

**Level 4 Diploma in
Dance Teaching
Portfolio**

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Risk Assessment, 1.1



A Risk Assessment is a way of ensuring that a working environment is suitable for its purpose. It decides what could be a potential hazard and then creates control measures to ensure that forms of loss, damage or injury are minimised. Once a potential hazard is identified, it is necessary that all required actions are taken to eliminate the risk of injury.

In a dance studio, something which may not appear to be a hazard in day to day life can easily cause a problem due to the type of activity being carried out and the number of people using the room at any one time. For example, somebody wearing jewellery may not appear to be a threat in another working environment, however with children dancing with bare feet, moving fast and dancing on the floor, this could cause a nasty injury. As a result, we must be extra vigilant when conducting a risk assessment in a dance studio.



**Caution
Uneven floor**

On the following page is a risk assessment carried out by myself in a community hall where I run regular classes of my own.



ID	Risk	Effect	Cause	Severity	Likelihood	Importance	Action	Owner
1	Heavy entrance door	Unsafe entrance area for parents or students waiting before or after lesson. Door could slam shut trapping body parts or knocking someone over.	Door is not restrained or able to be locked in an open position	4	4	4	Asked building owner to attach a hook which will hold the door open. 'Warning- Fire Door' sign fixed in place.	Building owner
2	Step at entrance	Causing people to trip over.	Step is not obvious/high lighted	3	3	3	Ask building owner to put yellow tape along the edge of the step. 'warning- step' sign in place	Building owner
3	Large foldaway tables stored in corner of room	Large objects could fall onto someone	Tables are not restrained or supported by ropes/brackets	5	5	5	Ask for tables to be stored elsewhere, or atleast tied to the wall.	Building owner
4	Uneven floor tiles	Student could trip, could cause wounds if dancing bare foot.	Floor has been neglected or is old and not repaired often/well enough	4	5	5	Ask for floor tiles to be re-glued, in the mean time avoid the area in class and make all students aware.	Building owner, Teacher
5	Plug socket coming away from wall	Could cause electrical fault/fire	old fixtures not been replaced/checked	5	4	5	Avoid use of socket until replaced, ask building owner to fix it.	Building owner, Teacher
6	Pins on noticeboard	If on floor could cause puncture wounds to dancers/teachers/parents	Use of pins not appropriate	3	4	3	Use staples instead, communicate this to other room users. Check regularly for pins on floor.	Building owner, Teacher

Legislation, 1.2

A responsible dance teacher should work hard to ensure that they themselves, their school and their students adhere to various different forms of legislation. This is in the best interests of those who work at or attend the school as it creates an awareness and understanding of types of misconduct and what actions or behaviours cannot be tolerated. Types of legislation particularly important when working with children are:

Child protection:

As a dance teacher, we are responsible for protecting a child's safety and wellbeing while they are in our care. We should be vigilant to signs of abuse and neglect and know how to act appropriately if we suspect something. Signs of such mistreatment could be a sudden change in personality, physical signs such as bruising, weight loss, dirty clothing or clothing that is drastically too small / too big or an unwillingness to remove clothing items for class e.g. jumpers. Dance teachers often see children multiple times in any given week, and possibly in less clothing than other members of the community, for example, in a leotard and tights. Therefore, it is possible that we may see signs of abuse that others may not and as a result, we should always be on alert and be prepared to take action for a child. Appropriate action could be discussing an issue with the parents (without accusing them of neglect) to see how they respond, contacting the NSPCC or the police if it appears necessary. Often children do not have the confidence or the resources to contact authoritative figures who may be able to help them, and so by offering support and guidance to a young person, we could be the ones to help them.

Equal Opportunities:

The Equal Opportunities Act was passed by UK government in 2010 and it prohibits discrimination on the grounds of gender, religion, race, sexuality and disability. No student can be turned away from a class on these grounds, and efforts should be made to ensure that all children are able to participate in classes equally. For example, if a deaf child wanted to join a tap class, the teacher should look to find ways in which the students can participate in lessons

and learn like the rest of the class. For example, they may choose to use actions to demonstrate the beat in a piece of music. In addition to this, it is possible that a young girl may want to join a ballet class, however her religious dress code means that they cannot wear the school uniform. This does not allow the teacher to turn the student away, but in fact allow exceptions to the rule.

