

Mountain Fire

Irish Dance

School

Handbook

For Students and Parents

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1. Introduction To Irish Dance

Irish step dancing combines the entrancing rhythms of traditional Celtic music with the grace and energy of dance. Instruction centers on the fundamentals of traditional Irish dance – timing, body position, and footwork. Students work to achieve these fundamentals as they learn the basic steps, known as “threes” and “sevens,” then progress to learn full steps.

Building confidence, social, and team skills, students learn to dance in teams of two, three, four, six, and eight. Students learn to dance in unison, developing special awareness as they dance the patterns of traditional ceili dances.

Hard shoe dancing, as popularized by *Riverdance* and *Lord of the Dance*, is usually taught to second and third year students, depending on their level of proficiency in their soft fundamentals at that point. The unique rhythms of hornpipe and double jig music drive the steps and timing of these dances. Students also learn one or more of the Traditional Set Dances, dances designated by the Irish Commission which are danced to the same music and employ the same steps the world over.



a b
c d

Common Gaelic Words to Know:

Ghillies – “gill-ees” - the soft black lace-up shoes worn by females in Irish Dance

Ceili – “kay-lee” – an Irish dance party, with food, music, and most importantly Irish group dances

Feis – “fesh” – an Irish dance competition

Feisanna – “fesh-ah-nah” – plural of feis

Feili – “fay-lee” – an Irish music and dance competition

Rince – “rink-uh” – Irish for dance

Oireachtas – “oh-rock-tus” – regional level Irish dance competition

2. About the School

Mountain Eire Irish Dance School was founded in June of 2013, by registered Irish dance teacher Mickie Richardson. Mickie had been a part of the Irish dance world as an adult competitor and assistant teacher for 16 years at that point, dancing first with Judy DeNapoli, ADCRG, of Saint Brendan's School of Irish Dance, and then with Shaun and Aisling Casey of Celtic Steps.

After years of watching dancers of all ages enjoy the dance, but then be driven away by the over-emphasis on high-level competition, Mickie wanted to open a school where everyone was welcome to dance for the joy of the dance. She sat her exams in 2012 and became a certified teacher by An Commisiun Le Rinci Gaelica, the Irish Dance Commission in Ireland.

The philosophy of Mountain Eire is that Irish dance is for everyone of all ages! Whether the dancer participates for exercise, the social setting, performances, or competition, we will help you to reach those goals. We have multiple performance opportunities throughout the year, lessons year round (excluding holidays), and many dancers that do choose to participate in competitions. We strive to keep our class and school sizes small in order to maintain a personalized and positive atmosphere.



3. Class/Practice Etiquette

1. **Always read notices on the dry erase board!** Weekly and/or monthly newsletters will be emailed for general information, but last minute or more specific info will be on the dry erase board.
2. **Arrive on time for class.** We begin with stretching to maintain the physical health of the dancers. If you are consistently late and miss the stretching, you may be putting your dancer at risk for injury.
3. **Wear proper attire for class.** This includes clothing that allow the dancer to stretch and move. Dancing is strenuous exercise, so dancers may want to wear layers so they may remove layers as they warm-up.

Acceptable Clothing

T-shirts/tank tops

Shorts/skorts

Leggings

Socks

Dance shoes

Not Acceptable

Jeans

Dresses

Hats

Long skirts

Short/revealing clothes

4. **Be courteous, respectful, and well-behaved at all times.** It is unfair to both the instructor and other dancers if an individual is taking instruction time away from the class due to behavior.

Special needs/challenges are understood and welcomed, but catering to a student's special situation will not be allowed to take undue time and attention from the whole class.

5. **Bring a small notebook to class.** This is a great way to take notes on new steps/dances for future reference when you are practicing later. It is also a great place to note tips or areas to work on from your teacher.
6. **Do not chew gum or eat in class.** Gum is a choking risk during strenuous exercise and is therefore not allowed. Food should be reserved for before or after classes, not during, unless there is a medical need. If eating at the studio space, please be neat and tidy, remembering to clean up after yourself.
7. **Bring water to class.** Dancers will be given opportunities to drink water during the class time as this is an important health element in any physical activity. Please refrain from colored drinks that may stain if spilled or sodas that do not rehydrate the dancers sufficiently.
8. **Clean up after yourself.** Remember to look around for your/your dancer's belongings before you leave our dance space. Also, be sure to pick up/throw away any cups or trash from your space. If we all pitch in, our studio space will be a pleasant place to be!
9. **Please be sure younger dancers a) use the restroom before class, b) have their shoes securely tied.**

And last but definitely not least, remember that the more you put into dance, the more you will get out of it! (Practice makes a difference!)

