



## Ballet Class Etiquette – a Rough Guide

### Be Early!

- Aim to arrive with enough time to change, warm up and to clear your mind of what's gone on in your day so as to get your mind and body into the *Ballet zone* – 15 mins before class is ok, 30 mins is better if the studio allows earlier access.
- If you are late, make eye contact with your teacher as you enter quietly and find a corner away from others to do a little quiet jogging on the spot, followed by some stillness to quieten the mind, standing tall in first position for posture, perhaps some slow tendus and rises to wake up your turnout muscles and to warm up and lengthen the muscles. Wait for your teacher to invite you to join in.
- If you are injured or have something to inform the teacher of, please do this before class and as succinctly as possible so class can start on time. In some cases, it may be better to email ahead of time if it relates to missing a class in the future for instance.

### “Leave Your Baggage at The Door”

(I'm not talking about your bags here.) The atmosphere in a class is very important to its productivity. So that the studio can be that special respectful sanctuary dedicated to positive learning, expression and enjoyment in your ballet work, please enter the studio with enthusiasm and a smile. Even if you had a bad day, you may find this lifts your spirits and will also prevent the spread of any negativity to others.

### Time – there's never enough of it

So much gets covered in each class and time is always scarce, so be sure to really listen and focus when your teacher is talking and explaining things. By all means ask questions when appropriate, such as when your teacher says “any questions?”. It's highly likely that someone else has the same query and no question is silly. However, bear in mind that your teacher will demonstrate or explain an exercise more than once before you do it, so you may find the answer to your question then.

### Be Ready Before the Music

There is usually a 4 count introduction before you start an exercise so be standing and ready with correct ballet posture, stillness, focus and epaulement in whichever position of the feet and arms the exercise is set to start with, so you don't miss the all-important beginning.

*A sloppy start makes for a sloppy delivery!*

### Turn Towards the Barre

- Think of the barre as your dance partner and that you don't want to turn your back to him / her; always turn towards the barre when preparing to perform the exercise to the other side.

### Corrections and Feedback:

- Corrections given to someone else will most likely apply to you too, so be sure to listen and check.
- Receiving corrections and feedback is a good thing to help you improve and is a major part of teaching so be grateful rather than offended when you receive one.  
(In some environments, you will hear students thanking their teacher for such help!)

### **Using your other senses**

Ballet offers so many life skills including isolating your senses such as listening and applying corrections without needing to stop what you're doing to look at your teacher speak them. Your teacher will rarely be silent during an exercise and you will learn to correct your movements while you are dancing so don't come out of your Ballet zone or change your eye projection or epaulement to apply them.

### **Appropriate Physical Contact**

As a physical artform, Ballet often requires appropriate physical contact by your teacher to adjust the alignment and placement of the body. eg adjusting the ribcage and pelvis if posture and placement isn't right. This is perfectly normal and is carried out respectfully. Don't stop dancing during this as sometimes it is a timing thing eg pirouettes if the second arm is too slow to come to first

### **Be Respectful to Your Teacher**

- Please save the chit-chat and socialising for after class.
- Openly yawning, turning your back to your teacher (especially when receiving feedback), leaning on the barre and talking back are all no-no's.
- Please don't use your mobile phone in class; if you're expecting an important call, let your teacher know beforehand
- A Ballet teacher sees so much and has limited time to help everyone so try to really listen and apply; ignoring corrections may lead to not receiving any so bear this in mind if you're wanting to improve.

### **Dress Code**

- Whilst I don't make balletwear compulsory (or at least not in the beginner levels), if you look the part, you are more likely to dance better so it can be a good investment. Either way, please avoid wearing anything baggy especially not round the ankles knees or mid-drift as this can hide incorrect use of technique which will be a difficult habit to get out of and which can lead to injury.
- Please wear neutral colours (not neon or bright colours) and avoid busy patterns, especially not stripes (which aside from sending my eyes loopy, can make it harder to judge correct placement)
- Hair shouldn't be loose around the face – eg coming up from a port de bras forward with a pony tail will see you develop an extra head twitch to prevent it coming to your face; it will probably make you squint or blink each time it slaps you in the face when you turn.
- Tuck your ribbons in when wearing pointe shoes and make knots rather than bows.
  - Avoid wearing big or sharp jewellery

### **Personal Hygiene & Breaks**

- Please wear clean clothes and deodorant and avoid strong perfume
- Use the bathroom before class rather than during, and let your teacher know if you need to leave early
- Unless it's for medical reasons (eg diabetes) please don't eat during class; this includes chewing gum

### **Tips for Centrework**

- Dancing in groups: if your teacher wants 3 groups and says how many in each group, be proactive and arrange yourselves so there aren't any "empty groups" of music
- If you're unsure of an exercise, don't go in the first group; be practising it at the back so that when it's your turn, you can perform it to your best ability
- If it's an enchainement that starts in the corner, only stand there if you are going to be in the next group
- If you're not dancing, watch the group that is, and always with love and encouragement; I say this a lot, particularly in the higher levels. What looks good and why? Apply it to yourself. What could look better and how? Apply that to yourself.