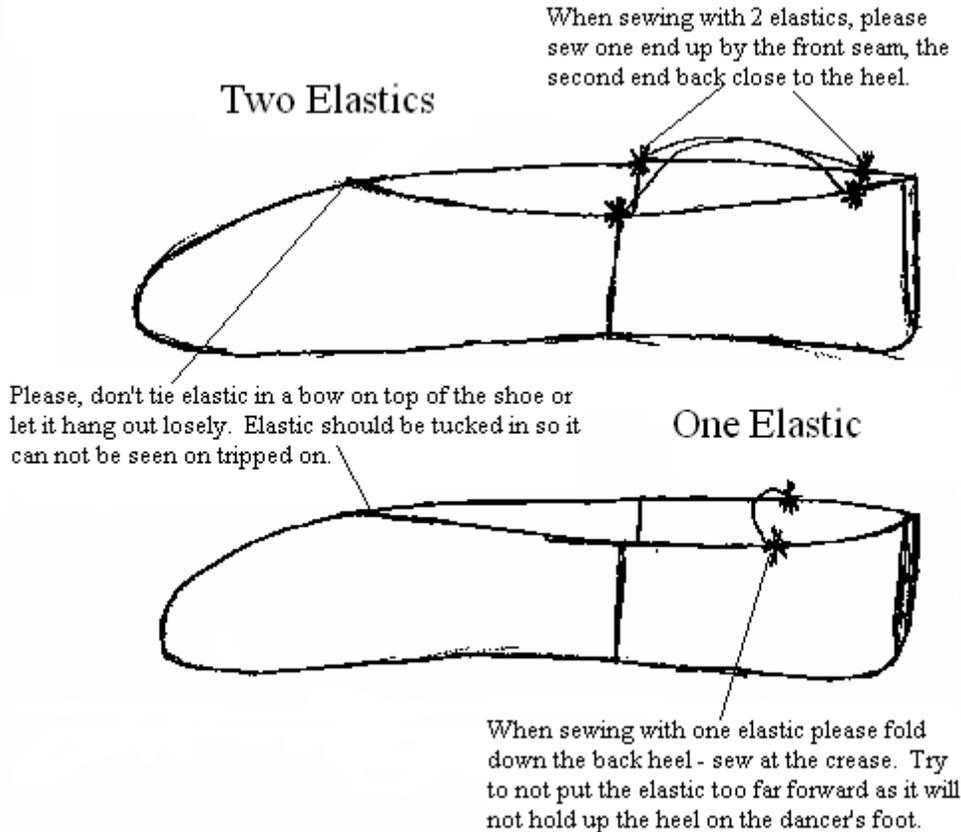
Proper Shoe Fitting and Preparation

One of the first things purchased when you are getting ready for ballet class are ballet slippers. Above is the reasoning behind where you should buy shoes. Now, I am going to explain what to look for when buying shoes, and what to do once you get them.

I understand that many of us want to purchase shoes and attire that have growing room. Unfortunately, ballet shoes that have too much growing room allow too much movement of the foot within the shoe, make it difficult to execute certain moves correctly, and, most importantly, can even be dangerous (if they start to slip off the dancer’s foot it can cause the dancer to twist their ankle, or slip and fall). Ideally, ballet shoes will fit like a pair of socks – not too tight, but with minimal extra space surrounding the foot. Know that ballet shoes do stretch, and therefore should last a while. Depending on how often your child is in class you may find that the shoes actually wear out before they are out grown. There are times when “short cuts” can be taken, and there are times when it is best to do things properly. If you cannot already tell, shoes are one thing that must be done right.

Now, on to how to prepare shoes. I know that many of you will buy a pair of ballet shoes, open up the box, find loose or semi-loose elastics, and have no idea what to do to prepare them for wearing. So, I am going to try to draw a couple diagrams showing how elastics should be placed on ballet shoes. There are two different ways that they can be placed depending on if there are one or two elastics per shoe. Both work just fine, although I personally prefer two elastics per shoe as two elastics provide a stronger hold to the foot. Please understand, I am not an artist... I hope you are able to decipher everything on the picture. Please note:

- The asterics are where the elastics are to be sewn.
- If you use one elastic per shoe be careful you don’t sew them too far forward as then the elastic will not hold the heel up. To determine where to sew a single elastic it works well to fold down the heel – sew the elastic at the crease.
- If you are using two elastics, please sew one end close to the heel, and the other end up by the seam at middle of the shoe (it should be around the instep of the foot – another place where shoes tend to be loose).
- Elastics that come out of the top of the shoe should be tucked in at the top of the shoe. This way they won’t come loose and pose a threat of tripping.
- Here are the diagrams:



And another important note: ballet shoes should never be worn outside!

