



...Raising the Barre

2023-2024 Competition Dance Team Handbook

The SDDA Elite Teams are competitive dance companies designed for the more serious dancer who is highly motivated in the performing arts. Those selected through the audition, or invitation, process must meet the following requirements:

- Physically “fit and able” to participate safely (emphasis on healthy mind and body)
- Self-motivated and able to self-evaluate
- Solid technical and performance skills
- Strong desire to grow and develop as a dancer/performer
- Maintain excellent behavior, bright smile, and positive attitude, even during rehearsals
- Show respect and support for the team, all fellow dancers, the studio, and the staff (SDDA has a strict no bullying policy, and this includes words and deeds whether in person or online)
- Have a supportive family base that always shows respect for the teachers and students

Philosophy

We pride ourselves in providing our dancers with the tools needed to succeed in the competitive world of dance and life in general. The SDDA competition teams were developed to create a positive environment where dancers can grow as performers, as well as increase their self-esteem, self-discipline, and pride in their accomplishments. Elite Team Members will improve their dance technique, become more precise and enthusiastic, and learn how to be responsible team members. At SDDA we value the process, not just the award at the end, and we encourage our dancers to celebrate all accomplishments, no matter how small.

We believe that students exposed to healthy competition learn that no matter what the results, the important thing is that we perform to the best of our abilities, while gaining confidence, improving skills, and having fun in the process.

Commitment

SDDA Competition Teams are a full-year commitment. This is a serious commitment and should not be entered into lightly. Should you choose not to complete the entire year, or miss a competition, due to any reason other than a verified medical disability or a move that is more than 60 miles from the studio, you will incur a \$300 drop fee. This is equal to what it would cost to re-choreograph and block the routine in your absence. SDDA Junior, Teen, and Senior Competition Team dancers will attend no more than 5 regional competitions per year, possibly 1 national competition, and may perform for community events, as well as in our end of the year

recital. Mini and Petite Team dancers will attend 3-4 competitions per year, possibly 1 national competition, and may also perform at community events and our annual recital. Participants are expected to fulfil their commitments, and there are no exceptions. For older competitors this often means giving up entire weekends, checking out of school early, and making tough decisions such as doing homework during competition down time. Also, please take note that these weekends are in addition to normal class schedules, picture weekend, Toad Suck performances, auditions, dress rehearsals, recital, etc. All students and parents will be required to sign a contract. Our Mini and Petite teams won't be as affected by the time requirements since they will be doing fewer competitions, will only perform 1 dance, and are usually scheduled earlier in the day.

Attendance

Attendance is expected in all dance classes. When it comes to school and family activities, you will find that SDDA is accommodating and flexible. However, by accepting placement on a competition team, you have agreed that ALL dance classes are a priority in your schedule.

Missed classes must be communicated to and cleared through the Director, this includes your mandatory technique classes. Absences will be recorded, and once a student has missed more than 4 unexcused competition classes, the student can be dismissed from the team. If a student misses more than 8 cumulative technique classes, dismissal is also possible. If you miss a practice, you must both arrange to have videos taken and watch those practice videos, get with another competitor to get caught up, or schedule a private lesson at your own expense. This must be done before the next practice. Competition teams are a group effort and attendance is very important to every dancer involved. We also understand that being a well-rounded individual is important, and we support students pursuing other activities; however, when it comes to participation on a competition team, students MUST be present.

Required Classes

Each dancer is required to take a minimum of 3 technique classes, including ballet, tap, and jazz, along with 2 supplementary classes: Stretch and Body Conditioning and Turns/Tricks/Skills. The only exceptions are our Mini and Petite teams. Mini and Petite team members must be enrolled in a ballet/tap/combo class and a jazz class in addition to their competition choreography class. This applies during the summer sessions, as well. However, to have the strongest competition team, we strongly recommend taking as many disciplines as possible, such as: acro, lyrical, hip-hop, etc. As our older teams are moving up through the ranks at competitions, it is imperative that we work as hard as, or harder than, every other studio in order to stay competitive. New for this year: No student may compete a group dance, solo/duo/trio dance style that they are not enrolled in for technique classes. For instance, if you are not enrolled in a hip-hop class or a lyrical class, you may not compete a group/solo/duo/trio hip-hop or lyrical dance.

Fundraising

You may have the opportunity to fundraise many months of the year. However, SDDA as an LLC cannot be formally in charge of any fundraising. For this reason, a parent volunteer is needed. All information should be out well in advance of each fundraiser. Fundraising profits will be applied to your dancer's account to help offset the costs of competition expenses.

However, please know that fundraising should not be counted on to pay all of your competition fees. To keep your prices down, all participants must pay in a timely manner so that SDDA is not incurring late fees or interest charges, which will ultimately be passed along to customers through price increases.