4. Tuition

Monthly tuition is due at the first class of the month. This is based on a 4-week average, acknowledging that some months have only 3 classes while others have 5. Payment coupons are available to print at home in the Dancers' Information section of the website. Extras will always be available at classes as well. Please fill out a coupon to accompany your payment each month to help us track your tuition and to ensure that the tuition is attributed to the correct dancer.

Late payments will require an extra \$5 fee for every week overdue. There is no credit for missed classes.

Family rate is as follows: first and second dancers are full price. Each family member after is half price.



5. Music and the Dances



One full step is comprised of the right foot completing the pattern, then the left foot completing the same pattern.

JIG: The famous Irish Jig is danced in 6/8 time and soft shoes. This is also known as Light Jig.

SINGLE JIG: This is similar to a light jig danced to the tempo of 'Pop goes the weasel.'

REEL: A reel step is counted in 2/4 or 4/4 timing and is very fast. It is danced with leaps, points, hops and kicks.

SLIP JIG: This is a very light soft shoe dance, usually for girls or women. The timing is 9/8. The dance is known for its graceful leaps, light skips and slides.

HORNPIPE: This is a hard shoe dance, accented on the first and third beat of 4/4 (or 2/4) timing.

DOUBLE JIG: This is a hard shoe dance. It is in 6/8 time, like a regular jig. Also known as Treble Jig, or Heavy Jig.

TREBLE REEL: This is a spirited hard shoe dance to reel music. Also known as Heavy Reel.

TRADITIONAL SET: One of a short list of traditional hard shoe dances that are performed exactly the same way worldwide. "Saint Patrick's Day" and "The Blackbird" are examples. These are typically the first hard shoe set dances that a student will learn.

NON-TRADITIONAL SET: A dance choreographed by the teacher, set to a tune from the approved list of hornpipes and treble jigs. Each tune has an allowable metronomic speed range.

6. Costuming

SCHOOL COSTUMES

All Irish dance schools have "uniforms" that are unique to each school. Normally of a very traditional cut and style, these costumes are made in the school's "colors" and are used to identify dancers from a particular school and to provide a uniform appearance when performing group dances.

Typically, a student will "rent" elements of the school uniform from Mountain Eire Irish Dance School. If they are carefully maintained, they will last for years, and can be passed down to another set of younger dancers. Uniforms require an initial deposit and are rented annually. We will annually hold a "Costume Day" in November. At this point, all costume pieces are turned in to our Costume Mistress, Miss Diane. Costumes are checked for wear and tear, needed repairs, and size changes. Costumes are then re-issued with the payment of the annual users' fee of \$20, which funds this process. Watch the website page for the Costume Mistress for dates and times for this process.

BOYS/MEN: In the past, it was customary for boys and men to compete in the Irish kilt. This differed from the Scottish kilt in that it is made from plain colored, rather than tartan, material. The current standard for boys and men is pants, shirts and vests and/or ties. The Mountain Eire uniform for boys and men consists of black socks and black dress pants, and a teal shirt and black vest rented from the school with a deposit. The reason for renting these pieces from the school is to ensure unity of costuming in performances and group competitions. One piece of Celtic jewelry is permitted on the upper left chest.

UNDER 10 Girls: The Mountain Eire uniform for girls under age 10 consists of white Irish "poodle socks"; a purple jumper with cape and a Mountain Eire uniform headband rented from the school; black "kick pants"; and a white blouse with a Peter Pan collar. The jumper, cape, and headband are available from the school with a deposit. The blouse, socks, kick pants, and Celtic jewelry must be purchased by the dancer. The white blouse may be purchased anywhere but can normally be found at local shops that specialize in school uniforms. The blouse must be long-sleeved with a buttoned cuff, have a rounded "Peter-Pan" collar, and be devoid of any design and/or embroidery. One piece of Celtic jewelry is permitted on the upper left chest.