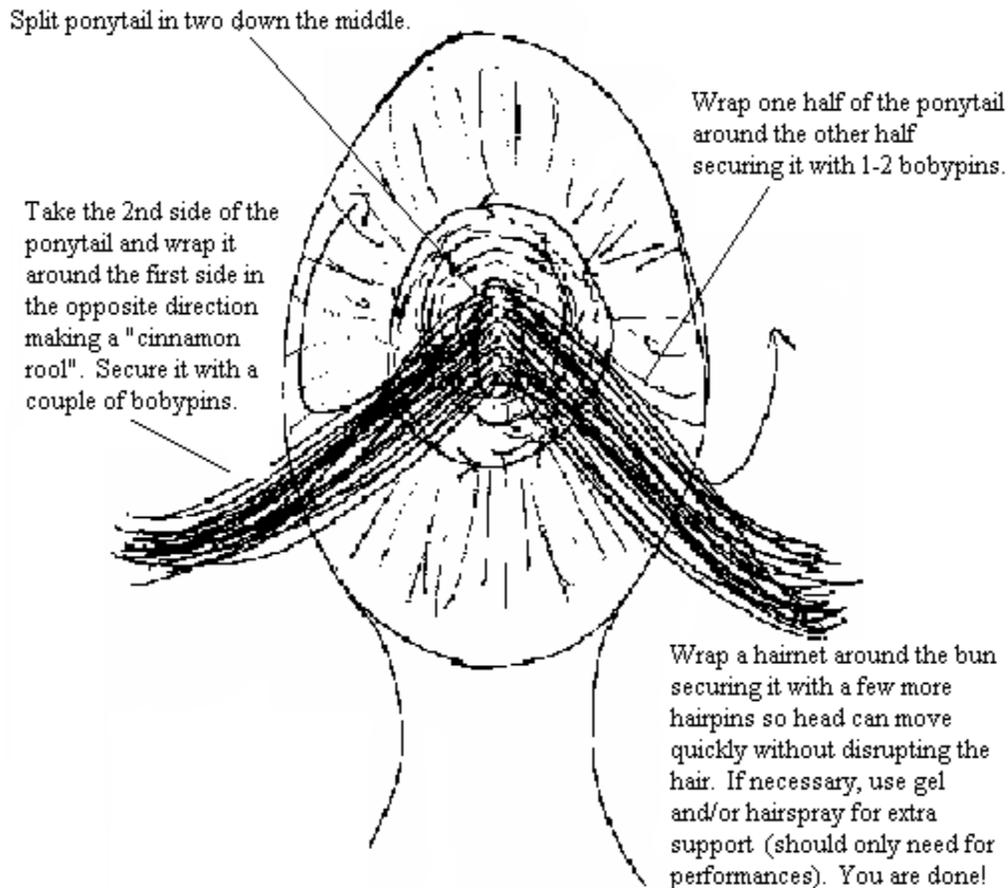
Hair

Hair is another area in which unless you personally have had experience putting hair up securely, might seem like a daunting task. I promise, with practice it can be done extremely fast (I can get my hair up in a bun in about 30 seconds... I know when you are doing someone else's hair it may take longer, but it is nothing that should use up a significant amount of time). First, let me explain to you why it is important for hair to be up. Dance is very physical - there is much movement. When hair is down it is very distracting, and can even inhibit a dancer's ability to perform certain moves. I understand that it may be difficult to get hair up in a formal bun for the little ones (pre-ballet). Whereas it is not a requirement for the youngest dancers every week (a ponytail will suffice), occasionally giving it a try would be good. Most likely you will be asked to have hair up in a bun for performances. Girls in Ballet I and up need to have their hair up in a bun unless it is too short to do so. In these levels we practice spots and/or turns. If hair is back, but in a pony tail or braid, it will still whip around and hit the child's face. The hair hitting them in the face with discourage them from using their head correctly (spotting movements require extremely fast turning of the head). If hair is down consistently, students may develop bad habits as to how to use the head. Bad habits can take years to break, and slow a student's progress in certain areas tremendously.

