

Competition Tips and Tricks

This document was developed by some of our seasoned OAA dance moms with the intention of helping new OAA team members prepare for the competitive season. New team members have typically found it very helpful to hear some of what others have learned from experience for making competition weekends enjoyable. Please note that none of this is compulsory...do what works for you! Competitive dance is a big commitment, but it is so fun and rewarding. Good luck and have a great season!

The big list of stuff you need (what to pack)

Stuff to Wear	
Costumes	Usually it is easier (and safer) to bring only the costumes that you need for each day
Tights	For each costume as per requirements. Should look new and clean, no runs or snags!
Shoes	For each costume, as per requirements. Should look clean, unscuffed, etc.
Undergarments	Bras, etc if needed
Accessories/hair pieces	For each costume as per requirements
Earrings/Jewelry	As per costume requirements
Team Jacket /Black yoga pants	Jackets must be worn over costumes and when on stage for awards
Socks	To wear over ballet slippers to keep them clean when warming up
Slip on shoes	Shoes that slip on and off easily over tights are the best! (flip flops are not so good with tights!)
Any props that you are responsible for	
Hair Stuff	
Comb and brush	Find the products that work best for you.
Elastics	
Hairpins	
Hair nets	
Spray, gel, water, etc	
Rhinestone hair clips	As required for each costume
Bobby pins	If required, for attaching hats, hairpieces, etc
Straightening Iron	If required (hair down or in a ponytail)

Face stuff	
Competition makeup kit	Foundation, eye shadows, liner, eyelashes (and spares!) and glue, blush, lip liner, lipstick, brushes
Makeup wipes or remover	
Hand or small stand up mirror	
Other Must Haves	
OAA dressed and ready schedule	Print out the schedule and bring it with you so you can keep track of when to be ready, when dances are scheduled for, etc.
Food/drinks	Healthy food and snacks and plenty of drinks/water are a must! Please remember to pack it nut free.
Cash	You may need to pay for parking. You will likely want to buy a competition program (\$5-10 usually), which you will need cash for.
Other personal supplies	Deodorant, medications, etc.
Spare tights	In case of snags, runs, etc. It is especially important to have spare fishnets, as these are quite easily damaged.
Other stuff to consider bringing	
Pop up laundry basket	To throw stuff in for quick costume changes (so nothing goes missing!)
Small sewing kit with scissors	
Safety pins	
Tide to go stick	
First aid essentials	Bandages, icepacks, ibuprofen, gravol, etc
Tylenol/pain reliever	Loud music + long days + cheering = occasional headaches for
Phone/ Camera	Ones with charged batteries work best!
Something to pass the time	There is some waiting around. Hand held games (with volume controls), books or other time passers can be very helpful
A stool or something to sit on in change room	Seating is sometimes at a premium in the change rooms. A stool is handy for you or your dancer to sit on to put on tights, change hair, etc.
Body suit, sundress, hoodie, etc.	Helpful between changes for modesty and staying warm.
Highlighters/pen	For highlighting routines, recording scores in your program.

<p>Makeup</p>	<p>Most people usually start with hair first so that it is off the face and easier to do makeup. Moisturize face and apply a bit of chapstick so it settles in while doing hair Put foundation on lips so that lip liner and lipstick stay on. Also cover lips totally in lip liner and fill in for coverage. There are several kinds of lashes recommended, so find one that works for you. You may need to cut lashes (shorten them in length) so that they fit better. There are several tools for applying lashes that can make life a lot easier. Eyelash glue comes in tubes or with a wand, which is often easier to use. Glue can be avoided by using lashes with adhesive strip attached. If you care for lashes well, you should be able to get several wears out of them. No temp tattoos or nailpolish on fingers or toes (if they show) and please try to avoid tan lines if you are lucky enough to be somewhere warm over March break! If you experience difficulties with earrings being loose, a dab of eyelash glue or a rubber backing will ensure that they don't go flying.</p>
<p>Hair</p>	<p>Some people don't wash hair so that style stays better (it is easier to work with day old hair than with than slippery, clean hair). Make sure you know which hairstyle is required for each dance. Find a hair-product that doesn't flake and that works with your child's hair type. Make sure you have a defined part over left eye for "side part" styles. Hair should be very neat and very secure. It should be fairly shellacked down to avoid fly aways. Use enough hairpins for bun. Use durable bun pins, not bobby pins Best elastics are those with rubber grip, not metal connectors. Make sure elastics/nets/pin match hair colour, go one shade darker as hair is darker when sprayed. Put hairclips in hair so that clip part is pointing down (joint of clip is up). This way, if the clip come unsnapped it is less likely to fall out of hair. A silicone placemat or towel to wrap hot flat iron is useful.</p>