Health and Safety

As a dance teacher it is our responsibility to ensure that our premises are safe. Everyone has the right to a safe working environment, and it should be the priority of a dance teacher to ensure the safety of all students and teachers. The act was passed in 1974 and it protects every person in any given working environment against injury or harm caused by inappropriate surroundings. It is possible to sue somebody should they fail to do so, and so although a dance teacher should minimise all known risks, it is also sensible to hold teacher's insurance to protect themselves against any legal fees as the result of any harm or injury caused by an unfit for purpose dance studio. As a dance teacher, I can ensure that I am First Aid trained, that I am able to prevent injury, teach appropriate stretches and know the limits of stretching and also warm up and cool down students in every class.

Insurance

Public Liability Insurance

Public liability covers you if a student, parent, or any other member of the public claims they have been injured, or their property damaged, because of your business activities. Despite having thorough health and safety policies in place, it is still possible that accidents can occur due to certain circumstances being beyond your control. Because of this, it is essential to have dance teacher insurance to protect you in case the unexpected happens. This type of insurance is designed to protect dance teachers (and any business owner) against claims that result in legal proceedings. If a claim does become a legal matter, a policy will cover the cost of these expenses, including any compensation you are required to pay. Public liability claims can arise from several circumstances, but performance oversight/negligence is the main trigger. A dancer might trip on an

uneven surface at your studio or a loose cable attached to a music player, for example. It will also cover claims of property damage - for example, you hire a local church hall to run your classes at, and a student damages a window, the church group may make a claim against you. Public liability insurance would cover you if you are held responsible for such damages.

Professional Indemnity Insurance

This type of insurance protects you against accusations for insufficient teaching and advice. An example of this could be: during a class, you are teaching a new technical step that the students have not yet seen or attempted before. One dancer hurts their back and incurs medical fees and is out of action for a period of time - they hold you accountable for not teaching this new step correctly. Because of this, they may take action against you to recover any losses they've suffered because of the injury, such as being unable to go to work/school etc. Another example may be when you teach a student that is hoping to pass their IDTA exams. They fail the exams, hold you responsible for not teaching them properly and take legal action against you to recover their outlay. Allegations of an inadequate service, such as this, are covered by professional indemnity insurance. Whatever the reasons behind a claim of this kind, they can be ruinously expensive to defend, making professional indemnity insurance a must-consider for every dance teacher. It covers the legal fees and expenses to defend your claim, as well as any compensation that might be awarded if your defence is unsuccessful. It's worth remembering that even if a claim is made against you without success, you will incur legal costs just to defend yourself; therefore insurance is essential in both cases, if you are found at fault or not.

Personal Accident Insurance

It is also important to consider personal accident insurance, as even highly skilled and professionally trained dancers/teachers can injure themselves during dance classes - which can leave you unable to work. There are a range of injuries you can suffer due to the nature and variety of work as a dance teacher. For example, you could suffer from tendonitis (of varying formats - for example Achilles tendonitis). This injury can leave you unable to work for weeks, months and possibly require surgery. Not having the right cover in this instance not only means losing income, it might mean having to pay for treatment yourself if you need to be seen privately, due to a long NHS wait list. Personal Accident cover

compensates you if you break a bone, require hospitalisation, need physiotherapy etc. Some insurance companies will offer cover for loss of earnings too, meaning you will be supported if you're out of action following an accident when teaching.

Equipment cover/insurance

Equipment cover is another important insurance policy to consider when you have your own equipment of varying costs. A number of things can happen to your equipment which could leave you unable to teach. For example, the music system could be stolen from your car, or you could drop water on your sound system and damage it. Equipment cover is designed for these exact scenarios, protecting you against the loss, theft or damage of your equipment, no matter where the loss/theft or damage takes place, at home or in the studio workspace. Having equipment cover means you don't have to pay out of your own pocket for repairs or replacement equipment. As a result, you can get back to teaching dance as soon as possible.

Safe Dance environment, 1.3

There are several factors to consider with regards to a safe dance environment and this develops beyond, but is inclusive of the dance studio itself. It is the teacher's responsibility to ensure this safe environment, however it may be necessary to involve others, for example the building caretaker, to take actions to improve the surroundings.

