



Newcomer Tips

Congratulations on your commitment to compete! Whether this is your first competition or you've competed several times, we hope that competing has been/will be a fun experience. Competing, and dancing in general, is a great way to exercise—both physically and mentally—and a great way to meet some fantastic people. We know from experience, though, that navigating the competitive dance world can be overwhelming at times. Below are some tips with input from many competitors—all who have been in your shoes at one point or another!

COSTUME

WOMEN

- As you purchase costumes or have them made for you, look for ones with convertible skirts. This will save you money and time changing.
- Be mindful of the color of your costume. Wear colors that accentuate your skin and hair tone. If you are unsure, ask several people you trust will give you an honest opinion...or a fashion consultant, if you know of any.
- Be mindful of costumes that clasp around the neck. Ensure it is re-enforced or the costume has other straps. Also, be careful with strapless dresses. If you have a strapless dress, body tape or body glue is your friend!
- Remember, simple can be best! Adding things that hang, like fringe or beads, can be distracting if you are not used to them. Costumes can be embellished as you learn what works for you.
- Buy costumes that you can wash or spray with fabric spray often (e.g., with Febreze). Over time, costumes can start to smell.
- Consider showing your Pro your costume(s) and do a run through of your dances with your costume(s) on before you compete the first time.
- Bring an extra pair of hose (preferably dance tights).
- Ensure hose are sheer to waist.
- If your dress does not include a bodysuit, be sure to wear dance panties (over your hose).

MEN

- Hats
 - Ensure your hat fits properly. A hat that does not fit can come off during competition.
 - Shape the brim of your hat.
 - Clean it often.
 - Ensure your hat is on correctly when competing. Tip: spraying a little hairspray on the inside band will help it stay on.
- Ensure your pant zipper is up.
- Ensure your pants are long enough. You don't want them so long that you will trip; however, you don't want them too short so they look like "high waters."

- If you sweat easily, consider wearing a dark v-neck t-shirt or compression shirt under your competition shirt.
- Wash your costume or freshen it with fabric spray often (e.g., with Febreze). Over time, costumes can start to smell.

HAIR (for WOMEN)

- Style it so it is out of your face. You don't want your hair to become a distraction or to cover your face where the judges can't see your expressions/smile.
- Avoid items in your hair that can get caught on your partner's sleeves/outfit or that can go flying out of your hair.

JEWELRY

- Avoid wearing jewelry that can become a distraction or a safety/injury concern. For example, women should avoid wearing large hoop earrings or large stoned rings.

MAKEUP (for WOMEN)

- Wear your make-up darker than you normally would (eyes, cheeks, and lips). You need make-up that will stand out on the floor.
- False eyelashes help accentuate the eyes.

PHYSICAL PREPARATION

- Get plenty of sleep the night before your competition.
- Drink plenty of water before, during, and after your competition. There are water stations around the ballroom for your convenience.
- Eat a good breakfast with protein.
- Bring healthy snacks (that are quick/easy to eat) to your competition to sustain you (e.g., nuts, fruit, granola bars).
- Stretch before you compete.

DURING THE COMPETITION

- Breathe!
- Smile!!
- Have fun!!!
- If you mess something up, don't stress--don't let it affect the rest of your routine. Keep smiling. Often a Judge may have missed seeing the actual mistake, but they know something happened because of the look on a competitor's face.
- Know your competitor number and know what heats you are in. It's a good practice to write down your heat numbers before your session (heat information is usually provided via a QR code at the event and some events may include heat information on their website a few days before the competition), but be sure to double check the heat sheets that will be posted on a wall (typically in a back corner).

- If the competition requires competitor line-ups, be sure you are in the “staging area” at least 2 heats prior to yours. If you are not sure where the staging area is, ask your Pro.

If the competition does not require competitor line-ups, pay attention to the heat numbers (either on a monitor and/or being called by the Emcee) and be prepared when your heat number is called.

Bottomline, pay attention and don't make the Floor Coordinator come looking for you.

MISCELLANEOUS

- Try to get a video of your dances. Videos are very helpful to review and improve your dancing. Check the event's website to see if they are offering videoing services. If not, consider asking someone to video your dances for you.
- Be in the ballroom at least 15 minutes before your warm-ups, if not sooner. This will give you time to put your clothes in the dressing room; find where you/your Pro/teammates are going to sit; stretch, put on your competitor number, etc, without feeling rushed.
- Check in with the Floor Coordinator when the announcement is made. You will typically find the Floor Coordinator with a clipboard near the staging area (or one of the back corners if the event is not going to require line-ups). He/she will need your competitor number and will verify your division and the dances you will be dancing for the current competition. It is important to let the Floor Coordinator know if you are scratching any dances—even if you told the staff members at the registration desk.
- Warm-ups can be stressful as a lot of competitors are often on the floor at the same time. You won't always get to execute everything as you would if the floor was less crowded. Don't worry about it. Use this time just to feel the floor and get the “jitters” out.
- Women: wear your competitor number low on your back, towards your hips.
Men: wear your competitor number near the middle of your shoulder blades.
- If you use a hand towel to wipe off any sweat, be careful about putting a white towel on your lap or holding it close to your shirt/costume if you are wearing black. It will typically leave lint!
- Be mindful of eating things or sucking on candy that can stain your tongue or lips.
- Don't chew gum on the floor!
- The Floor Coordinator is available to answer any questions you may have and help in any way possible. If you have any concerns while competing, s/he may also be able to assist you.

From your Texas Hoedown Event Directors-
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There are shortcuts to happiness, and dancing is one of them.

-Vicki Baum