Organizing Costumes, etc	<p>The more you have organized and set aside just for competition use only (hair kit, costume bags, makeup kits, etc), the less packing and organizing you need to do each time. Also, the less likely it is you will forget something! Most people develop a “system” for organizing their things. Everyone’s life is easier when dancers to know where to find their things on their own, and how to put their things back when they are done with them. Consider making up a hair, makeup, tights kits for use only at competitions.</p> <p>Most people find it useful to use some kind of garment bags for costumes. There are many types available (some with pockets for tights, accessories) at dance stores and elsewhere. Label your bags with the tights, hair requirements, etc. for each dance/costume. Small accessories, tights, etc. can also be attached to the hanger in Ziploc freezer bag so everything is together.</p> <p>Try to store costumes so that they don’t get too wrinkled or flattened. Costumes with tulle skirts can be hung upside down in garment bags to maintain their “fluff”.</p> <p>If you have multiple costumes, something to organize all those tights, shoes, accessories, etc. in can be very helpful. There are lots of different products available for organizing/transporting dance things, so you should be able to find something that works for you.</p> <p>Please note that when we go to end of year competitions that require a flight, costumes should not be packed in luggage just in case luggage goes missing. All shoes and costumes will need to be carried on.</p>
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Food	<p>Competitions often do not stop for meal breaks, or stop only for very short breaks for the judges. Dancers may have dressed and ready times over the judges' breaks. Also, competitions can sometimes run ahead or behind schedule. So you should take the opportunity to feed and water your dancer whenever you can! You will need lots of snacks and, depending on your schedule, you may need breakfast/lunch/dinner. Most, but not all, venues have food available, and sometimes it is difficult to run out for food.</p> <p>For dancers, snacks that are familiar, non-staining and provide good energy (fruit, cheese, meats, etc) are smart to have on hand. Please remember that we are a nut free studio (even at competitions). Also, no eating in or around costumes please.</p>
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Countdown to Competitions (what to do and what to expect)

Any day now...	
Review the list of required items for each routine, and ensure you have everything you need.	
Label everything!	
Figure out "a system" and organize your stuff	
Prior to the each competition	
Print and review the competition schedule	Know what routines your child will be dancing in and when they are scheduled, so you can plan out your weekend. We usually receive the schedule about 2 weeks before each competition. You will note that there is a performance time (which is when the dance will actually
Review/print the directions to the venue (or program your GPS)	Know where you are going!
Pack up your stuff	Make sure everything is clean and in good repair. Most importantly, double check to make sure you haven't forgotten anything.
Day of the Competition	
Get ready before you leave	Consider doing hair and makeup at home if possible. This tends to be easier than trying to do it in a potentially crowded change room at the venue. Wait until you get to the venue to put on your costume, though!
Leave in plenty of time	It always takes longer to get ready than you think it will (especially when you are new!). Give yourself lots of time to get ready to leave. Also, give yourself lots of time to get to venue, to find parking, to find the changeroom, and to get settled and in costume.
Find OAA change area and get set up	There are usually signs/directions at the venue telling you where to go. Find the OAA change room and get set up. Note that depending on the schedule and the venue, change rooms can be crowded and/or shared with other studios (changerooms are a great place to exercise a positive attitude!)

<p>Get ready for dressed and ready drop off</p>	<p>There will be a “dressed and ready time” on the schedule for each dance, typically 1 to 1 1/2 hours prior to the scheduled performance time. This is the time that the dancer must be completely in costume and dropped off in the warm up area with their teacher, who will get them ready to perform. Moms and Dads are asked not to stay in warm up area (i.e. this is your free time until the performance!)</p>
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Cheer for your team (and for all dancers!)	You may go into the theatre any time to watch any of the routines. There is no admission charge. Clapping and cheering is encouraged, but please use good theatre etiquette and remember that you are representatives of OAA. You can come and go as you need from the audience, but please do so between, not during, a routine.
Meet up with your dancer	Kids will be “released” by teachers after their routine. Parents do not go backstage, so you will need to know where they are going to be released (usually the drop off area). This will be the time to get changed for the next number, or get out of costume and put on team gear and wait for adjudication.
Attend awards/adjudication	Every couple of hours (depending on the competition) there will be an adjudication. Adjudication times are usually noted in the program. During adjudication, all the kids that have danced in the last few hours will be called onto the stage where they will be given scores, ribbons and awards for their routines. Dancers must wear their team jackets when on stage. They are expected to show good sportsmanship and etiquette when accepting awards (clap for others, shake judges hand, say thank you, etc). In younger groups, one dancer will be selected in advance by the teacher to receive the award for each routine. Sometimes, a dance will receive a special award from the judges or all dancers in a routine will be asked to stand when an overall award is received.
Pack up	After your last routine/adjudication, pack up to leave. It is important to check to be sure you have everything you came with before you go. Make sure you are leaving your space clean and tidy when you leave (throw out garbage, etc).
After the competition	
Questions or concerns to the teachers	The teachers are very busy and work very hard during the competitions, so please hold any questions or concerns that are not urgent until we are back in the studio.
Go to class	Each competition provides scores/ judge’s feedback for each routine to the studio. The teachers will review the judges’ feedback, and between competitions will work on any necessary improvements with each group.
Get ready to do it all again!	Hand wash tights, make any repairs, etc and be ready to start again before you know it!