10 AND OVER LADIES: The costume for ladies ages 10 and older consists of opaque black tights, a black Mountain Eire team dress, black kick pants, and a Mountain Eire uniform headband.

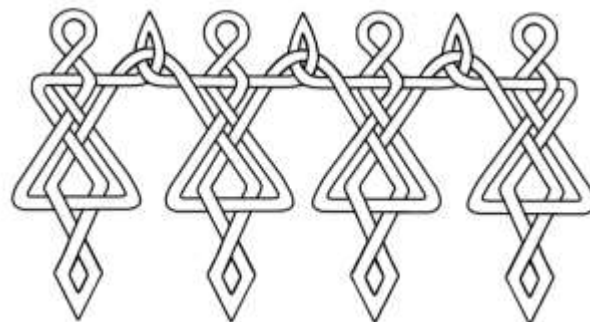
The black/purple team costume is also a rental from the school. It is the costume that dancers ages 10 and over will use to compete or perform in "open level" (or novice and above level) group dances of 2, 3, 4, 6, and 8. It is a simpler costume at a less expensive price so that dancers at that level can afford either a school costume or solo dress AND team costume.

ADULT LADIES: The costume for adult ladies (ages 18 and over) consists of black opaque tights, black kick pants, and a black handkerchief-hem school dress. These will be made to order for sizing.

WAITING FOR A SCHOOL COSTUME:

Many parents wonder what to do for their dancer if he/she wants to compete or perform before an "official" Mountain Eire costume is available or if they cannot afford a school costume at that point. In such cases, parents should think "basic white on top/black on the bottom." In other words, gents should wear a plain white long-sleeved, button-cuffed shirt with black dress pants and black socks. If the collar permits, a plain-colored tie is suggested.

Girls/ladies should wear a plain white long-sleeved blouse, a black skirt, black kick pants, and poodle socks (for girls and young ladies under 18) or black opaque tights for adults. Traditionally, blouses for girls under 10 were required to have round Peter-Pan collars while mandarin or parson's collars were required for older ladies. However, if these types cannot be found or would cause undue expense, dancers need only stick to the "plain, white, long-sleeved" requirement. Skirts must be plain black, not shorter than 3 inches above the knee, and of a type that allows free movement when dancing. Dancers must wear black kick pants under their skirts -- bicycle shorts are not permitted.



SOLO COSTUMES

Once a dancer has achieved Novice level in at least four dances, he/she may invest in a solo costume. When competing, the solo costume may only be worn in the novice or above level dances. If a dancer is still beginner² in a particular dance, they must wear the school costume for that dance in competition.

BOYS/MEN: The "solo" costume requirements for gents are very liberal (and much less expensive than the ladies solo costume!). Pant color and shirt color are decided by the dancer. Black dress pants continue to be the norm, with a same color or contrasting color shirt. To this the dancer can add a tie, suspenders, a belt, a cummerbund, a button cover, vest, etc. The amount of embellishment, or "bling," added to the costume should directly correlate to the level of the dancer. I.e. the lower the level, the less "bling."

GIRLS/LADIES: A girl's first solo dress is typically purchased "used" from another dancer. Finding a suitable used dress is not terribly difficult -- usually there are display racks of "pre-owned" dresses at feisanna, and there are a number of websites that deal in solo dress consignments. Please see the costume mistress's page on our website for tips on choosing a used solo dress. Again, the level of embellishment should correlate to the level of the dancer. A novice solo dress should have less "bling" than a prizewinner dress, and a champion level dress will have more than the previous 2 levels. All prospective solo dress purchases need to first be approved by Miss Mickie and Miss Diane.

When a dancer reaches preliminary championship level, a new solo dress may be in order. New dresses are ordered from a highly skilled seamstress several months in advance of when they are needed for competition. Prices for these dresses can be quite high as each individual dress becomes a unique work of art from the dressmaker.

A solo dress need not be in school colors. The choices for color combinations, graphics, and materials are endless. Experienced competitive dancers watch the World Championships closely each year – not only to keep up on the hottest new step trends, but also to check out the fashions as well.

