



Irish Ensemble Handbook

A Guide for Students and Parents

We believe that our success comes as a result of providing solid training and quality service, along with an underlying belief in the strength of our organization. We have created this handbook to offer our students and their parents a clear understanding of their commitments and responsibility to Irish Ensemble and the school.

Purpose:

The purpose of the Dance It Out Irish Ensemble is to provide students with an opportunity to participate in an activity and develop sportsmanship, character, dedication, performance skills, and teamwork. Participation on the Irish Ensemble team is a privilege. As a member of this group, you represent our dance program; and your conduct and actions in the classroom, on the dance floor, and in the community should not deviate from the regulations and code of conduct set forth in our Code of Conduct. Team members must show determination, dedication, and desire to be a productive member of this team.

DEDICATION:

There is a level of commitment required to be a part of the Irish Ensemble. You must have a desired level of commitment not just for yourself, but for your ENTIRE team. Being on this team, you will depend on your other team mates to be at practice consistently and do their part in having the knowledge of their routine. If at any time, you are not doing your part as a productive member of this team you will be suspended.

Dates and/or expenses listed in this handbook are subject to change.

Key contact information for Dance It Out:

18742 US-1
La Crosse, VA 23950
434-757-1029
danceitoutstudios@gmail.com

Key event dates:

On your performance schedule, there will be an arrival time listed and an estimated performance time. Dancers must be at the performance by the ARRIVAL TIME! Dancers must arrive dressed in full uniform, hair, and makeup complete specified by the Director and ready to perform. If the Dancer fails to show up performance ready at the arrival time, the dancer WILL NOT PERFORM.

Calendar for Next Year

- August 26th Littleton Concert
(4 rehearsals will be scheduled the 2 weeks before the show)
- Brunswick fest. (September/October)
- Harvest Fest (October)
- Boydton Day (October)
- Pine View/Hundley Center performance (December)
- Christmas Parade South Hill
- Christmas Parade Bracey (December)
- St. Patrick's day shows (March)
- Miss lake country pageant (March/April)
- SHJWC Pageants (April)
- Pine View Performance (June)
- All recital shows (June)

FOR OUR DANCERS:

Congratulations! You have been accepted into the Irish Ensemble. The first step to becoming a successful dancer is making a solid commitment to your classes, rehearsals, and performances. Strong technique is a key ingredient and class is where you develop that technique. Come to each class prepared to learn and without personal distractions. Class time is your chance to focus on yourself, so try to leave your concerns or worries at the studio door. True progress is made when you look at each class, rehearsal, or performance as an opportunity to become better at what you love to do. Dance full-out, stretch a little further, become more aware of your technique, and make the most of every class.

We encourage dancers to be as dedicated to their academic studies as they are to their dance training. If your participation in this program affects your grades or the expectations and goals set by your parents, we cannot allow you to continue in the program. Grades must be submitted each grading period. Dancers must maintain a C or better average in their classes.

Reasons why this program might not be a good fit for you:

- You're involved in extracurricular activities that could interfere with your class, rehearsal, or performance commitments.

- You're doing it because you want to keep up with your friends, but you are not passionate about dance nor the commitment.
- You're doing it because your parent(s) want you to.
- You're not fully committed to attending all classes and rehearsals.

Program Benefits:

The Irish Ensemble focuses on educating young people to strive for their personal best in anything they want to accomplish. We achieve our goals for the program by offering young people the chance to:

- gain a sense of balance in life by managing their commitments to both dance and academics;
- participate in a physical activity that enhances understanding of the value of a healthy body;
- develop a sense of confidence when speaking or making a presentation in a public setting, which is also a great benefit in college or job interviews;
- work with mentors who are focused on the students' success inside and outside of the classroom;
- enjoy friendships that could last a lifetime and a sense of belonging to an extended family of fellow dancers, teachers, and parents;
- discover the results of hard work and determination; and
- develop a lifelong appreciation for the performing arts.

In addition, making a commitment to the policies set forth in this handbook teaches our young people that there are boundaries that must be respected in order to succeed in the program.

FOR THE PARENTS: *"WE'RE IN THIS TOGETHER"*:

We believe that children's success depends on the support of their parents or guardians. Because your commitment to the process makes an enormous difference, we encourage you to be a part of your child's dance education.