Now, here is one way that can be used to get up hair. Note, this is one way; the way that I have found works best for me (even with long, thick hair I was always able to get it to stay up without fail). There are other methods that can be used. Regardless, you will usually need a hair elastic, hair pins (long

ones are preferable), and hair nets (hair colored, preferably not the blue/pink colored hair nets, especially for performances. All are sold in many grocery stores – I usually go to Fred Meyer.). I am again going to draw a diagram as well as explain the process. I hope you will be able to make sense of it with the two together.

1. Put hair in a ponytail with a hair elastic – the pony tail should be in the middle of the back of the head – not too high or too low.
2. Pull the ponytail into two parts.
3. Wrap one half of the pony tail around the other half of the pony tail. Secure it with 1 or 2 long hair pins.
4. Wrap the other half of the pony tail around the first half of the pony tail in the opposite direction (think cinnamon roll). Secure this section with 1 or 2 long hair pins as well.
5. Put the hair net over the bun – hair nets are usually big enough for 2 or 3 layers (start it at an end of the hair net, pull it over, twist the hair net and pull it back over. Repeat until the hair net is secure – not too tight, but not loose).
6. Put remaining hair pins in the hair (4-6, or more if necessary).



Again, this is how I personally do my hair. There are many other ways in which it can be done. It may be necessary to use hair spray or gel if your child has fine, slick hair. If you have any problems let me know, I would be happy to help.

Performances

Without a doubt, performances are the most exciting part of the year for students and parents. They give a chance for fun and expression, allow each class to work and interact together, and have the entire studio working together to perform a much practiced ballet for students. They give parents an opportunity to see what has been learned and practiced and how much their child has improved. In addition, the performances are a joy for friends and the rest of the community.

All this said, it is important to realize the amount of work and commitment that is put into a performance. During rehearsal seasons (October – Christmas Break for Nutcracker, and April – Mid June for the Spring performance), there is a more defined attendance policy. There are also a couple Saturdays where we have all-cast rehearsals. There are costumes, make-up, and hair to be attended to. And, there is the dress rehearsal the day of the show. Please read the performance season expectations below.

When Unable to Participate

Whereas performances are extremely encouraged as they are an important part of dance, they are not required. In saying this I ask that if for whatever reason you are unable to participate in a performance that you please let me know as soon as possible. Please email us at americanballetacademy@gmail.com. Listed above are the performance rehearsal seasons. Inevitably, I start planning for these performances far before these dates. Please let me know as far in advance as possible if you will be unable to participate. This will help me accurately cast and choreograph the ballets. I understand that there are times when it is impossible to know that you will not be able to be involved in our shows. Unfortunately, if you are not able to inform me within two weeks of the start of rehearsals it may still be necessary for you to purchase the costume that is required for your class (know that frequently costumes are not required, and when they are I try to keep the cost to a minimum and the use as practical as possible – see below).

Performance Attendance Policy

I understand that there are always numerous things that interfere with practice and rehearsals. However, when there are excessive absences, the ability for both the student and the class as a whole to be able to execute their dance to their highest potential is greatly hindered. In order to come up with an attendance policy that is fair to the students of the studio, but also allows ABA to have productions of high quality, I discussed ideas and alternatives with numerous different people. This is the policy that we have come up with.

- There are certain absences which are viewed as “excused”. These include illness, family emergencies, and necessary school/church events (not social based events. An example of an excused absence would be a band concert).
- Each student is allowed a certain number of “unexcused” absences. This number is determined by the number of rehearsals each class has a week (If your class has one rehearsal a week you are allowed one absence through the rehearsal season. If your class has 3 rehearsals a week your child is allowed 3 absences throughout rehearsal season).
- If a student misses more than their allotted number of unexcused absences they will be asked to come in for a private to make up for the missed rehearsal time. Please note: privates are not cheap. I know that this is a financial challenge for some people. I am hoping that it will be incentive for you to have your child at their scheduled rehearsals. However, I know that sometimes this is not possible. Know I will only ask you to come in for a private if your child needs it. And, often times privates can be very short – especially for the younger dancers. The length of the private will be determined on an individual basis. I promise, I don’t want to spend my spare time in unnecessary privates – I am extremely busy.
- Whereas there are a number of situations that are considered excused absences, please understand that if this number gets excessive I may still ask that you come in for a private lesson. Again, this will be determined on an individual basis. What is most important is