7. GIRLS' HAIR and WIGS



Trends for hair have varied over the years in Irish Dance. Hair was originally worn naturally, then heavy curling became the fashion, then ultra-curly wigs have been currently seen everywhere. However, there is a quiet movement by some groups to bring back the beauty and convenience of the natural hair look. Every school and dance teacher has a differing opinion on hair. Miss Mickie is a proponent of returning to the natural hair look depending on the level.

Young dancers under age 10 may wear their hair naturally, pulled up at the crown and secured in a band or barrette, with the school headband. They may also complete this look with natural curls (foam curlers or foam spike curlers work best). If a dancer under 10 would like to purchase a wig for convenience sake, a small bun-style wig worn high on the head is the preferred style.

Dancers age 10 and up may continue to dance with natural/curled hair, particularly through the lower competition levels. If this age dancer prefers a wig, again for convenience sake, please consult with Miss Mickie about the style that best suits your dancer's face style and level. With wigs, traditionally the higher level the dancer, the fuller and longer the wig.

Adults should wear their hair naturally, curled or not, to suit the individual. Headbands, Celtic designed barrettes/clips, or silk flowers in our school colors can be used as decoration. We recommend trying out a few different styles with your costume on to see which balances the look of the dress and flatters the dancer.

Instructions for Achieving Traditional Curls:

Wash your dancer's hair the day before the performance or feis. DO NOT USE CONDITIONER! When it is clean and dry and combed out, assemble your materials. You'll need a comb, some of those foam spike curlers, some end papers, and some heavy-duty styling gel. You'll need a hair net to cover it all up for sleeping. You'll need a towel for your dancer's shoulders and another for your hands if the phone rings. Make some popcorn, turn on a movie or DVD, and get comfortable, this will take a while.

Take the very top 1/3 of the dancer's hair and put it into a covered elastic or scrunchy. The best ones have a plastic ball at each end – so you can remove it easily. Begin work with the back of the topknot. Use the comb to take a small amount of hair, apply a liberal amount of the gel to it. Wrap the very end with a paper. Roll it up tightly on the spike, just before the wide spot with the hole in it. Thread the end of the spike through the hole. One down! The very front of the topknot will be somewhat looser. You'll want it to lie flat when you put a barrette and the headband in place the day of the function.

Move on to the main part of the head, just below that level, in the center of the back. Work your way around to the front, rolling small amounts of hair each time. When you've finished with that layer, move down to the next. When you get to the bottom layer, don't roll the curlers up all the way especially in the back. The tops of these don't show and they'll be easier to sleep on if they don't pull. Cover it all with a hair net. Note that it all must be perfectly dry when you take it out.

The less hair in each of the curlers, the more curlers you'll need. The more curlers you use, the 'fuller' the hair will be when it's all taken out. It takes longer to do a complete and very full head of curls, but it's well worth the extra time. Don't worry! You'll get faster with experience.

8. Competitions

BRING: Freshly polished dance shoes, your dancer's complete costume (double check that ALL the pieces are packed the night before), water, non-sticky ad non-staining snacks, extra socks, a change of clothes, a smock or cover-up to be worn over school or solo costume. Also think of bringing some sort of diversion (books, video games, cards, etc.) to keep your dancer occupied in the case of a long wait between competitions.

BRING: Your dancer's notebook. Your dancer may want to refer to notes about steps or dances to ease the nerves. It is also a great place to keep track of how he or she placed in each event at each feis. You may also want to keep notes regarding how your dancer performed -- hesitate on any dance? Smiled and bowed to the judge? Had very nice, straight arms? All this will help your dancer remember what to work on during the next practice sessions.

BRING: A couple of safety pins for attaching your dancer's competitor number to his/her costume. PLEASE DO NOT attach competitor numbers with a tied ribbon around the waist as this changes the line and look of the costumes, and not for the better!

BRING: Cash for food or snacks before, during, or after. Also, most feisanna have several vendors that set up shop at these events. This makes for a convenient place to shop for any of your dancer's needs (practice cds, new socks or shoes, wigs, etc.) or fun gift ideas for your dancer (apparel, jewelry, and other fun items).