Financial Commitment

A program such as this requires a financial commitment. There are entry fees, optional spirit wear, costumes, travel expenses, etc. All entry fees must be paid 30 days before each competition. ****Your competition class tuition is designed to cover all coach expenses, so you will not be billed for that later.**

- Competition Classes are separate from your hourly technique/recital classes. You are paying for a program and all its benefits, not just an hourly class.
- Hotel accommodations, if needed, and transportation to and from competitions, are not provided. This is the responsibility of the parent/guardian.
- Enrollment in a competition class-team is \$50 per month for 1 group dance, \$85 per month for 2 group dances, \$110 per month for 3 group dances, \$135 for 4 group dances, and \$160 for 5 dances. (Sibling discounts do not apply to competition tuition since it is already discounted on a sliding scale)
- **All Competition Dancers must be on automatic payment/credit card draft. Automatic drafts will deduct all fees that are owed on the 1st of each month. This includes tuition, entry fees, costumes, etc. Another payment will be run on the 15th of each month to catch all fees posted between the 2nd and the 15th. Payments for private lessons are expected at the time of the lesson, though they are not always posted and run on the same day.** Sometimes parents want to pay for their competition entry fees 1st and then tuition later. This is not allowed, as competition entry fees do not benefit the studio, rather go straight to the individual competition companies. Your tuition is, in fact, how we pay our rent, our teachers, etc. **Therefore, all normal studio fees such as tuition, private lessons, costumes, etc. must be paid in full before other monies can be applied to competition expenses.**

Average Competition Entry Fees

Solos: \$120-160 per dance for regionals and \$160-\$185 per dance for nationals

Duo/Trio: \$65-90 per dance/per dancer, more at nationals

Small Group/Large Group/Line: \$55-70 per dance/per dancer, more at nationals

Choreography Fees

- Group Choreography is \$300 per dance. This fee will be divided between the total number of team members.
- Solo and Duo/Trio Choreography is \$275 per dance. This fee will be divided between the members.
- All choreography fees are due upon the first private lesson for solos and duo/trios, or at the beginning of choreography camp for team members.

Camp Fees

- A Camp Fee will be charged to each dancer to offset the time spent in the studio and the amount needed to pay our instructors. This is generally never more than \$75 - \$85 per camper.

Other Costs to Consider

- Competition dancers are required to purchase tights, false eyelashes, earrings, make-up, etc. Though many of these things would be purchased for recital anyway, competition dancers purchase them much earlier in the year and generally in higher quantities.
- Spirit Wear, though not a mandatory expense, is something almost all competitors take advantage of. Jackets, T-shirts, spirit jerseys, tank tops, car decals, hair bows, etc. can be purchased. They make excellent Christmas gifts and will be on sale in our online store/locker room several times throughout the year.

Auditions

- Only students enrolled in SDDA Jr. Ballet/Tap/Jazz or Level 1-5 who are age 9 and up may audition for the Junior/Teen/Senior competition teams. unless specifically invited by Mrs. Michelle or Mrs. Haley. Placement is not, however, guaranteed.
- The Mini and Petite Teams are invitation-only programs, and no audition is required.
- Dancers from other studios, or new students in the community must be 9 years of age and have significant dance experience (at least 2 years) to audition for Elite Teams. If necessary, these dancers may be considered for a more novice level team or individual solos/duos/trios.
- Initial auditions will be held on Saturday, May 13th.
- The cost to audition is \$20 per student. There are no refunds, even if your child does not make a team.
- Every effort is made to allow students to participate, whether it is on a team of their peers or in a solo/duo/trio capacity. For instance, if a few students fall well below or well above the average score during auditions, a novice or advanced level solo or duo/trio may be considered, depending on the circumstances. However, team participation is always our priority. In addition, solos/duos/trios will be available to TEAM members first, and then at the Director's discretion based on studio and teacher availability.

Opportunities Available

Competitors will be chosen for teams, and/or solos, and/or duo/trios. Final choices regarding costumes and songs are at the sole discretion of SDDA instructors and choreographers. While we appreciate the suggestions of parents and students, our professional instructors have an excellent track record of choosing the right/winning combination for each student.

- Solos/Duos/Trios require normal private lesson fees for the learning and perfecting of dances. Each dancer must participate in at least 3 private or semi-private lessons per month to compete a solo or duo/trio with SDDA. This rule is strictly enforced. Choreography fees also apply. Please see above.

- Solos/Duo/Trios may perform their routine(s) in community performances and the annual recital, **if space allows**, but are not required to do so. **Teamwork always comes first.**
- Group dances may perform routines in community performances and the recital **if space allows.**
- Elite Team Members will have the opportunity to attend dance conventions, where they can take classes from “Master Level” teachers from around the world.

The Director and Coaches

Mrs. Haley Ashford is the Director for all competition teams. She is also our lead competition instructor and choreographer. Mrs. Michelle may also be an instructor, along with other staff members who have years of competition experience as dancers and instructors. We will attend all competitions! If you are performing a solo or duo/trio, you may choose your instructor from SDDA, but it must be approved through Mrs. Michelle Knell or Mrs. Haley first. Not all teachers are available to work on competitive routines, as many of them have other jobs and/or are still in school and have very busy schedules.