that your child is comfortable and confident with the material that they will be performing on stage – I do not want children to go up on stage and become embarrassed or scared. This can become a traumatizing experience, and can last for prolonged periods of time. Furthermore, it again becomes a safety issue if a child is not confident with their material as it can become a traffic issue on stage.

As of yet, I have not had anyone approach me with a better solution to solving the dilemma of finding a balance that is both understanding of involvement in other activities and emergencies and that also allows the students to be confident and proud of the work that they both do as an individual and a class. If you have any suggestions as to what can be done while maintaining this balance, please let me know.

All-Cast Rehearsals

As stated above, the studio works together to put the performances together. There are two extra practices a couple weekends prior to the performance (dates will be included yearly in the holiday/performance schedule). These two rehearsals prior to the show are the only times that we have a chance to put everything together. This extra practice is vitally important to the show as it allows both me and the dancers to be aware of situations that require more attention, and allow us to figure exact spacing. Please, make these extra rehearsals a priority. If you can't make it to the entire practice, come to as much as you possibly can. If you are going to be completely unable to make it, please let me know so that I can plan accordingly.

Costumes and Make-up

Costumes and make-up are yet another aspect of performance. Prior to a performance I will put together a list of what will be necessary for each individual class. Please look at this information carefully, and try to be organized to make sure you have everything on the list in advance. I always try my best to keep costume costs to an absolute minimum. Frequently, especially for Nutcracker, I will be able to provide the entire costume. There will be times when you will need to purchase a specific color of leotard, tights/pants, or shoes. Costume sizing will happen during class, usually mid-October for Nutcracker and mid-April for the spring show. Watch the newsletter for exact dates.

It is vitally important that if you borrow a costume from ABA the costume is returned in the same condition that it was taken. In order to help achieve this, please do not take the costume home unless you are asked to bring it to the performance yourself, and never bring it home after the show. Costumes are in sets. If too many costumes from one set disappear or are damaged, the entire set will become unusable. If it becomes too much of a problem that people do not turn in their costumes then I will be forced to change the policy such that everyone is required to buy their own costume.

I want to mention again that undergarments are not to be worn under costumes. This is part of the dress code for ABA, and it continues over into performances. If a student has numerous costume changes it is, however, completely acceptable that they wear a nude colored leotard under their costume.

Make-up is important on stage because under stage lighting much of the definition in a person's face is lost. Moreover, it makes many people of a lighter complexion appear ghostly. Unless otherwise noted in the Newsletter make-up should be as follows:

- Skin colored, or slightly darker foundation
- Blush
- Purple shades of eye shadow
- Eyeliner
- Mascara
- Red lipstick

Make-up is to be put on heavy – much heavier than what you would wear on a day to day basis. I know some of you will wonder if this is really necessary. I promise you it is; without it all facial definition and expression is lost. There will be parents at performances that are available to help you get your child's make-up applied. If for whatever reason (medical, religious, etc.) your child is unable to wear stage make-up, please let me know prior to the performance. This will allow me to properly inform backstage

parent volunteers. If I am not informed of this decision then volunteers will try to apply make-up to the child. On another note, I want to stress: **make-up is not to be shared**. This is an extreme health concern.

Hair, like in class, should be put up securely so that it does not fall and distract the dancer. Unless otherwise noted and discussed, it should be put in a bun. If you have questions as to how to secure hair up in a bun, please refer to the diagrams above. In addition, for performances extra hair spray and gel should be used. Whispies will catch the light, and can distract the audience from the dancers. Bangs need to be gelled back as they cast a shadow over dancer's eyes. If necessary, you should use hair pins to help hold bangs and hair in place. Finally, for performances dancers will frequently have extra hair pieces to wear. Please make sure that these costume pieces are also extremely secure so they don't fall out of your dancer's hair during the show. Bring extra bobby pins to facilitate this. Again, there will be backstage volunteers to help with hair. I ask you try to do it yourself so that they don't have to do everyone's hair, and can have time to make sure everyone's hair and hair pieces are put up correctly.