Feis Day is a busy and sometimes confusing time for an Irish dance family. Feel free to ask questions of other Mountain Eire parents and experienced dancers. Younger dancers are typically scheduled early in the morning. Arrive early. Pick up your dancer's registration packet and competitor number. There are almost always signs directing you to the registration or packet pick-up table. Find the stage where the competition will be held. Find some seats. Remember, Irish dancing is all about the feet -- if you have a choice, find seating as close to the stage as possible. If you end up way in the back, plan on standing a lot!

Dancers: Stretch! Have a little something to eat. Change into costume, including shoes. Take out the curlers or solidly anchor the wig. Visit the restroom.

There may be a small practice area to warm up. It's a great place to test out shoe lacings to make sure they are not too tight, warm up sleepy muscles, and practice steps one more time before competition. But remember -- this is a "warm-up" area, not a play area. Discourage "goofing off" and "rough-housing" at all times. Also, be sure your dancer does not overdo it in the practice area or he/she will be too exhausted to point when it is time to compete!

Have your dancer report backstage prior to the competition for check in. Parents are not typically allowed backstage. The "stage manager" for that stage, and his or her assistants, will see that your dancer gets lined up with the other dancers in that competition.

Competition stages must be a minimum of 20x20ft., but may be larger. Two or three competition stages may be set up side by side with only a line of red tape to separate them. Dancers compete two or three to a stage for most soft and hard shoe dances. Your dancer will be paired with a student from another school if possible. Please advise your dancer not to cross over to the next stage, not to collide with the other dancer, and **NOT TO WATCH** what that other dancer is doing. Remember, steps vary from school to school.

Feis Day is a great opportunity for your dancer to see champion dancers in solo competition. Watch dancers from other schools display all of the skills that they have worked so hard to master. This gives younger dancers an idea of what they may want to set as their personal goals.



Current Feis Schedule:

The North American Feis Committee website maintains a current list of all sanctioned feiseanna in North America for the calendar year. Visit it at <http://www.feiseanna.org>. Since only a given number of feiseanna can be held in North America on a given day, competition to "reserve" days (especially weekends) is fierce among organizing committees. Normally, once a feis organizing committee is granted a time slot (the first weekend in May, for example), its feis is held at that time every year. Our own Pike's Peak Feis is held the first weekend in June. The location may change, but the weekend won't. Here's a list of the six NAFC-sanctioned feiseanna held in Colorado:

January: Colorado WinterFeis
- sponsored by the Wick School

April: Feile Denver
- sponsored by the McTeggart School

June: Pike's Peak Feis
- sponsored by Celtic Steps School

July: Colorado United Irish Societies (CUIS) Feis
- sponsored by McTeggart School

September: Longs Peak Feis
- co-sponsored by the Reed and Heritage Schools

October: Oktoberfeis
- sponsored by the Martin Percival School

November: Fall Feis
- sponsored by the McTeggart School

Here are some other feiseanna a little further away, just to give you an idea.

February: Albuquerque, NM

March: Bellevue, WA

May: Tucson, AZ

June: Dayton, OH

June: Cincinnati, OH

July: St. Louis, MO

August: Phoenix, AZ

August: St. Louis, MO

October: San Antonio, TX

October: Phoenix, AZ

November: Houston, TX

December: Scottsdale, AZ

Travel expenses to and from feiseanna, to include airfare, lodging, meals and miscellaneous are the sole responsibility of the individual dancer and his or her family. There are some competitions (the regional Oireachtas for example) where Celtic Steps School of Irish Dance sends a large number of dancers, and it may be possible to share expenses with another dancer or family.

Oireachtas (pronounced "oh-ROCK-tus") is an Irish word meaning a large gathering. When delegates to the Irish Congress meet in Dublin, this is referred to as an Oireachtas. In this case, however, it is a regional Irish dance competition. In our Western Region, the Oireachtas is usually held the weekend before Thanksgiving. As with local feiseanna, the time slot for Oireachtas remains the same but the location moves to various locations within the region.