Our programs rely on a positive atmosphere and educational experience for our faculty and students and their parents. Cooperation between all parents is expected. Showing respect—for other parents, the students, and the faculty—makes an important impression on the children. You are a role model for your child about how to interact with others in a professional setting.

Your child's presence at all classes is imperative. The spirit of teamwork and the lesson of dedication are a big part of our school's educational process.

Parents and teachers may look at a child's learning from different perspectives. However, we believe they share a common goal: to ensure that every child receives the best possible training, both physically and mentally. Mutual respect among our faculty and our students' parents provides the children with the ultimate care and education.

Understanding Dance Education:

As a parent, you play an important role in supporting your child financially, but your emotional support is of equal—and perhaps even greater—value. Encourage your child to be the best that he or she can be regardless of what others may achieve. Dance is an individual art form and children need to be allowed to achieve at a pace that's comfortable. No two students will progress at the same rate, even if they experience the exact same training. It's important to encourage children to focus on themselves, give their all, and be satisfied with their own accomplishments.

Dance education encompasses far more than technique and the steps your children learn. We believe the discipline of dance training gives young people a better understanding of commitment through learning, experiencing the spirit of teamwork, and discovering what they can accomplish through hard work. Our goal is to educate the minds, bodies, and souls of our students, teaching them the skills needed for a successful life, whether or not they stay involved in dance.

□ You play an important role in supporting your child financially, but your emotional support is of equal—and perhaps even greater—value.

Dos and Don'ts:

Some parents may compare their child's progress or class placement to another child's. Watch for this behavior in your children as well and encourage them to focus instead on their own accomplishments.

Looking to other students for inspiration is good; however, making negative comparisons distracts children from focusing on becoming stronger dancers. In addition, speaking negatively about your child's teachers, fellow students, or other parents in front of your child—or other students—could result in problems far beyond your original concerns. Often children will imitate a parent's behavior with other adults or authority figures.

Children learn important lessons from their teachers and parents, acquiring behavior patterns through their example. Our school's faculty takes that responsibility seriously. It's our philosophy to encourage our students to feel, think, and act respectfully toward their peers, the adults in their lives, and themselves.

If you have questions or concerns about your child's dance education (such as progress or class placement), please discuss them with your child's teacher or the director. Talking only to other parents can lead to misinformation and confusion. Please contact the school office to set up an appointment; do not approach your child's teacher or the director between or during classes or make contact outside of the school.

If you do request a conference, please listen carefully to what your child's teachers have to say. They spend a significant amount of time with your child and offer expertise in the field of dance education.

Class or Choreography Placement:

By recommendation only.

Fees:

Each member is required to pay an additional \$200 membership fee (existing member who do not need a new jacket will be \$100). Dancers must purchase a shoulder length wig in their color. Dancers who are in there 3rd year of Irish Ensemble may purchase a larger wig (\$90 -not required)

The fee covers the cost of member jackets, Irish performance dress, costume accessories, and compensation for additional rehearsals that may be needed. The fee is due by September 1st.

Costumes:

Dance families are responsible for the purchase of the dancers' Irish dance costume. Dancers must purchase a gently used Irish dance costume. Costumes may not exceed \$300. Parents are responsible for fitting the costume and adjusting any changes or updates it may need. **All purchases must be approved by Ms. Deanna.** If the dancer does not have a proper fitting dress, they will not be allowed to perform. The dancer may perform in this costume until the dress no longer fits, or until the dancer is no longer in Irish Ensemble. Miss Deanna will assist in finding costumes.

Classes:

All dancers are expected to attend their regularly scheduled classes in addition to all rehearsals and performances. No more than five class days per season may be missed. Any team member with poor attendance will be dismissed from the program.

All dancers must show respect for their teachers at all times. Inappropriate behavior could result in dismissal from the program.

Rehearsals:

All rehearsals are dedicated to choreography or "cleaning" the choreography. A dancer who misses a rehearsal holds back the progress of the entire group. Repeating the choreography from a previous session for those who were absent takes up valuable rehearsal time, which could result in a performance that is not up to par. When we clean choreography, we may also change it. Dancers who miss a cleaning session may not be properly prepared for an upcoming performance and could end up disappointing themselves, their team, or the school.