Dress Rehearsal

Dress rehearsal is the only time that the studio has to practice on stage prior to the performance, and is the last practice students will have as a class. Please make the rehearsal a priority – it can be very difficult and confusing to figure spacing if anyone is missing (spacing on stage is very different from that in the studio, and students need to practice their wing entrances/exits). Since the performance is a group effort you are expected to be there. Always come talk to me far in advance if there is potential of a schedule conflict. For the exact schedule of the day, please refer to the Newsletters prior to the performance. They will list times that classes are expected to come to the auditorium. As dress rehearsal is extremely important, make every effort to be there early so that your child has time to focus and prepare for the show (also please note that the times listed in the Newsletter are the times that the students are to be at the auditorium dressed in costume with make-up and hair done).

Plan that the day of dress rehearsal, and the first performance, to be a long day. I know this can be hard. I do my very best to get through rehearsal in a timely fashion while adequately preparing students for the show so that everyone can take a dinner/rest break. Typically, dress rehearsal will have call time of 10:00am, and will last until 4:30 or 5:00. Call for the show is at 5:45, with the performance starting at 7:00. Sunday the call time is 1:15, with the show starting at 2:30pm. Again, please stick to these call times before the show – it gives the children just enough time to re-focus, touch up make-up, and get into their costume again. Moreover, it gives me time to do a head count and call people if necessary.

I know everyone is going to want to send your child to dress rehearsal with food. I completely understand that children will need to be replenished throughout the day. However, eating and drinking in costumes (with the exception of water) cannot be permitted. There are certain foods that cannot be around costumes, even if your child is not wearing it. And, no food is allowed in the auditorium. I will prepare a list of costume friendly foods prior to the show and list it in the newsletter. Please stick to this list. I thank you for understanding and following this policy.

Volunteers

Unfortunately, I cannot do everything that goes into a performance by myself. There are numerous things, both before the performance in preparation for the day, and the day of the show that require help. Volunteer duties include costume and set construction, ticket sales, set-up, dressing room and back stage help (both during dress rehearsal and the performance/s), strike, and costume collection. There will be volunteer lists placed upstairs in the waiting room area prior to the performance. Please sign-up to help with these shows as it will make them possible!!!

Summers!

No doubt, summers are a lot of fun, and provide opportunities to be involved in other activities and have family vacations. I mentioned it earlier, I am going to say it now, and you will hear me say it

again - try your very best to not forget about dance over the summer! This does not mean that you have to dance as much as you do during the school year, or stick to any particular schedule...I do my very best to make schedules flexible and easy so everyone can continue dancing as much as they possibly can, even if it is just a few classes. Taking a few months off without any dance can have a big impact in the progression on a dancer. Over the summer, ABA operates with punch cards. You can buy a punch card for your dancer with a certain number of punches, depending on what your schedule is, and how much you want to dance. Of course, if you run out of punches, you can always buy another punch card. This system is great because it allows your dance schedule to be very flexible around your other schedules– I will just punch a class each time you come in. Summer is also great because, if you want, you can come in and try a different class, like jazz (as long as it is within your child’s level). This allows you to see if it is something that your child would be interested in pursuing in the fall.

In addition to regular classes, ABA also offers week-long summer intensives. I would love it if everyone would see the summer as not only an opportunity to be involved in other activities, but also concentrate on their dance studies and advancement. Or, if you are unable to fit typical classes into your schedule that you still enroll your child in a summer intensive. These week-long intensives are not only great for training, but they are also a lot of fun for the students. We explore other forms of dance beyond ballet, choreograph, and do crafts and games. I encourage you all to consider summer dance intensives at ABA. Keep your eye out for information in the spring.

Now, for the more advanced, serious dancer there are also summer intensives outside those offered at ABA. These intensives are typically associated with a performing dance company, and offer great exposure for the dancer, as well as wonderful training from different, frequently highly sought dance instructors. For these programs, it is often times necessary to drive a distance (Portland or Seattle) for an audition – acceptance into these programs is competitive. Many of these programs are located in other areas of the country – Seattle, New York, California, Texas... all over. They are typically 5-6 weeks long. These programs are highly encouraged. Typically students start thinking of auditioning for these programs between ages 12 - 14. If you have any interest in these programs, please come talk to me. Auditions generally start in January, so planning ahead is necessary. You will hear more information regarding these programs as time gets closer.

