
IDTA Membership Number: :

LEVEL FOUR DIPLOMA
IN DANCE TEACHING

UNIT ONE
SAFE DANCE PRACTICE

PORTFOLIO

IDTA Level 4 Diploma in Dance Teaching

Portfolio Index

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IDTA Level 4 Diploma in Dance Teaching

Evidence mapping grid - Unit 1 Safe Dance Practice.

Name:

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1. RISK ASSESSMENT

The 'Health & Safety Executive' website is very useful for explaining risk assessments and suggesting how best to assess risks in the workplace.

When assessing a workplace we attempt to identify:-

- Hazards – anything that may cause harm, such as electricity, chemicals, an open drawer etc.
- Risks – the chance, high or low, that someone could be harmed by these and/or other hazards.

When performing a risk assessment we aim to:-

- Identify the hazards
- Ascertain who may be harmed and how
- Evaluate the risk and decide on precautions
- Record significant findings
- Review the assessment and update if necessary

For thirteen years I worked as a dancer and later Dance Captain aboard cruise ships. During this time I was part of a safety team that performed weekly Risk Assessments along with the Safety Officer in differing areas of the ship. Before every performance in the Theatre I performed my own risk assessment prior to the performance to ensure that possible hazards were identified and dealt with. I was also involved in investigations with the security and infirmary personnel following any injury that occurred on stage.

Since returning to teaching I have adopted the same practice of assessing my workplace prior to students arriving. This isn't always possible as I teach for several studios and on some days my hours of work start after classes have already started. In either case I am constantly looking for possible hazards and either fix them immediately or report them to the schools' Principle.

The following risk assessment was taken at the Betty Chappelle Dance Centre in Penistone which is a relatively new studio. Health and safety personnel were involved in checking the studio during its' construction and it therefore has excellent safety features such as emergency lighting, fire alarms, step free access, sound proofing etc.

I performed the Risk Assessment prior to any students arriving and also made observations during the first class I took.

No major risks were found but even a small incident, such as someone being scratched by a students' ring that she didn't take off for class may have consequences in addition to injury. For example:- Parents are aware that we have a policy of no jewellery in class and if an injury involving a ring, as above described were to happen we could easily lose their confidence in us to care correctly for their children and the parent may well pull the student out of the school.

Risk Assessment

Carried out by___

Date__25th February 2016_____

Location of risk assessment__B

Date of next assessment____1st June 2016_____

What is the hazard?	Who is at risk from the hazard?	What is the likelihood of the risk?	What is the impact of the risk?	What are you already doing to reduce this risk?	Do you need to do anything else to manage the risk?	Who is responsible for further action?
Pair of shoes placed on top of fire extinguisher (Obstruction of safety equipment)	Students & Teachers	Medium	Medium	Shoes removed and placed in changing room	Remind students to always keep fire extinguishers free from obstruction Remind teachers to watch that fire extinguishers remain clear	Students & Teachers
Dance bags left on floor in changing from previous day (Trip Hazard)	Students & Teachers	High	Medium	Bags placed in lockers	Verbally remind students to take everything home with them at the end of the lesson	Teachers

Electricity socket cover not inserted (Possible risk of electric shock)	Principal & Teachers	Low	Medium	Applied the socket cover	Remind teachers & the Principal that once they have finished teaching, unplug the music centres to insert the socket cover so that an electricity socket is not left exposed	Principal & Teachers
Students Wearing Jewelry During Class (high risk that jewelry may become caught on someone/something and cause injury)	Students & Teachers	High	Medium	Uniform policy clearly states no jewelry to be worn in class. Parents and students are made aware of this policy as soon as students are enrolled in class.	Remind students before each lesson to remove their jewelry. Speak to principal about possible putting up a sign reminding students	Principal, students & Teachers
Missing Fire Procedure Sign (possible panic & confusion if there was ever a fire)	Students	Medium	Medium	A clear evacuation procedure is in place with an adequate alarm system & out of building muster point. Without the procedure being on display students will not be reminded of what to do in an emergency. Looked for sign without success.	Spoke to Principal either to locate the missing sign or create a new one. Also requested that principal arrange a series of evacuation drills ASAP	Principal

2. DESCRIPTION OF LEGISLATION

The following notes discuss legislation which affects all dance teachers. The particular legislation I'm detailing are as follows:-

- Equality Act 2010
- Health & Safety At Work Act 1974
- Child Protection Legislation

As dance teachers, it is important to have knowledge about any legislation that affects what we do and how we do it in order that we operate within the law. These three pieces of legislation are detailed separately below.