The venue:

Risk assessments should be carried out to highlight any potential hazards in a dance studio and all necessary actions should be taken to rectify the situation. When selecting a room for dance lessons, the teacher should look out for:

- Ventilation to allow free circulation of air
- Heating systems to ensure that room temperature is always above 13 degrees. This is the minimum legal temperature for work that involves substantial physical activity.
- Even, smooth flooring.
- Blinds or curtains in place for privacy.
- Functional toilet facilities.

Clothing:

Clothing should allow free, unrestricted movement and it should allow skin to breathe. It is important that outfits worn to dance lessons are appropriate for the subject, allow the teacher to see body alignments to prevent injury and be flexible. For example, Ballet requires correct posture and body placement and so clothing should be tight fitted, however it mustn't be so tight that it restricts breathing or limits movement. Street dance can allow for baggy clothing items that reinforce the style of the movement, however they shouldn't be so baggy that they can cause the wearer to trip over. For all subjects, lycra and cotton materials are beneficial as they allow the skin to breathe. Loose drawstrings should be removed, hair should be tied up and jewellery should not be worn. Shoes should fit correctly and be supportive of the foot arch. Clothing should also be modest and comfortable for all students, taking into account older students who may wish to cover up more than younger students. It can be a

good idea in introduce a different uniform for students of a certain age and above. For example, leotards should allow for girls to wear a bra discreetly and perhaps uniform t-shirt so that boys or girls can cover up more if they wish. Boys should have the option of wearing looser fitting trousers if they wish.

It is important to realise that parents may not have considered the value of appropriate clothing when taking their child to a dance class. Therefore, when taking on new students I hand over a 'welcome pack' which outlines the requirements of uniform.

Lesson format:

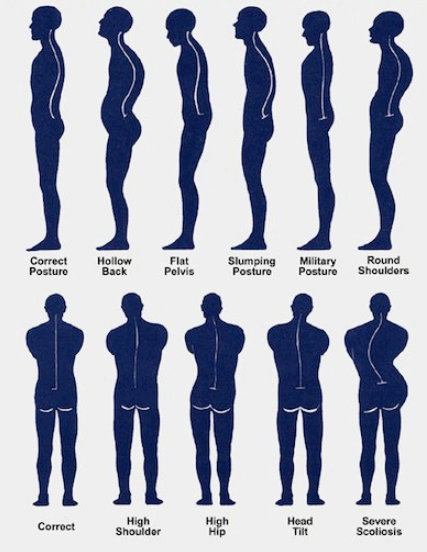
It is imperative that every class begins with a warm up. Without warm joints and muscles, students will not be able to dance to their best ability, but it can also trigger injury. A gentle stretch should follow which is mindful of the age and developmental stage of the students. The class should build in intensity, and allow time for a cool down and another gentle stretch at the end. This ensures that muscles relax and cool down gradually, preventing injury.

Teachers:

Often, dance teachers work for privately owned dance schools on a self-employed basis, however it would be the principal's responsibility to ensure that all teaching staff are not only qualified for the job, but also a safe influence on the school and its students. For example, teachers ideally should have a first-aid qualification and be DBS checked, as well as having received the relevant training to teach their classes in a safe manner.

Recognising poor posture, 2.1

LOOK AT YOUR POSTURE... OTHERS DO



Having correct posture is extremely important for our health to ensure that we can lead a joint and back pain free life. Bad posture can cause a multitude of problems that extend beyond pain and discomfort, for example a slumped spine can lead to limited blood circulation. This can cause deterioration of the vertebrae which can then lead to hip, neck and shoulder pain. Such pain can be extremely debilitating and lead to an inability to work or conduct basic day to day activities. In order to prevent this, it is important that we know what good posture is.

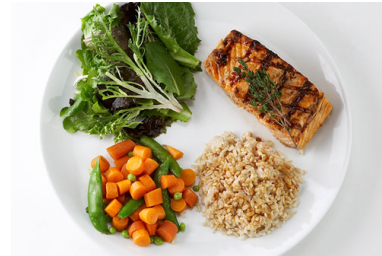
Good posture is imperative in dancers to maximise their ability and to practise dance safely. Often, we are teaching young people who are growing and so ensuring we teach the importance of good posture minimises injuries and encourages strength and flexibility. Certain genres of dance, e.g. Ballet can be beneficial to those who suffer with poor posture as it improves core strength which can aid the dancer in better control of their joints and muscles.