An important lesson taught through our Irish Ensemble is the value of teamwork. Dancers who miss a rehearsal because of a non-emergency circumstance are letting their fellow dancers down in many ways. We expect parents to nurture the values that

dance education teaches; therefore, you should never encourage your child to let the group down.

If parents have a conflict that prevents them from taking their children to a scheduled rehearsal, we will be more than happy to arrange transportation with other parents from the same group. Our goal is to help all children make their commitments.

□ Dancers: True progress is made when you look at each class, rehearsal, or performance as an opportunity to become better at what you love to do.

Additional rehearsals may be scheduled at the discretion of the teacher/choreographer. All dancers are required to participate.

All Irish Ensemble dancers must attend rehearsals and classes in proper dance attire and appropriate shoes.

□ We expect all dancers to be on their best behavior during rehearsals and work as team players at all times.

Performances:

Members of the Irish Ensemble must give notice of missing a performance at least 4 weeks in advance. Dancers will be dismissed from the program if performances are missed. The objective of this program is to perform so dancers must be present.

Respect:

Respect for the school, its teachers, and its choreographers is essential.

The teachers and choreographers selected to work with our Irish Ensemble dancers are among the finest and most experienced available. They are selected because of their professionalism and knowledge of what is technically and emotionally right for the dancers.

Guidelines for behavior:

- Leave any personal negativity at the door when entering the studio.
- Arrive at least 10 minutes before the start of every class or rehearsal.
- Proper dancewear and shoes are a must in every class and rehearsal.
- Choreography must never be questioned.
- Never attempt to contact teachers or choreographers at home. All contact must be made through the school office.
- Finish every class or choreography session with a thank-you to the teacher or choreographer.
- When wearing your school jacket or other apparel to non-dance events, be sure that the activities and your behavior reflect positively on you and the school.

Appreciate the Critique:

Listen to each correction given, whether it's directed to you or another dancer. A correction is an honor; it shows you how much a teacher cares about your progress as a dancer. Always say thank you when a teacher or choreographer offers you constructive criticism. Nothing can stop those students who apply themselves in every class and appreciate their teachers' knowledge and experience.

Image:

The children and parents involved in the Irish Ensemble program participate in many outside activities, all of which reflect Dance It Out's philosophy.

Please keep the following in mind:

- We never speak negatively about teachers, dancers, or parents from other schools.
- We never create conflict with the directors or judges of events in which we participate.
- We never recruit dancers from other schools.
- The school director handles all communication with the directors of our outside activities.
- No parent or dancer may call or question the directors of any event. If you have a concern, please contact the director of our school.
- Dancer and parents should be properly dressed for all events. Do not arrive at or leave in your Irish ensemble costume.
- Go out there and show the audience how much you love to dance!

Dress Code Requirements:

Class	Girls
Irish	Work out top, skort or shorts that show knees, poodle socks, ghillies. Hair must be pulled back.

Additional Shoe/Dancewear Requirements:

All participants must have the following extras:

- Black shorts (for rain shows and/or parades)
- Black leggings
- plain black leo or black short sleeve top
- Black dance sneakers (for outdoor performances)
- Sun tan tights
- Poodle socks
- Sock glue
- optional but not required - sweat absorbing shirt

Irish Ensemble “Pay It Forward” Mandatory Participation:

Members of the Irish Ensemble are required to participate in the Pay It Forward Challenge. Each member is responsible for earning 150 service points. **The service points of 150 must be earned by May 1st in order to participate in the revue or audition next year.** If you do not reach this goal, you will not be allowed to audition for the Irish Ensemble the following year. Please see the Pay It Forward Challenge packet for more info.

Pay It Forward project ideas:

- Think pink week - \$2 to wear pink to raise money for breast cancer.
- Toys for Tots
- Breadbox Food Drive
- Bun-Raiser – Older team members will do buns for younger students during the revue or costume picture day. Can charge \$10 per bun.
- Collect hotel toiletry items and donate to shelters.
- Pet food and blanket drive
- Have a bake sale and donate money to the Artbank of Southside.
- Collect items for the local nursing homes and annex.

The points must be earned by May 1st, 2024 or the student will not be allowed to perform in the revue or audition for next year.