Schools may choose to regularly send 8-hand Ceili teams to Oireachtas when they have enough dancers dancing at a high enough standard. It is also encourage for Preliminary and Open Champions to participate in this important competition. Finishing well at Oireachtas earns a dancer an invitation to compete in the National and/or World competitions.

During the weekend of the Oireachtas competition, the Oireachtas committee sponsors a "mini-Feis." This feis is exclusively for Ceili team dancers who are not competing in the solo Oireachtas events and the siblings of Oireachtas dancers who are not competing in the regionals themselves but who have come to cheer on their family members.

At these higher level feisanna, due to the large numbers of competitors, adjudicators will narrow down the competition by using **recalls**.

First Round: A dancer who enters a Championship (either preliminary or open) will typically compete first in a soft shoe dance. For boys/men this is the reel, for girls/ladies this could be the reel or the slip jig depending on the competition requirements.

Second Round: The second part of the competition is a hard shoe dance. This is either a hornpipe or double jig, depending on the competitor's preference, or the competition requirements. These first two parts are conducted on a large stage, two dancers at a time, with three adjudicators.

At the conclusion of the first two rounds, the scores of all six (or 10) adjudicators are tallied and converted to Irish Points by a mysterious process. Irish Points are weighted heavily so that a first place finish in any one dance is worth a lot of points, tapering off rapidly to subsequent places. If there are more than a dozen or so competitors in the championship at this level and age, the dancers who scored well in the first two rounds are RECALLED for the final round.

At a small feis, like Feile Rince Tucson for example, each competitor does a soft shoe dance, and then moves automatically to the final round. If this is the case, points for the first and final rounds are combined.

Final Round: In the final round, the competitor is alone, on a large stage, dancing before three adjudicators. The competitor dances a longer, carefully choreographed dance called a Non Traditional Set or Set. The musicians play the music for that set at the speed specified by the competitor. There is usually a short preamble to the music, so that the dancer can determine whether the music is 'fast', 'slow' or just like the practice music they've been working with. The results from all three rounds are combined to determine the final competition placing.

9. Feis Registration

1. Go to www.feisworx.com online.
2. Click the “New User” button in the upper left corner box.
3. Fill in your personal information. This info is secure and will not be used for other purposes. Be sure to check the box for e-mail confirmation towards the bottom. Click “Create User”.
4. Click “New Registration.”
5. Click the “Add Dancer” button, and enter your dancer's personal information. For “School” select Mountain Eire. Then click “Add this Dancer.” There is another button to click instead if you have multiple dancers that you need to add.
6. If you have multiple dancers, after adding them in the “Add Dancer” section, click the “Create Family” button to group them and possibly reduce your fees.
7. Now within the “New Registration” section, select the Feis: ex: Pikes Peak Feis. Then click the “Register for Feis” button.
8. For our new competitors, you should register them for the following (**Beg 1 level**):
 - Reel/Light Jig Special (First Feis)
 - Reel
 - Light Jig
 - 2-Hand jig
 - 3-Hand Reel

If your dancer is comfortable with slip jig, they may compete in that as well. Most of our new dancers are not in hard shoe yet, and so they don't need to register for the other dances.
9. Click the “Register Me” button.
10. You have the option of paying online with a credit card, or printing off your registration and sending it in with a check. Be sure to check the deadline before late fee for the feis in the Feis Information tab.

10. Age and Competition Levels

HOW OLD IS MY DANCER?

Your dancer's competition age is his or her age on January 1st of the current year. If he/she turned 11 in March, he/she still dances in the U11 age group until next January 1st.

HOW DO I INTERPRET AGE GROUPS?

Irish dance age groupings are determined by the feis organizing committees, following NAFC guidelines. Typically, an age category will include two-year groupings—that is, there will be a category for "Under 7" and the next will be "Under 9." If there are a large number of dancers in a two-year age category, the feis committee has the option of "splitting" the category into single-year groups. For older dancers the opposite is true - an age category will be listed as "15 and over," or "17 and over."

Now, just to confuse matters -- age categories at the World Championships and regional competitions here in the US are changing the way they list age categories. The "new" way is a bit easier to interpret. Under the current system, a dancer whose competition age is 10 years old would enter the U11 category since he/she is 'under 11' years old. Under the new system, the dancer would enter the Age 10 or 10U category which translates to '10 and under.' The online feis registration validates birthdays and competition ages for you. If you have questions, please ask another parent or one of the instructors.