Warning signs of poor posture can be hunched shoulders, a tilted head, one hip that is higher than the other, uneven shoulders, a curved spine, a 'leaning' spine or an alignment that appears too straight. Ideally, the head should be straight with the chin slightly lifted. Shoulders should be level and relaxed, the spine should have a natural curve and hips should also be level. If a student complains of back, shoulder, neck or hip pain, this can be an indicator, in which case as a teacher, we should look out for signs of poor posture and then work to improve it. For example, we can advise them to do core strengthening exercises at home. In addition to this, we can begin lessons with an exercise to correct posture before we begin dancing. For example, deep breaths in and out to relax muscles and increase the flow of oxygen in the blood. Rolling the shoulders in a relaxed way and doing side stretches to relax the spine. Teaching them to pull up through the spine so to encourage them to not 'sit' in their hips can be done with envisioning string coming out their head which we pull upwards. This can be done right from a young age. In my pre-school ballet

lessons, we imagine that we have a crown on our heads. If we tilt our heads forwards or slump the spine, it may fall off, and we must work hard to stop this happening.

Hydration and Nutrition, 2.2

There are several things we can do as teachers to promote strong, healthy dancers. One of the most important is educating our students on the benefits of a good diet. We as humans work at our optimum when we are hydrated and have energy, which comes from a good nutrition. Without adequate water in our system, we become dehydrated and this leads to headaches, dizziness, fainting, weakness and an inability to sweat which as dancers, we must do regulate our body temperature. Without sufficient nutrients, we lack energy and can suffer from extreme fatigue, fainting, dizziness, confusion, an inability to concentrate and weight loss or weight gain. Our bodies systems cannot function properly without enough energy, for example our immune system can weaken and our metabolisms can slow down, resulting in our bodies not absorbing nutrients and vitamins. In addition to this, if a dancer is underweight or over weight, this limits their ability to perform at their best and can also be a threat to their vital organs.



For a dancer to be happy, healthy and able to perform at their optimum ability, they must try to:

- Always have breakfast. Ideally, it should contain a source of protein as this sustains our energy for longer.
- Eat regularly, and healthily. 3 large meals a day can be heavy on the stomach, especially if the dancer is required to dance afterwards. 6 smaller meals can be an ideal alternative, as this maintains energy levels at a constant level and prevents hunger.
- Sugary foods should be avoided as they deliver short bursts of energy, but can cause the consumer to 'crash' afterwards. Nuts and fruit are good sources of energy, however it is OK to enjoy sugary foods on occasion as a treat.

- Drink water regularly through the day (approximately 2 litres). Energy drinks can provide our bodies with electrolytes however they tend to have high levels of sugar. No added sugar squash can be an alternative to water, however fruit juices should be consumed in moderation as they contain a lot of sugar.
- Aim to stay within the RDA (recommended daily amount) of food groups (salt, sugar, carbohydrates) and also the suggested calorie intake. This can prevent weight gain and unwanted weight loss.

Calculating your BMI can be a simple way of working out whether or not you are within the ideal weight range, however this isn't always a valid method, as those who have a lot of muscle will appear to be 'obese' due to the weight of their muscle, whereas in fact, they can be healthier than someone who appears in the 'normal' range. As dance teachers, we should work to recognise when a student is losing weight at an unhealthy rate, but also understand that their can be health complications that contribute to unwanted weight gain or weight loss.

