

# 30 Tips...

## - To Help You Prepare for Competition

*by Kelli Woodruff, Director, Colleyville Heritage High School Panteras*

There are so many things to think about for competition and several perspectives to keep in mind. The director, dancer, spectator, and judges' impressions all need to be taken into consideration. The director needs to make sure that the material is not only appropriate for the dancers, but is creative and entertaining. The dancers need to be challenged with choreography that will keep them motivated throughout the long contest season that is also attainable for the entire team. It is necessary to remember that dancers must be able to execute the movements proficiently or you will never effectively communicate the dance to the audience and judges. A spectator should be able to enjoy a well executed performance without being offended. Finally, you do have to think about the judge's perspective. They sit through a lot of dances all day long and need the choreography to catch their attention, but it can not be too difficult to where points are deducted for poor execution and precision. However, remember to maintain the delicate balance between great choreography and great execution and precision.

Below you will find areas to think about BEFORE you jump into competition season. If you incorporate these into your decisions for competition, you and your team are sure to come out on top!

### **MUSIC**

1. Pick appropriate music – Be aware of the lyrics and age appropriateness of the music.
2. Do not use songs just because they are popular.
3. Take time to cut your music properly and get a professional recording.
4. Make multiple copies to cover technical problems and damage.
5. Record each song on a separate CD or tape.
6. Keep CD's in a protective covering or original jewel case to avoid damage and skipping.

### **COSTUMES**

7. Choose appropriate costumes that flatter your entire team.
8. Choose costumes that will look good in the performance venue. Consider backdrops, floor color, lighting, etc..
9. Make sure that costumes and accessories will stay secure during the entire dance and are not distracting.
10. Practice in contest costumes prior to the first contest performance and watch to see if there are any costume malfunctions. Make sure you fix them!
11. Toupee tape works very well in keeping costumes attached to the body.

### **CHOREOGRAPHY**

12. Be creative in your choreography – An innovative piece of choreography is much more appealing to the judges than a difficult routine filled with lots of “tricks” that are executed with poor technique.
13. Remember that dance is an artistic form of communication.
14. Choreograph around the strengths of the dancers and beware of movements that are too difficult to execute.
15. Make sure that choreography is age appropriate and not risqué.

### **TECHNIQUE**

16. Expand dance technique outside of the choreography realm. Use technique class to teach and practice new dance skills.
17. Only incorporate those skills that are executed with proficiency into the choreography. Having a dancer perform difficult technique before her body is ready will only hurt her or him in the long run.



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## **CLEANING DANCES**

18. Go through each movement's body angles, arm angles, leg placement, foot placement, and focus one count at a time to make sure that everyone looks the same.
19. Clean technique in the dance using the music. This will allow for proficient execution of the technical skills in the choreography.
20. Make sure that ALL of the dancers are COMMITTED TO THE MOVEMENTS and are executing each movement FULL OUT!!

## **SHOWMANSHIP**

21. Make sure that facial expressions are genuine and appropriate for the theme and motif of the dance.
22. Having students write stories that interpret the meaning of the dance is a great way for the dancers to know what they are dancing about, especially for lyrical and modern.

## **PROPS**

23. Make sure that they are incorporated into the choreography. (75% is a good rule to work with.)
24. Be aware of the execution of dancers who are manipulating large props while another group is dancing.

## **COMPETITION ITINERARY**

25. PRIOR to leaving for the contest, prepare a contest itinerary for the parents and students of all expectations and consequences for not upholding the expectations.

## **DANCER HEALTH AND WELL BEING**

26. Know when your dancers are stressed out – play a game, bring a treat, work in peer groups, or share stories for emotional content of the dance.
27. When exhausted, work on transitions and spacing.
28. Make sure dancers get sleep at contest and are eating well in order to perform to the best of their ability.
29. Make sure that dancers do a full warm-up before each dance, especially when there is a long break in between dances.
30. Do not allow an injured dancer to practice full-out or perform prior to complete recovery as this will only make the injury more severe.

*And three extra tips...*

## **COMPETITION ETIQUETTE**

31. Remind dancers not to walk around or talk during a performance.
32. Remind dancers to be gracious winners and losers.
33. Discuss with dancers prior to contest how to have a positive attitude toward their own teammates and toward other teams.

***GOOD SPORTSMANSHIP IS A MUST!***

