

Ausdance National

FACT SHEET

Parents' Code of Behaviour

What this Fact Sheet covers

A comprehensive guide to positive, respectful behaviour for dance parents — covering your relationship with your child, your conduct in the studio environment, and your responsibilities on social media.

Who is this for?

Parents, carers and guardians of children enrolled in dance classes or programs at any level; particularly in studios.

Why this matters

Children's experience of dance is shaped not only by what happens in the studio, but by the attitudes and behaviour of the adults around them. When parents model respect, positivity, a belief in equity, and appropriate boundaries, children feel safe, confident and free to enjoy their dance journey. This code is grounded in current best practice in child-safe sport and performing arts environments, including guidance from Sport Australia, the Child Safe Standards (National Principles), Ausdance, and international dance education bodies.

Section 1: You and your child

Your relationship with your child is the most powerful influence on their enjoyment and development in dance. Perceived pressure to please parents can add to the stress (both positive and negative) of daily living and growing.

The code of behaviour for parents is intended to support you to reassure your child dance is for enjoyment and they are loved for themselves rather than their achievements. The following behaviours support a healthy, child-centred approach.

Supporting your child's enjoyment

- Remember children are dancing for their own enjoyment and fulfilment, not yours.
- If children are interested, encourage them to dance. Do not force them.
- Celebrate effort, attitude and personal growth rather than outcomes such as examination results, competition placements or performance roles.
- Help your child set realistic goals based on their individual ability, experience, age and culture.
- Teach your child an honest effort is as important as a victory, so the results of each examination or performance are accepted without too much disappointment.
- Attend performances and milestones regularly and with genuine enthusiasm.

Protecting your child's wellbeing

- Never ridicule, yell at or shame your child for making a mistake, not passing an examination or receiving constructive feedback from a teacher.
- Encourage your child to see dance as one valued part of their life and community participation — not their entire identity or worth.
- Support your child to develop resilience and perspective, including learning how to handle disappointment.

- Encourage your child not to compare their dance journey to that of other students — every dancer develops differently.
- Be mindful of the language you use about your child's body, abilities and progress. Negative or appearance-focused comments can cause lasting harm.
- If your child raises a concern about a teacher, another student or an incident at the studio, listen without judgement and follow the studio's reporting procedures.

Modelling healthy attitudes

- Remember children learn best by example. Model the values of respect and positive engagement you would like your child to demonstrate.
- Applaud and acknowledge all performers, not just your own child.
- Avoid making negative comments about other children's abilities or performances in front of your child.
- If you disagree with an examiner, adjudicator or critic, raise the issue through the appropriate channels rather than question the official's judgement in public.
- Support all efforts to remove verbal and physical abuse from dance activities.

Section 2: In the dance studio setting

Dance studios are professional learning environments. Parents are expected to conduct themselves in ways that support the safety, focus and wellbeing of all students, staff and families.

Your conduct with teachers and studio staff

- Always treat all teachers, assistants and studio staff with courtesy and respect — in person, by phone and in written communication.
- Recognise teachers are trained professionals making informed decisions about curriculum, casting, repertoire and student progression.
- If you have a concern about your child's class, progress or an incident at the studio, raise it privately and calmly through the studio's communication channels — not during class time, in front of students, other parents or publicly.
- Do not question a teacher's professional judgement in public or undermine their authority in front of students.
- Disputes about examination results, competition outcomes or assessments should be raised respectfully with the appropriate person (e.g. studio principal) through the correct process.
- Understand teachers cannot always discuss individual students during busy class times — request a scheduled time to speak if needed.
- Acknowledge and respect the time and expertise of all studio staff, including at events, concerts and competitions.

Your conduct with other parents

- Treat all other families in the studio community with respect, regardless of differences in ability, experience, culture, background or opinions.
- Do not make negative, disparaging or competitive comments about other children or their families — whether in person or online.
- Avoid gossip, rumour-spreading or forming divisive factions within the studio community.
- If you have a conflict with another parent, seek to resolve it respectfully and privately. If needed, involve the studio principal as a mediator.
- Be mindful of the impact your words and attitudes have on the broader studio culture — a supportive community benefits every child.
- Model inclusive behaviour: welcome new families, be encouraging of students at all levels, and contribute positively to group events.