BMI HEIGHT	NORMAL				OVERWEIGHT				OBESE				EXTREME OBESITY																							
	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40	41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50	51	52	53	54
4'10"	91	96	100	105	110	115	119	124	129	134	138	143	148	153	158	162	167	172	177	181	186	191	196	201	205	210	215	220	224	229	234	239	244	248	253	258
4'11"	94	99	104	109	114	119	124	128	133	138	143	148	153	158	163	168	173	178	183	188	193	198	203	208	212	217	222	227	232	237	242	247	252	257	262	267
5'0"	97	102	107	112	118	123	128	133	138	143	148	153	158	163	168	174	179	184	189	194	199	204	209	215	220	225	230	235	240	245	250	255	261	266	271	276
5'1"	100	106	111	116	122	127	132	137	143	148	153	158	164	169	174	180	185	190	195	201	206	211	217	222	227	232	238	243	248	254	259	264	269	275	280	285
5'2"	104	109	115	120	126	131	136	142	147	153	158	164	169	175	180	186	191	196	202	207	213	218	224	229	235	240	246	251	256	262	267	273	278	284	289	295
5'3"	107	113	118	124	130	135	141	146	152	158	163	169	175	180	186	191	197	203	208	214	220	225	231	237	242	248	254	259	265	270	276	282	287	293	299	304
5'4"	110	116	122	128	134	140	145	151	157	163	169	174	180	186	192	197	204	209	215	221	227	232	238	244	250	256	262	267	273	279	285	291	296	302	308	314
5'5"	114	120	126	132	138	144	150	156	162	168	174	180	186	192	198	204	210	216	222	228	234	240	246	252	258	264	270	276	282	288	294	300	306	312	318	324
5'6"	118	124	130	136	142	148	155	161	167	173	179	186	192	198	204	210	216	223	229	235	241	247	253	260	266	272	278	284	291	297	303	309	315	322	328	334
5'7"	121	127	134	140	146	153	159	166	172	178	185	191	198	204	211	217	223	230	236	242	249	255	261	268	274	280	287	293	299	306	312	319	325	331	338	344
5'8"	125	131	138	144	151	158	164	171	177	184	190	197	203	210	216	223	230	236	243	249	256	262	269	276	282	289	295	302	308	315	322	328	335	341	348	354
5'9"	128	135	142	149	155	162	169	176	182	189	196	203	209	216	223	230	236	243	250	257	263	270	277	284	291	297	304	311	318	324	331	338	345	351	358	365
5'10"	132	139	146	153	160	167	174	181	188	195	202	209	216	222	229	236	243	250	257	264	271	278	285	292	299	306	313	320	327	334	341	348	355	362	369	376
5'11"	136	143	150	157	165	172	179	186	193	200	208	215	222	229	236	243	250	257	265	272	279	286	293	301	308	315	322	329	336	343	351	358	365	372	379	386
6'0"	140	147	154	162	169	177	184	191	199	206	213	221	228	235	242	250	258	265	272	279	287	294	302	309	316	324	331	338	346	353	361	368	375	383	390	397
6'1"	144	151	159	166	174	182	189	197	204	212	219	227	235	242	250	257	265	272	280	288	295	302	310	318	325	333	340	348	355	363	371	378	386	393	401	408
6'2"	148	155	163	171	179	186	194	202	210	218	225	233	241	249	256	264	272	280	287	295	303	311	319	326	334	342	350	358	365	373	381	389	396	404	412	420
6'3"	152	160	168	176	184	192	200	208	216	224	232	240	248	256	264	272	279	287	295	303	311	319	327	335	343	351	359	367	375	383	391	399	407	415	423	431
6'4"	156	164	172	180	189	197	205	213	221	230	238	246	254	263	271	279	287	295	304	312	320	328	336	344	353	361	369	377	385	394	402	410	418	426	435	443

Source: Adapted from Clinical Guidelines on the Identification, Evaluation, and Treatment of Overweight and Obesity in Adults: The Evidence Report

Identifying and taking action to prevent injury, 2.3

An injury that is left untreated or ignored can lead to lifelong problems, which can require medical attention and ongoing pain and discomfort. While wear and tear of joints and muscles can be accelerated with regular exercise such as dance, in general the strengthening nature of dance should prevent injuries.