EQUALITY ACT 2010

The 'Equalities Act 2010' brought together several previous acts such as the 'Race Relations Act 1976,' the 'Disability Discrimination Act 1995' and the 'Sex Discrimination Act 1975' under one piece of legislation.

Basically it requires equal treatment of all people, regardless of age, disability, gender, race, religion and sexual orientation.

In the case of disability, employers and service providers (including Dance Teachers) are required to make reasonable adjustments to their workplaces to overcome barriers experienced by disabled people.

The policy of all dance studios I work for reflects the above act and any person who wishes to attend classes will be accepted no matter what their colour, religion etc.

The Betty Chappelle Dance Centre studio where I teach has a disabled ramp in place in addition to a disabled toilet and wide doors to allow wheelchairs through – all installed to comply with the Equalities Act

HEALTH & SAFETY AT WORK ACT 1974

Under the Health & Safety At Work Act 1974 we have to 'ensure, so far as reasonably practicable, the health and safety of yourself and others who may be affected by what you do or do not do.'

I have found websites giving guidance on how best to apply health and safety law to small businesses such as the dance schools I work for. A few examples:-

- Risk Assessments, such as the one I completed earlier are important as they makes us think about what could possibly cause harm to people – we then have to decide what steps we need to prevent that harm
- Talk to other teachers in the dance school – they may have different health and safety concerns or other possible solutions to deal with current risks
- Have the correct equipment – such as a stable ballet barre, an adequate gymnastic tumbling mat, suitable dance floors
- Maintain a good first aid kit

As a dance teacher there is a lot I can do to maintain good health and safety in the classroom:-

- Ensure students are warmed up well before class and perform a suitable cool down
- Ensure that what I teach is suitable for the class being taught – e.g. I wouldn't put a child in ballet pointe shoes if their feet were not yet strong enough for them
- Make sure that students are always kept well aware of our safety procedures – e.g. fire evacuation, no jewellery in class, correct uniform etc.
- Make sure that the equipment I use e.g. music centres are safe not use – no wires that students could trip on.

CHILD PROTECTION LEGISLATION

Child protection laws are extensive and cover a whole manner of issues from adoptions to preventing abuse. In the case of dance teachers, it is our responsibility to ensure that the children are taught in a safe environment.

As a dance teacher I consider it absolutely necessary that I always have a current Enhanced DBS check, especially considering that I am male and work with a lot of young female children. After the recent reports of activities involving children by high profile celebrities such as Jimmy Saville, plus the fact that I teach a lot of gymnastic classes to children each week where I am required to physically handle them to improve their technique, I feel it is imperative that I can prove to parents (and employers) that I am of good character and they can trust me to care for their children's wellbeing.

The DBS check safeguards children against people who have been deemed unsafe to work with children and is an important to me that my employers and parents of my students know I have a current DBS check.

The 'Anti Bullying Alliance' defines bullying as the 'repetitive, intentional hurting of one person or group by another person or group, where the relationship involves an imbalance of power.'

Each dancing school I teach for has stated that they would ask bullies to leave the school immediately if they found that bullying in any form was in their school. I have the same policy and would report bullying to parents and the schools' Principal if I ever identified any kind of bullying.

INSURANCE

Public Liability Insurance- This covers the cost of claims made by members of the public for incidents that occur in connection with your business activities. This is very important insurance to have if you own your own business premises such as a dance school, as if any incident happened on site it would be covered.

Professional Indemnity Insurance- a commercial policy designed to protect business owners, freelancers and the self-employed if clients claim a service is inadequate. This is beneficial for dance teachers to have as if someone isn't happy for the service they've paid for (a dance class), then you could face hefty legal fees and compensation payments if you don't have this insurance.

Personal Accident Insurance- This is also known as personal injury insurance. It's designed to pay out compensation if you suffer from a serious injury or death as the result of an accident. This is very important for a dance teacher to have as if you face a bad injury and are unable to dance/ teach, then you will be out of work and with being self-employed won't be earning anything. If you have this insurance, then the compensation should cover any work missed and help make ends meet whilst you recover.

3. SAFE DANCE ENVIRONMENT

There are several factors that together make up a safe dance environment.

It is important, as Dance Teachers that we aim to create this environment, not only from a safety point of view but from a business point of view – if students are safe and happy they will return, if they feel unsafe or uncomfortable in the dance school then it's likely they will go somewhere else.