Competitions

The competition schedule for the 2023 -2024 season will be announced in late August or early September. All dancers are required to participate in all assigned competitions. Every effort is made to select competitions that will provide our dancers with the best experience possible. For instance, we strive to only attend competitions and conventions that are members of the ADCC (Association of Dance Conventions and Competitions). All rebates and cash awards from competitions go directly to the studio to benefit the competition team. They will offset costs of things such as staff lodging/stipends, props, trailer rental, music editing, end of year parties, team gifts, etc. This is one of many ways SDDA keeps your prices down.

SDDA approaches competition with a few things in mind:

- Competition against other teams allows our teachers and students to “see what’s out there” and grow. Most competitions will be in our local area such as Little Rock or Hot Springs. However, on occasion, we may travel as far as Rogers, Texarkana, or Memphis.
- Fun Family Atmosphere- SDDA attends competitions that are fun for the whole family. Students learn team-building skills, performance skills, and develop confidence that will last a lifetime.

Annual Recital

All members of the SDDA competition team will perform all team routines in at least one of the annual recitals, **if space allows**. Solos/Duos/Trios are optional and performed only as space is available. Please remember that non-competing recital students have worked hard all year and only have this one major performance opportunity. They deserve to have a performance dedicated mostly to them.

Parent Roles

SDDA is a **drama free zone!** Parents are expected to be supportive, respectful, and courteous to all team members and their families always. Poor sportsmanship, rudeness, jealousy, or disrespect for another team member, their family, a teacher, or the director is not tolerated. We love our positive environment, and so will you! We ask that if you have any issues, you please think/pray first, speak later, and even then, make sure you are speaking in the right way to the right person. Example: issues with Mrs. Michelle should be discussed with Mrs. Michelle. Issues with Ms. Haley should be discussed with Mrs. Haley, and issues with a fellow parent should be discussed with that parent directly and kindly. This is the only way to ensure a team of happy and positive people, not to mention, it sets a great example for your children.

Your role is the following:

- Lift and support all team members
- Teach your child to be happy for other dancers
- Teach your child that in the world of competition, it is possible, and even likely, there will be someone with more natural talent or more hours of training than they have
- Give a hand to those who may be behind or struggling, and never belittle them
- Stand firmly behind the teaching staff in word and in deed
- Work with the teaching staff, never against them
- Remember that the way your child perceives their result is often a direct reflection of what they have heard or seen from you

The most successful children are those whose parents support their teachers 100%. These are parents who do not question a teacher in front of their children, and who are realistic about their children's abilities and placement on a team. We all want our children to succeed, but success is not measured by a trophy, or by the row in which they stand on stage, which team they are assigned to, or how many pirouettes they can do. Instead, it is measured by the effort put forth. If they give all they've got to give, what more can we expect? **If you have questions or concerns, please see Mrs. Michelle or Mrs. Haley. All concerns will be happily and honestly addressed.**

End Notes

Teaching is our utmost passion, and we can't imagine doing anything else. Thank you for trusting us and giving us the opportunity to work with your children. We take our jobs very seriously and your child, and their success in the program, is our top priority. Let's "raise the barre" in dance education together.

SDDA Elite Team

Letter of Commitment

*Please return this signed agreement to the front desk when you register.
Please complete one form for each competitor.*

This correspondence serves as an agreement between you and SDDA, as produced and directed by Michelle Knell, Kevin Knell, and Haley Ashford. Your child has been selected as a member of the SDDA competition team, which is an honor and a privilege. Your signature below indicates that you have read and fully understand all the requirements associated with participating in the program, as outlined in your SDDA competition handbook. Furthermore, your signature, and that of your child's, indicates your acceptance of those terms, and that you are fully aware of the commitment involved in this program in terms of finances, time, and behavior.

Student:

Being a member of the competition team means that you will actively participate for a full year. Your commitment to this program means that you will be participating in all performances, competitions, technique classes, and recitals that are required during this time, including summer classes. Your commitment to this program means you will come to class on time, dressed appropriately according to the dress code, and ready to learn. Your commitment to this program means that you will adhere to all SDDA codes of conduct. Your commitment means that you also agree to keep at least a C average in your academic endeavors. In addition to all of this, I understand that a violation of my commitments to this program/contract has serious consequences that may result in being put on a temporary probation period, or entirely dismissed from the program.

X _____ Date _____

Parent:

Please be sure you feel comfortable with your ability to handle the fees incurred for this activity. As with most competitive activities, there is a lot of information that will be communicated regarding schedules and payments, and we don't want to catch anyone off guard. Monthly tuition, competition fees, costume fees, choreography fees, etc...all have precise due dates. These due dates are always publicly posted and e-mailed to you. We suggest checking e-mail regularly and coming into the studio at least once a week to stay current on updates.

I have read the above information and will be responsible for my child's account and activity requirements.

X _____ Date _____