Your conduct with students other than your own child

- Do not coach, instruct or correct other children in the studio — this is the role of the teacher.
- Do not comment negatively on another child's appearance, technique, body or performance.
- Respect the privacy of all students. Do not share information about other children's progress, health, personal circumstances or behaviour.
- If there is a genuine concern about how another student may be treating your child, follow the studio's processes for grievances and if necessary speak with the studio principal.

General studio etiquette

- Follow all studio rules, including those relating to observation areas, waiting rooms, class times and spectator conduct.
- Remain in designated areas during classes — avoid interrupting classes or hovering at studio doors.
- Ensure your child arrives and is collected on time. Inform the studio in advance if there are changes to arrangements.
- Support the studio's child safety policies, codes of conduct and reporting procedures. If you observe something of concern, report it to the appropriate person.

Section 3: Social media and digital conduct

Social media and digital communication are a normal part of modern life — but they also present particular risks in a dance studio environment where children are involved and professional reputations are at stake. Parents are expected to exercise responsibility, discretion and respect in all digital spaces connected to the studio.

Sharing content about your own child

- You may share images and videos of your own child's dance activities on personal social media in line with community expectation and any legislative requirements, provided doing so does not incidentally feature or identify other children without their families' consent.
- Be mindful of what you share publicly — images or videos that could be misused, that reveal personal information, or that your child would find embarrassing should not be posted.
- Consider your child's right to digital privacy and their own relationship with their online presence. Children's consent matters, even for parents.
- Avoid sharing content that draws unfavourable attention to your child's appearance, weight or physique.

Sharing content involving other children

- Do not photograph, video or share images of other people's children in dance settings without the explicit consent of their parent or guardian.
- This applies at classes, rehearsals, concerts, competitions and any other studio-related events — including informal situations.
- Do not tag other children or families in posts without their permission.
- Be aware that some families have safety or privacy reasons for keeping their children's images off social media. Respect these choices without question.

Online conduct relating to the studio, teachers and other families

- Do not post negative, critical or defamatory content about the studio, its teachers, staff, students or other families on any public or semi-public platform.
- Complaints or concerns about the studio should always be raised directly with the appropriate person, not aired publicly online.
- Avoid venting frustrations on social media in ways that could damage the studio's reputation or affect the livelihoods of staff.
- Do not engage in or encourage negative online commentary, reviews or campaigns, even if others have started them.
- Treat all online communication with the same respect and professionalism you would apply in person.

Studio-run digital platforms and parent groups

- If you are part of a studio-run or parent-run group (e.g. on Facebook, WhatsApp or similar), conduct yourself with the same respect as you would in person.
- Do not share confidential studio information, casting decisions, examination results or student details in group chats.
- Use group channels for their intended purpose — not for personal disputes, criticism or gossip.
- If you see inappropriate content in a group chat, do not engage with or amplify it. Report it to the group administrator or studio director.

Online safety for your child

- Be aware of what your child is posting about their dance life, including in relation to other students, teachers and the studio.
- Talk with your child about respectful online conduct, including not sharing images of classmates without permission.
- If you become aware of cyberbullying or inappropriate digital behaviour involving students from the studio, report it to the studio director.

First Nations considerations

This section is written directly for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents and carers whose children are participating in Western dance settings. Your Cultural knowledge, your instincts and your rights as a parent matter here — this section is about supporting you to navigate these environments with confidence.

Your child's Culture belongs in the dance studio

Your child's identity as an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander person is not something they need to set aside when they walk into a dance class. A good studio will welcome and affirm that identity. If your child is ever made to feel their culture is irrelevant, unwelcome or lesser, that is a problem worth raising.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples have the oldest continuing dance traditions on earth. If your child also participates in Traditional dance, Ceremony or Cultural movement practice, that is a source of enormous strength — not a conflict with their Western dance training. Many of the physical, expressive and performance skills developed through Cultural dance are directly transferable and deeply valuable.