Factors contributing to a safe dance environment include:-

VENUE

As previously discussed, before the students arrive, I or other teachers spend some time ensuring that the venue is as safe as possible – this may moving bags and dance shoes out of the way to a safe place, ensuring that the room temperature is comfortable for dancing (the studio has the ability to pick the exact temperature you want), there are clean towels in the bathroom, ensuring the room is well lit and the outside light is on so that in winter months when it gets dark early the outside area is well lit so students are not trying to find the entrance in the dark.

Most important is to ensure that the floor is clean, cleared of trip hazards and undamaged.

An ideal venue should:-

- An adequately sized dance floor, suitable for dancing on
- Be adequately lit
- Be of a suitable temperature for dancing
- Be free of slip and trip hazards such as loose wiring
- Be well ventilated
- Have a separate area from the dance studio for rest and relaxation

I always work with the 'Neat means safe' motto

Additionally, not only does a neat and well organised venue promote a safe and healthy environment but it also demonstrates professionalism and preparedness.

UNIFORM

Students wearing correct uniform in class, with the correct and well maintained shoes is an extremely important factor in being able to provide a safe dance environment as risks can be caused if clothing is inadequate for the class being taught.

A few examples:-

- Wearing jazz pants that are too long – they can catch under the feet causing a slip
- Wearing anything other than bare feet or proper gymnastic shoes for gymnastic classes – the risk of slipping is too great to wear anything else.
- Holes in ballet shoes – ballet shoes only last so long and can start to develop holes which become a slip and trip hazard. The foot also loses support.
- Loose screws in tap shoes can cause trip hazards and cut up the dance floor – in the case of a wooden floor this may then cause splinters which can injure dancers. There is also the risk that the metal tap may become unstable, again causing trip hazards.
- Hair also needs to be tied back to avoid the risk of it getting caught on something

THE CLASS ITSELF

Injury can occur if a student is asked to do something that their bodies are not yet ready for. It is therefore imperative that before we teach age appropriate classes and use training exercises to build up technique. For example, a pirouette needs to be taught in stages over a period of time to build up both the strength and the technique needed in order to perform a pirouette successfully and safely.

Obviously a good warm up before the class is important, as is a cool down at the end.

I always try to plan and structure my classes before I teach them so I have an understanding of how much time I'm going to spend on particular movements – I'd prefer for students to do one thing well and safely than a lot of mixed sections rushed together.

Corrections need to be given in class, especially if students are showing signs of bad posture or unsafe practise.

SCHOOL PROCEDURES & RULES

Each dancing school I teach for has a set of rules which are clearly listed on the enrolment form when a student first joins class. These rules are reiterated verbally when broken in or before class.

They include:-

- No chewing gum – it is extremely dangerous to chew or eat anything whilst dancing. Plus leaving chewing gum around anyway presents a hazard.
- No jewellery to be worn in class – as stated in my risk assessment, this can lead to scratches, earrings can be ripped out, necklaces can get caught on things
- Correct uniform and footwear to be worn
- Bullying will not be tolerated

Additionally, general good behaviour in class is paramount – not only so they can concentrate on learning but so the class can operate safely.

4. RECOGNISING POOR POSTURE

My chosen genre is **Ballet**

Example One

I had taken over the teaching of a ballet class of nine/ten year old girls. Their previous ballet teacher had stressed that she wanted excellent turnout. I would say that turnout develops over time and at this age. Good technique and getting the 'actions' correct are more important than over forced turnout. However, I noticed one girl as soon as I taught her for the first time.

She would stand facing the barre in ballet first position and force her feet back to the point that her toes were actually facing backwards by the time she had finished. Her knees were bent, her bottom was stuck out and she was leaning forward heavily onto the barre. I was also concerned about the stress this position was having on her knees.

To rectify this I asked the student to stand up straight with her toes together – away from the barre – her posture was fine when she did this but as soon as she started to separate her toes to turn her feet out she would automatically start to bend her knees, stick her bottom out and lean forward, as she had at the barre - It had become an almost automatic position for her.

It took time but making her stand with a minimal amount of turnout and practising simple movements such as 'demi plié and recover' with good posture eventually worked.

Example Two

I have had a few cases where dancers have been extremely limbered in the back but have lacked good posture. Whenever I asked them to stand up straight they would arch their back, pushing their ribcages forwards and tilting in the pelvis. As a child I was also like this – it 'feels' as though you are standing straight with good posture.

In these cases I ask the student to lie on their back – legs together – trying to mirror the same position lying down as they'd do standing up.