Pointe at ABA

Pointe is a goal of many dancers, and often times seems extremely unattainable. This is quite understandable as the amount of training and discipline required before a dancer is ready to start pointe is very extensive. Starting pointe too early physically, mentally, or technically is very dangerous. For the safety of the dancer it is required that bodies have had a certain amount of development; if dancers go *en pointe* too young they can have permanent damage done to their feet and ankles. The best advice I can give you is be patient. And, even when a dancer is ready for the opportunity, pointe is still very difficult, and can be frustrating. Like class advancement, starting pointe work is a decision that is made by the instructor on an individual basis. Considerations include dancer’s strength, flexibility (especially in the foot and ankle), ability to hold proper leg and body alignment, and commitment to the art. Typically a student will not be ready before age 11 or 12, and often times not until 13 or 14, and after several years of serious training. Remember: there is no arbitrary “right time” to go *en pointe*. Studies even show that dancers who wait a little longer, working on their strength and waiting for their bones to more fully develop, are at no disadvantage later in their dancing careers, and may actually be better off because they didn’t harm their bodies. Of course, it never hurts to think ahead and try to prepare yourself for pointe. When students are ready, I start teaching foot and ankle exercises; encourage your child to practice these if they know them. Even something as simple as walking around the house on *demi-pointe* (also referred to “tippy toes”) helps as it too develops strength and flexibility. Pointe is in the syllabus starting at Level III; however, not all students in Level III are *en pointe*. Many students will be in level III for a year or two before they are ready to start pointe and take the class as a pre-pointe foundation. Mentioned earlier

is the importance of continuing dance over the summer. This is especially important once your child is in levels II and III and starting to think in the direction of pointe. Again, I want to emphasize that over summers it is not required that you stick to any specific schedule, or dance the entire summer. I just ask that you make the effort to do it as much as possible – your body, and your feet, will thank you for it later. When it is time for your student to begin preparing for pointe, I will speak with you. Please talk to me if you would like further information regarding pointe before that time.

Community Involvement

Being able to proactively make decisions to be involved in the community is one of the things I love about owning a business. Those of you who have been with ABA know that I try to keep involved in the community, and do as much for the community, as possible. Involvement ranges from First Wednesday and free community classes to studio time rentals/donations, free community performances, and culminates with our semi-annual performances. Performances are what I see as our biggest opportunity to help the community. Traditionally, all net-proceeds from our Nutcracker performance are donated to the Marion-Polk Food Share. Instead of donating net-proceeds from our spring performance to a specific non-profit organization every year, I try to provide assistance to a variety of different non-profits. If any of you have desire to help with these performances, or anything else ABA is involved in, please let me know. We commonly need help for these programs. Assistance can be given through donations of your time and talent, or monetarily to help cover the costs of productions. Remember, anything you can do is greatly appreciated!

Saying Good-Bye to ABA

Obviously, it is my hope that people will continue dancing at ABA as long as possible. However, I realize that for numerous reasons this is not always a possibility. In the event that you must leave ABA, I ask, PLEASE let me know. Once a student at ABA, I reserve class space for you for the entire year, or until you inform me of otherwise. Moreover, I plan and choreograph dances specifically for each individual class – class size has huge influence on not only the choreography, but also the dances that I will designate to classes. When a student leaves mid-rehearsal season, it becomes difficult not only for me (I am left to make changes to a dance and have ordered costumes that typically I am left to pay for), but also becomes confusing for the class because spacing, and sometimes choreography must change. Finally, there are sometimes waitlists to get into class. Unlike many activities, I don't require contracts in regards to your commitment to dance. I try to make dance a positive experience– all the way to the end. Please, in return, keep me informed of your personal plans and decisions. Also, please note that if you do not inform me of your decision to leave ABA in accordance with the studio policies (with exception of summer term and fall re-enrollment) it is possible that you will be charged for the classes reserved for your child. Our policy is that if we do not receive a written notice by the 15th of the month, prior to when you wish to stop, then we will expect payment for the next month.