What to look for in a Culturally safe studio

Research on First Nations children's participation in sport and physical activity consistently identifies

cost, transport, and feeling Culturally unwelcome as the main barriers. When choosing or assessing a dance studio for your child, consider:

- Does the studio acknowledge the Traditional Owners?
- Are First Nations students and families visible and welcomed in the studio's community?
- Does the studio have a clear anti-racism policy and a Culturally safe process for raising concerns?
- Are teachers and staff willing to listen to and learn from you and your child?
- Does the studio show genuine flexibility around Cultural obligations, Sorry Business, Sad News, NAIDOC events and other Community commitments — or does it penalise absences related to these?
- Is financial support available if cost is a barrier? Are uniform and performance fee obligations flexible?
- Does the studio treat your child as an individual, rather than making assumptions based on race or background?

You have the right to ask questions and raise concerns

The code of behaviour in this document applies to everyone — including staff. If a teacher speaks to your child in a disrespectful way and dismissive of their culture, or makes assumptions about their abilities or background, you have every right to raise that concern directly and to expect it to be taken seriously.

You do not need to manage this alone. If you are not satisfied with how a concern is handled by the teacher, you can escalate it to the studio director. If the issue involves racial discrimination, the Australian Human Rights Commission provides a free complaints process at humanrights.gov.au.

Cultural load is real — for your child too

First Nations children and young people often carry significant Cultural responsibilities alongside their schooling, activities and personal lives — including caring for family, attending Ceremony, supporting Community through Sorry Business/Sad News, and representing their Culture in multiple settings. This is not a burden unique to your child, but it is a real one.

A good dance teacher will understand your child may sometimes arrive tired, preoccupied or needing a gentler session. You should feel comfortable telling a teacher when your child has been carrying something difficult — Culturally or personally. A responsive teacher will adjust accordingly, not push through regardless.

You know your child, your family and your community better than any teacher does. That knowledge is not just relevant — it is essential to your child receiving genuinely good care in a dance setting.

Supporting your child's enjoyment and Cultural pride

Research by Creative Australia confirms arts participation — including dance — supports empowerment, community connectedness and overall wellbeing for First Nations young people. The joy and confidence your child builds through dance is real, and it connects to a much broader tradition of First Nations Peoples using dance as a vehicle for identity, healing and Community.

- Celebrate your child's participation in both Western dance and any Cultural dance or movement practices they engage with.
- Talk with your child about what they enjoy in class and whether they feel respected and supported.
- Encourage your child to speak up if something doesn't feel right — and let them know you will always listen and act on what they tell you.
- If your child expresses reluctance to continue, take the time to understand why. It may be the studio is not the right fit — and that is a legitimate outcome, not a failure.

Further reading

Sport Australia — Positive Sport Communities: www.sportaus.gov.au

Australian Human Rights Commission — Child Safe Organisations: www.humanrights.gov.au

eSafety Commissioner — Family resources on online safety: www.esafety.gov.au

Ausdance National: www.ausdance.org.au

One Dance UK — Healthier Dance resources: www.onedanceuk.org

<https://sportresilience.com/children-praise-in-sport/>

<https://kewschoolofdance.com/how-parents-can-support-their-young-dancers/>

<https://www.danceplug.com/article/here-are-8-ways-to-be-a-supportive-dance-mom-or-dad>

AIHW — Health and wellbeing of First Nations people: aihw.gov.au/reports/australias-health/indigenous-health-and-wellbeing

Creative Australia — Living Culture (arts and wellbeing): creative.gov.au/research/living-culture-first-nations-arts-participation-and-wellbeing

Reconciliation Australia — Reconciliation Action Plans: reconciliation.org.au

eSafety Commissioner — First Nations resources: esafety.gov.au

13YARN (24/7 crisis support for First Nations people): 13 92 76

Australian Public Service Commission — Cultural Load: apsc.gov.au

ABS National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey 2022–23: abs.gov.au

National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Nutrition and Physical Activity Survey 2023: abs.gov.au

This fact sheet is intended as a general guide. Studios should adapt this code to reflect their specific policies, child safety framework and community context. Ausdance Fact Sheet updates 2026 have been completed by Rita Pryce, Ashley Saltner Jr, Tom Davis, Annie Strauchs, Lynette Haines, Dr Joanna Nicholas, Ellen Paterniti, Isaac Campbell, Peta Blevins, Jacqueline Dimmock and Molly Tipping. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander content and Cultural Guidance – Rita Pryce, Pryce Centre for Culture and Arts.