By doing this the dancer can feel that there is a gap between the floor and their back. I ask them to press their back into the floor – this tilts the pelvis back into the correct position, the dancer can also feel their stomach muscles engage. This 'back flat' position is what we want when standing up.

I may also try this stood against a wall – pressing the back into the wall.

Once standing again, I aim to get the student to create the same position standing as they just did on the floor – with reminders whenever they lapse back into an arched back position the student should be able to achieve a good posture.

5. EXAMPLES OF HYDRATION & NUTRITION

Hydration

The importance of drinking water to maintain good health is well documented – it is recommended that 2 litres or 8 glasses of fluid are drunk daily, with at least half of this being in the form of water.

Dancers require more than this in order to remain hydrated due to the large amount of water lost during dance classes, rehearsals and performances.

As Dance Teachers, it is important that we schedule enough breaks for dancers during long classes in order for our students to have a drink. Drinking should also be encouraged before and after a class to reduce the risk of de-hydration which can cause fatigue, nausea, decreased performance and cramping.

Sipping water often is more recommended than taking large amounts of liquid in one go – this reduces the uncomfortable feeling of bloating.

Nutrition

Eating habits can have a large effect on a dancers' body and performance. Not eating enough can lead to lack of energy, whereas eating a large meal before a performance may result in a feeling of a heavy stomach and/or nausea.

As with drinking, it is recommended that food be taken little and often in order to assist digestion and keep energy levels constant.

When I danced professionally I had a few instances of dancers with eating disorders.

It was written in our contract that we would be weighed every week and a large increase or decrease in our weight may result in termination of our employment.

As Dance Captain it was my job to weigh the dancers each week and speak to them if I had concerns.

I noticed over a period of four weeks that the weight of one particular female dancer dropped dramatically and, even more significantly she started to look unhealthy – she looked tired, gaunt, her ribs were a lot more noticeable.

I spoke to her and she said that she'd been working out more and changed her diet.

I asked her to put some weight back on, to which she agreed.

However, her weight continued to drop quickly to the point where I had to involve my managers who forced her to visit the doctor. Following her appointment, the doctor spoke to me to say she had aggressively denied having a problem, which in itself is evidence of an eating disorder.

At this point, with the doctors' advice, I excluded her from all performances and her contract was terminated.

We have a case right now where we've noticed one young dancer brings food to eat in her breaks between classes but throws it away rather than eating it. Once again, we've noticed that she is becoming very thin.

We have discussed this with her mother and now her mother comes to the studio during the child's breaks and watches her eat it.

6. IDENTIFYING & TAKING ACTION TO PREVENT INJURIES

I firmly believe that prevention is better than cure and as previously discussed I aim to keep the dance studio and classes as safe as possible so that accidents are limited.

However, from time to time accidents can happen and following are two examples of accidents that have happened at dance studios where I teach.

Sprained Ankle

I was working on 'leaps' with a class of students. In an attempt to make the students think about increasing the height and length of their leaps I placed two gymnastic mats on the floor. These were both approx. 1.5 inches thick.

The first was placed horizontally to the students – I wanted them to leap over this mat without touching it – requiring them to have enough height and length in their leap to clear the mat. The second was placed length ways to the students – this mat was for the students to land on. This mat was not 100% necessary as the students could have landed on the floor quite safely but I calculated that if their leaps were higher than usual then a soft landing would be safer than a hard floor.

One girl performed her leap well, cleared the horizontal mat and landed safely on the second mat. She then went to step off the mat but her last step on the mat was so close to the edge of the mat that she went over on her ankle and her foot fell off the mat.

It was only a 1.5" drop from mat to floor but her ankle started to swell.

As a cruise ship dancer it was quite common for myself and other performers to experience knee and ankle injuries. In addition, I have been trained in first aid so I knew how to handle this situation.

I got the student to sit on the floor and elevate her foot onto a chair.

We keep ice in the fridge for such occasions – I wrapped some ice in a towel (so the student would not get ice burns from ice being applied directly to the skin) and applied the towel to the ankle.

I advised the student to maintain the ice pack there as I called her mother (we have emergency contact numbers for all students on hand in case of emergency).

The students' mother came to pick her up. The sprain was not bad and the ice pack had managed to keep the swelling to a minimum. The student was able to walk with her mother to the car. I advised the student to keep weight off the ankle as much as possible and not to try dancing until the ankle was fixed – it is common for students and performers to start dancing again before their injuries have recovered which can result in re-injury.

The incident was recorded in the 'Accident Log Book' which is kept in the studio.