General Performance Policies:

Performances and competitions are your opportunity to show the world the results of your dedication and hard work. Here’s what you can do to make the most of this opportunity.

- Arrive at performances at the designated time.
- Be sure you are properly warmed up.
- Present yourself in a professional manner, with costumes pressed, shoes cleaned, and all accessories accounted for.
- Treat competitors and teachers from other schools with respect.
- Treat the directors and staff of the competition with respect.
- Keep your area of the dressing rooms clean and never bring food or drink where it is prohibited.
- Wear your school uniform to all competition events and during the award presentations.

Costume Common Sense:

- ✓ Always have a second pair of poodle socks available.
- ✓ Place costumes in a garment bag/box for travel.
- ✓ Carry tiaras in a hatbox or container to prevent them from damage.
- ✓ Hang and press costumes before each performance.
- ✓ Place your name in all shoes.
- ✓ Remove all costumes from their garment bags immediately following the performance to be sure that they are not wrinkled for the next event.

- ✓ Check seams, trim, headpieces, etc. for repairs that must be made prior to the next competition.
- ✓ Make sure your dress and shoes always fit!

POLICIES AND IMPORTANT INFORMATION

General Policies:

- Parent and students should not enter the office space of the school. Please feel free to communicate through the office.
- Use of the school telephone is limited to emergencies only.
- Parents and students should never interrupt a class in session.
- Only water is allowed in the studios. No food, drinks, or gum.
- No cell phones or computers may be used during class time. (This means no emailing, Internet use, or text messaging.)
- Students and parents are restricted from contacting teachers by phone, email, text messages, etc. All communication with teachers or the director must go through the Dance It Out's office.
- Watch what you say in the lobby area, a space intended for the comfort of our students' parents and families. At no time should anyone utilize this area to commiserate with others about their dissatisfaction with the school, its faculty or choreographers, or other students and their families.
- Never speak negatively about teachers, students, or parents from other schools.
- Never recruit students from other schools.
- All students must show respect for their teachers at all times. Inappropriate behavior could result in dismissal from the school.

ATTENDANCE:

Only the reasons listed below are excused from any practice or activity.

1) Personal illness

2) Funeral

3) Special school activity - Must be discussed and approved by the instructors in advance.

- Please note that **even an excused absence could cost you a performance** depending on the date and length of the absence. A team member who is excused from a practice or event will not be permitted to perform with the team until he/she knows the routine to the instructor's satisfaction.
- A Dancer **CANNOT** miss more than five practices throughout the year (use them wisely)!
- It is required that each dancer and a parent/guardian be present for all parent meetings.
- If a member knows in advance that they will be late or will be missing a practice/performance, they are to contact the instructors immediately. Team members must be present at every mandatory practice for the entire practice time in order to be eligible to participate in upcoming events.

- If you miss a practice you must make up the material you missed BEFORE the next practice. IT IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY TO CATCH UP!
- Team members must stay with the team during all practices, performances, and competitions unless given permission by the coach to do otherwise!
- All dress rehearsals are mandatory!

NON-PERFORMERS:

The following reasons determine whether or not a dancer will be allowed to perform. There will be NO exceptions to these factors, so please read carefully.

- Lack of knowledge of a routine
- Lack of ability to perform at required skill level for said routine
- Attitude not promoting teamwork/sportsmanship
- Lack of dedication/commitment being shown toward Dance Team
- Lack of improvement shown over time in a given routine
- Disregard for the code of conduct and the rules and guidelines governing this organization
- Absences the week prior to a performance - Tardiness is also a factor.
- Missing more than the allotted 4 practices.
- Dancer's that are on suspension/probation
- Not being in proper uniform to perform and performance ready by the arrival time listed on the performance sheet
- Not being in attendance for required parent meetings/information sessions
- A dancer will not be allowed to practice/perform if an injury occurs for which that dancer is unable to perform at their normal level. Dancers will not be allowed to participate until written clearance is obtained from a doctor.

Termination of Enrollment:

One verbal warning will be given for any unruly behavior in practice. This includes talking, nonparticipation or any behavior disruptive to the team. A dancer will be asked to leave practice in lieu of any other warning.