Identifying Injury

A responsible dance teacher should be able to correctly identify a potential injury and advise on the necessary action to be taken. The most common sign of injury is the dancer complaining of pain or discomfort. This can be sudden, or a pain that gradually worsens over time. In either case, the teacher should be able to advise on whether or not it is safe to continue. For example, a student twists their ankle in a Tap lesson and then complains that they are unable to bare weight on that foot. This is potentially a sprain, a torn ligament or tendon, or even a broken bone. In this case, it would be clear that the dancer should stop dancing and seek medical attention. In the meantime, an ice pack can be used to prevent swelling as well as keeping the ankle elevated. Injuries can be minor, for example a graze to the knee, in which case it can be safe for the dancer to continue, however head injuries should be closely monitored, even if the victim appears well in the first instance. Parents should always be made aware of any injuries so that they can keep an eye out for progressing symptoms. Aside from pain, other signs of injury can be swelling and limited movement of a particular limb or joint that hasn't existed before.

Preventing Injury

To prevent injury in the first instance, teachers should be properly qualified to teach the dance subject and should also be first aid trained, carrying a well quipped first aid kit during class. The dance studio environment should be suitable with all potential obstacles removed or highlighted to the users and there should always be enough space to avoid collisions. Carrying out a risk assessment can be an effective way of minimising the cause of injury. Important methods of preventing injury are:



- Ensure dancers are sufficiently warmed up before they commence class.
- A stretch should be carried out to loosen muscles to prevent pulled or torn muscles.
- Look out for incorrect technique and correct it as soon as possible, as errors can cause injuries.
- Ensure the standard of the class is suitable for the age and ability of the class. Forcing students to take on choreography which they are not mentally or physically prepared for can cause serious injuries, especially in gymnastic genres of dance and exercise.
- Ensure clothing and footwear is suitable. Materials should be flexible and allow the skin to breathe.
- Ensure that there is a circulation of fresh air.
- Ensure students don't attempt a move that has not yet been properly explained or demonstrated.
- Utilise an assistant teacher in particularly busy classes, as it is impossible to have eyes on everyone at all times in large classes.
- Respect each individual's strength and weaknesses and bare this in mind during choreography. For example, asking a weaker member of the class to lift an older or heavier member of the group would be irresponsible.

Teaching different age groups,

3.2, 3.3

As teachers, we should alter our approach to a dance class based on our students age and stage of development. For example, we wouldn't force a pre-school class into doing the splits or enforce harsh stretching techniques, but we may push stretches further with an advance modern jazz group. It is important that we are aware of the differing stages of mental and physical development to ensure that our classes are suitable. These stages are:

1. **Infant**- movements are reflexive.
2. **Toddler**- Strength builds to enable them to walk unaided, hold objects and climb stairs. Dance lessons can start at this age to aid with strength, balance and co-ordination.
3. **Pre-schooler**- able to balance on one leg, hop and jump. Co-ordination is much improved. At this stage, the complexity of dance movements can develop to become more complex. For example, Pliés and jumps.
4. **School-aged child**- Movements become more graceful and the child can move in different ways, e.g. energetic, to soft and graceful and they can control their body well enough to do this. Hand-eye co-ordination is improving and with regards to dance, their ability to take on more challenging steps and remember and re-call combinations of steps improves.
5. **Teenager**- Although they may be still growing, muscles and bones are strong and formed. Dance steps can be increasingly complex and challenge the body's natural placement and alignment. Core strength is strong and they are fully capable of supporting their own body weight.

Recognising and realising the capabilities of children in various age groups should strongly influence our teaching technique, not just with physical movement, but also with our psychological approach to teaching. It can be necessary to be much more sensitive in our approach to a class with pre-school age children, using quieter and more animated voices. The use of props can be

used to sustain their concentration for longer amount of time and regular rewards, e.g. stickers can keep them interested and encouraged. With teenagers, we can afford to be stricter and much more direct in our approach to communicating with our students as they can understand and handle discipline. However, we may use a friendly, light hearted nature in class to allow the lesson to become a 'break' from challenging days at school, and perhaps minimise the rise of tensions in class that may be caused by changing hormones and increased competitiveness. With older students (age 16+), challenging choreography can sustain an interest in maintaining their hobby to ensure that they are mentally stimulated. With regards to how we communicate, they have stronger sense of maturity at this age and we must respect that by listening to their ideas/concerns, or maybe perhaps giving the opportunity to choreograph and showcase dance sequences. They may even be able to assist in younger classes. Giving students of this age a sense of importance and responsibility can encourage them to work hard to prove their ability to their authoritative figures.