Broken Wrist

I wasn't at the studio the day of this accident but I was informed of it by the principal of the school who was teaching at the time:-

A ballet class was in progress, the teacher turned towards the music centre to press 'play' and whilst her back was turned a student decided to do a cartwheel.

All students know NOT to do this, we are very strict against students doing gymnastic activities outside of a gymnastic class which is why this girl decided to do the cartwheel when the teachers' back was turned.

As the student was wearing ballet shoes, she could not grip the floor correctly and fell heavily onto her hand.

Assuming the wrist was broken the teacher immobilised the arm by supporting it in a sling from the first aid box.

The students' mother was called and took the girl to A&E where it was confirmed that the wrist was broken.

The teacher logged the accident in the accident book and informed all teachers, including myself that this had happened. We were advised to tell all students about the incident at the start of their classes in order that they could realise that accidents like this can happen.

7. KEY STAGES OF DEVELOPMENT & EFFECTS ON DANCER PERFORMANCE

I teach the full range of ages of students – my youngest is less than two years old, whereas my oldest student is seventy eight.

Each age group has different requirements and therefore I change the way I teach depending on which age group I am teaching

Young Children

I teach my youngest, 2 year old students at a day nursery where I have nursery staff in the class to join in and assist me with the children.

At this age children are un co-ordinated, tire easily and have limited language and muscle skills.

With children I find that you can't just 'tell' them what you want them to do, it is important to try and paint a mental picture that the children can recognise – 'marching like soldiers,' 'walking tall like a princess' and 'running on the tiptoes like a fairy' are all phrases that I could say in order for children to understand what I would like them to do.

Young children's classes are short and varied – at this age their attention span is not long and involve very basic, fun technique. Keeping their interest is also important for maintaining discipline in a class, as once they get bored young children tend to either sit down or start running about.

As the children start to grow and we begin to start to teach more technique I still find it necessary and important to give the students mental images to assist them in the 'feel' of the movement they're performing. For example, a ballet 1st arm position I will often describe as 'hugging a big balloon'

Young Adults (Teenagers)

As teenagers, students go through a rapid growth spurt in order to reach their final adult height.

At its peak males may grow by 9cm a year, whilst females can grow up to 8cm a year.

In some cases the body growth is so fast that the brain simply can't keep up and teenagers can become clumsy.

The growth spurt starts outside of the body with growth of the hands and feet, followed by the arms and legs and then the spine. The final expansion is broadening of the chest and shoulders in males and widening of the hips and pelvis in females.

The female growth spurt tends to start earlier than the male but also ends earlier, at around 18 years of age. Males can continue to grow until the age of 20 or even later.

As a teacher of teenagers I find that by this age, particularly the late teens, I am able to discuss the aims of the technique I'm trying to get across to them a lot clearer than when they were younger. I also find that they are interested when I go into further detail and discuss, for example, muscle functions and breathing and this often brings pleasing technical results.

I will do a longer, more advanced warm up for students of this age as they are performing more technical movements and I want to be sure that their changing bodies are prepared for the class. Additionally, I will focus on correcting individuals' faults more often, as students develop at different speeds and may require more one on one attention at this age.

Finally, I find that teenagers miss classes more often than when they were younger, usually as the cause of injury outside of the dance school. I have one female student that is often away from class due to hockey injuries. At this age, the students are developing a varied amount of interests and their hunger for competition is also growing which can result in injuries as they try to compete against others in their class. These students will, again require more one on one coaching if they have missed a large number of classes.

Adults

As they get older our students will lose flexibility, muscle strength and the ability to recover from injury as quickly as when they were younger. Joints become stiffer and age related conditions such as arthritis may become an issue. I often find that bunions and knee problems can be a conditions that are quite common.

The ladies that attend my adult classes are generally in their sixties and seventies – they have no interest in taking exams or performing on stage, therefore, my classes are arranged with 'fitness and fun' in mind.

Music choices are important as good music is as important to my adult classes as the dance movements themselves. I always aim to make the class challenging but not too hard, remembering that some in the class are new to dance whilst others have danced since they were children.

At this age I do not ask anyone to dance in turn as adults can be quite self-conscious about dancing in front of others – they are there to socialise and have fun through fitness rather than achieving perfect technique or being embarrassed.

Warming up is just as important before a class at this age. However, my adults prefer the same set warm up exercises to music each week so that they can remember the same thing from week to week. This also helps if adults have prior commitments and have to miss classes – if they know the warm up exercises at least then they can fit straight back into the class.