In certain circumstances, when it is in the best interest of one or more students, it may be necessary for the school owner or director to terminate a student's enrollment. Every effort will be made to correct a problematic situation before terminating enrollment. Reasons for termination of enrollment include the following:

- Disruptive or dangerous behavior by students or their parents
- Abuse of other children, staff, or property
- Inability of Dance It Out to meet the child's needs

DISCIPLINARY ACTION:

Failure to follow the policies may result in but is not limited to the following actions:

- Sitting out a practice, performance, or competition
- Suspension/Probation from team
- Removal from team

Student and Parent Use of Social Media:

Use of Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, blogging, and other online social media vehicles is commonplace. This policy is intended to provide Dance It Out students and parents with guidelines to eliminate any confusion concerning the use of social media.

- You DO NOT have permission to reveal any information that compromises Dance It Out. By that we mean you are forbidden to share personal information about the director, other students or their families, or anything that is proprietary and/or confidential to them or Dance It Out.
- Students and parents should neither claim nor imply that they are speaking on behalf of Dance It Out.
- Never post anything that could compromise the self-esteem of students who attend Dance It Out.
- If you post videos of class or rehearsals, don't post any choreography in its entirety; Dance It Out owns the copyright to all choreography taught at the school.
- Respect the law, including those laws governing defamation, discrimination, harassment, and copyright and fair use. As stated in this handbook, parents and students should never post negative comments about other schools or teachers. Also, please do not post negative comments about school activities such as competitions, conventions, and performances or about the directors of those events.
- Ensure that your social networking conduct is consistent with all of the policies contained in this handbook.

Class Visitors:

Safety issues and legal responsibilities make it impossible for us to allow students to bring visitors into the classroom. Students should not invite siblings, other relatives, or friends to their classes with the exception of special events such as "Bring a Friend Week" and in-school performances.

Emergency Evacuation:

Although we have never experienced an emergency evacuation at the school, we are prepared for such a circumstance. Emergency evacuation routes are posted in all classrooms and in the lobby. Students are to evacuate quietly and walk in single file as quickly as possible to the designated area, where teachers will check roll. Students and teachers are to return to classrooms and buildings when the all-clear signal is given.

Parking Lot Safety:

The school is home to children of all ages. Please enter and exit our parking lot with extreme caution. Never park your vehicle in any area that is not a designated parking space. If you park in a space that is very close to the building or its windows, please do not leave your car idling. Please do not allow siblings to play in the parking lot.

Weather Cancellations:

School closures due to severe weather conditions will be announced by noon on that day. Notifications of weather cancellations will be emailed, posted on the website and the Facebook page.

Staying Informed:

We work hard to make the dance experience organized and fun. Keeping you informed is one of our primary goals. Please read all newsletters and other school information.

The newsletters and updates are emailed to you and posted on the Dance It Out website and Facebook page.

If you have any questions regarding the information distributed, we encourage you to contact the office at 434-757-1029.

We answer emails on a daily basis, except on weekends. Feel free to email questions to the office at danceitoutstudios@gmail.com

Website

www.danceitoutva.com

We are constantly updating our website. News, important parent and student information, contact information, and more are available online 24 hours a day.

Facebook Page

“Like” the Dance It Out page on Facebook to receive daily updates on school events. Please invite your family and friends to “like” the school. Parents will also be invited into a Irish Ensemble private Facebook page to keep current with events.

Please do not post questions on the school’s Facebook page. Instead, please email them directly to danceitoutstudios@gmail.com.

A Final Note

WELCOME TO THE IRISH ENSEMBLE! We look forward to an exciting, rewarding season!

DANCE IT OUT, LLC

PLEASE KEEP A COPY OF THIS HANDBOOK FOR YOUR RECORDS.



Irish Ensemble Handbook

Team Member's Name _____

I, the parent/guardian of the above named, have read the handbook and understand all of the requirements in order for my dancer to continue participation as well as the ramifications if this contract is broken. I fully comply with all rules and regulations within this handbook. I also realize this is a team effort and I will be called upon to help in some way throughout the year with things that are within my capacity to help. I will make every effort to do my share of assisting on behalf of my dancer. I understand I am required to be present for parent meetings or have someone present on my behalf.

Student's Printed Name: _____

Student's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Parent's Printed Name: _____

Parent's Signature: _____ Date: _____