HOW DOES A DANCER ADVANCE?

There are several levels of Irish dancing skills. Within an age group, there may be several different competitions. Your dancer will be registered in each competition based on his/her specific age and skill level.

In order to advance to the next skill level, the competition must have five or more dancers. Advancement is per dance category. This means that your dancer could be at the Prizewinner level in one dance (the light jig, for instance), and the Beginner Two level in another (the reel).

NAFC rules state that boys and girls compete separately. However, in the Western Region, a feis will typically include both boys and girls in the same competition unless there are five or more boys entered. If there are five or more boys, it is then the prerogative of the organizing committee to add a boys' competition event. In other regions, and at the Western Regional Oireachtas, there are normally enough boys in each age group and skill level to hold separate competitions.

If there are not enough dancers in your dancer's competition (U9 Beginner Two, Traditional Set, for example), the feis committee may decide to combine age groups. As long as your dancer places and the group has five or more competitors, he/she can still advance.

WHAT ARE THE SKILL LEVELS?

Beginner: A beginner is a competitor who has not taken Irish dancing lessons from a registered teacher prior to September 1 of the previous year. A Beginner moves into the Advanced Beginner (or Beginner 2) category for a particular dance if he/she places 1st, 2nd or 3rd. A Beginner must move into the Advanced Beginner (or Beginner 2) category within 16 months of his/her first competition.

Advanced Beginner: (or Beginner 2): An advanced beginner must place 1st, 2nd, or 3rd to advance to the Novice category in a particular dance. Competition dances are limited to reel, light jig, slip jig, single jig, treble jig, traditional hornpipe, and St. Patrick's Day – a traditional set.

Novice: A Novice must win a 1st or 2nd place to advance to the Prizewinner category in a particular dance.

Prizewinner: A Prizewinner must place 1st at this level in those dances that are also competition categories in the Champion level. These include the reel, slip jig, double jig, hornpipe, and traditional set. Advancement to the Preliminary Champion level is at the discretion of the teacher.

Preliminary Champion: A dancer is required to perform a minimum of two dances, a light shoe dance (reel or slip jig for females and reel only for males), and a hard shoe dance (treble jig or hornpipe at the discretion of the dancer, or a set dance at the discretion of the Feis). A dancer who wins two first place awards will move on to Open Championship the following year or as soon as the second win is achieved in any age category in the following years.

Open Champion: This is a competitor who has reached the highest level of proficiency in Irish Dance. Open champions compete in three categories -- a light shoe dance (reel or slip jig for females and reel only for males), a hard shoe dance (treble jig or hornpipe) and a set dance. Champions dance before a panel of three adjudicators and scores for each category are combined to determine the overall winner.

Adult Beginner: An adult beginner is a competitor who is over 18 years of age and either never took Irish dancing lessons as a juvenile and or is returning after a five year absence from competition. Adult competition levels are similar to the age group levels. Competing adults will begin at the Beginner 1 level, and then progress through Beginner 2, Novice, and Prizewinner levels. At this point, there is not an Adult Championship level in competitions, however many feisanna offer an "Adult Championship Special." Adults in this special are asked to dance one soft shoe dance (reel or slip jig), one hard shoe dance (slow speed hornpipe or double jig), and a non-traditional set.

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11. Feis Etiquette

Irish dancing has been passed down from generation to generation, and with this has also developed a certain “standard” of behavior. Many times people who are new to Irish dancing may not be aware of these standards of etiquette, so we hope that this may help. Etiquette is a way of showing kindness and concern for all those around you. It is an unselfish awareness of others who are all sharing the same wonderful interest in the discipline and art that is Irish Dance.