Insider information (how it all really works!)

Every competition is a bit different!	Although they are all structured in basically the same way, each competition has different rules, categories, age groups and scores/awards, etc. For example, the highest scores may be called a platinum at one event and a diamond at another! Explanations are typically in the program for that competition, and can be found on each competition’s website.
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<p>Scoring and awards will be confusing at first!</p>	<p>Routines are typically scored by 3 judges. Judges scores are averaged to produce a score for the routine. The routine will be given an award (usually a ribbon) based on its score. Awards are typically named silver, gold, platinum, etc. At some competitions, they will also “place” the routines within each category (for example, first, second or third place in the 8 year old small group tap category) or read the scores out in their placement order.</p> <p>All competitions will also have overall awards. These are awards given to the highest scoring routines in all categories in particular age groups. For example, top 8 and under small groups, teen duet/trios, junior solos, etc. Some competitions have separate overalls for novice, pre-competitive, acro, ballet, etc. Winning overall routines usually receive a trophy and sometimes a cash prize.</p> <p>Most competitions also give “special judges awards” at each adjudication. These awards allow the judges to recognize extra special things that they noticed (such as great energy, most potential, great choreography, etc.). Winners typically receive a special ribbon, scholarship, prize, etc. Some competitions also recognize select dancers at the end of the entire competition with scholarships or special prizes.</p>
<p>Schedules</p>	<p>Schedules can be weird, and are different at each competition. There can be days or minutes between your dancer’s various routines. Typically, younger kids start early in the day (competitions start around 8....so dressed and ready time is very early!) and older kids dance into the evening (competitions can also end quite late!). Should your dancer have back to back routines, they are expected to be changed and ready as quickly as possible. The weekends can be long, and you are not expected to stay when your dancer is not dancing. However, team spirit, including coming out to cheer from other OAA groups and dancers, is always encouraged!</p>
<p>Dance Offs</p>	<p>Some competitions that we attend have a “dance off” component where group routines that receive the highest scores are invited back to compete “head to head”. Dance offs are typically held at the very end of the competition, and very often are for full time competitive groups only. It is very exciting for the kids to be in the dance off and your dancer must participate if their group qualifies! You will typically know as the weekend progresses if your child’s dance is likely to qualify, but sometimes things change until the very last minute. You should plan to hold the time if there is a potential that you might be in a dance off. The studio will send out dressed and ready times for dance offs as soon as they are able during the competition. Whether your child is dancing or not, try to come out to the dance off! You can cheer on team OAA, and you also get to see some great dancing (typically the “best numbers” of the whole competition are in the dance off).</p>

<p>Photos/DVDs</p>	<p>Competition rules do not allow audience members to take photos or shoot video of any routine. In fact, this is grounds for disqualification (yes, they are very serious about this!). You can take photos everywhere else (but be sensitive about taking photos in the change rooms please!). Most competitions have a photographer/videographer and sell individual photos/ videos and packages on site. You will need to find the time to review and select pictures at the competition. They will often print them for you on the spot, or send them to you after the competition. Sometimes, they delete the photos at the end of each day, so at some competitions you need to buy them on the day the dance competed. Other have websites where you can order online well after the competition. Parents are often able to set up a "studio package deal" with the photographers at a competition if enough families are interested. You can enquire about this at the photo booth.</p>
<p>Remember it's about having fun!</p>	<p>A positive attitude and teamwork goes a long way during long competition days. Celebrate your own dancer's accomplishments and remember that parents set the example for good sportsmanship.</p>
<p>Don't be afraid to ask!</p>	<p>The staff and other families at OAA are fabulous! There is a lot to know and many tips and techniques to make it all a little easier! Everyone is happy to help, so please don't be afraid to ask.</p>