General Competition Etiquette:

1. NO VIDEO CAMERAS ALLOWED. Each dance is the sole property of its instructor.
2. No person other than the adjudicator's aide or a member of the trophy committee may approach an adjudicator before the competition is concluded.
3. No student or parent shall approach another teacher. Any comments or questions must be directed solely to the student's own teacher. This will assure that all issues will be considered at decisional meetings.
4. No person may speak to, give signs to, or prompt a competitor. Violation of the rule may incur the disqualification of the competitor.
5. Please keep small children under parental control. Any excess noise distracts both the competitors and adjudicators.
6. Please keep flash pictures at a minimum if at all as they distract the dancers.
7. Be quiet during competitions. The dancers need to hear the music!
8. Cheer for everyone! Don't be too overly “enthusiastic” for one competitor. Cheer for the musicians as well.
9. Most importantly, please remember that your comments and behavior are a reflection on your dance school and instructor. Show a kind attitude towards all other competitors and schools, as well as the feis committee. Please discourage any remarks that are derogatory towards anyone else. Remember, we are all in this together!

12. public performances

Our dancers have performed at schools, nursing homes, restaurants, conventions, weddings, and many public events. They have participated in both the Colorado Springs and Divide St. Patrick's Day parades. While other commercial dance schools (tap, ballet, contemporary, etc.) may have a recital or two during the year, Irish dance is different. There is great public demand for Irish dancers.

Mountain Eire Irish Dance School engages in performances during the entire year, with an understandable concentration during the months of February and March (St. Patrick's Day).

Children usually love to dance. They love the response of the audience, especially bigger audiences. Performances for profit-making functions or private parties normally result in a donation to the school, the proceeds used to offset travel, costume, or clinician costs. Mountain Eire engages in community service performances as well.

Mountain Eire Irish Dance School regularly puts together a performance group for various venues. Students must be regularly attending classes and must have mastered the performance steps in order to be eligible to participate in performances. Proceeds go to the school and come back to the dancers in the form of lower fees for the things they need -- practice space, uniforms, etc.

Each performance is standardized and lasts approximately 30 minutes. Performances are a mix of soft and hard shoe dances, beginner through champion levels, and suitable for our youngest dancers (the "littles") to adults.

As mentioned earlier, our busiest performance schedule comes around March 17th. During the week leading up to, and including St. Patrick's Day, there can be as many as 8 or 10 performances scheduled. These will be at parties, schools, nursing homes, churches and fraternal organizations in Woodland Park and the Pikes Peak Region. Some of these performances may be scheduled during a school day, and we will give you prior notice so that you can make arrangements with your dancer's school for make-up work, etc.

We always ask for your dancer to be available for the entire duration of one particular day, and advanced notice will be given so arrangements can be made.

Performers will be given a packet which contains a map or directions to each performance, the required arrival time, performance time, and any special instructions. Please arrive on time! Miss Mickie will be in the thick of things making sure that there are changing spaces; that the Ceili dances have enough people; that everyone has arrived, etc. Direct your dancer to check in with the team coordinator, go change and use the restroom, stretch, put on his/her shoes and wait quietly for the call to line up.

Performance Etiquette:

Dancers - smile! You really ought to look like you're enjoying yourselves! You are ambassadors of Mountain Eire Irish Dance School and of the art of Irish Dance. You are bringing a brief look at an entire world of Irish Dance to an audience that has paid for the privilege.

Behave yourselves! This is the first time some of the 'littles' have performed in front of an audience. It's up to you to show them how to behave, and to gently guide and help them. Adopt a younger dancer and show him/her "the ropes."

Bring a diversion for the slow times – a deck of cards, a backgammon board, or other quiet game that you and another dancer or two can play while you wait. But remember to pay attention to what's going on and don't miss your dances!

Depending on the venue, there may be space for parents to attend performances. If the show is a private party, space is usually limited, so you may need to drop your dancer off and pick him/her up again after the performance. Sometimes you'll need to buy a ticket.

When getting ready for a performance, please organize all of your dancer's shoes and personal belongings together in a bag that can be readily identified and easily transported. The changing areas and coat rack space at some venues can be very limited. Check to see if your dancer's gear is in good shape from time to time, socks clean, shoes taped, etc. Another good idea is to write your dancer's name or initials in shoes and such. After a performance, when costumes and shoes seem to be strewn everywhere, they all begin to look alike! You don't want your belongings going home with someone else!

Above all, enjoy yourself! This is one of the aspects of dance people enjoy most, and it can be so much fun to dance for an audience and receive their praise and appreciation. Take a bow!

