



Creating a Great First Impression



**Simple ways dance studios can help
new dancers and families feel
welcome from day one.**



Why We Made This Guide

The beginning of a new dance season is filled with excitement, anticipation, and opportunity. For returning families, it's a familiar routine. They know where to park, where to wait, and what to expect when they walk through the doors.

For new families, it's very different.

Everything is unfamiliar. They're learning your studio's culture, trying to remember names, figuring out where classes are held, and hoping they've made the right decision for their child. The first few visits often shape how families feel about your studio long before recital or competition season arrives.

Studios spend countless hours preparing schedules, classes, costumes, and choreography before a season begins. Taking a little time to intentionally think about the experience new families will have can be just as valuable.

Fortunately, creating a memorable first experience rarely requires major investments. More often, it's the small moments of kindness, preparation, and communication that leave the biggest impression.



1. Look at Your Studio Through Fresh Eyes

When you've worked in the same building every day, it's easy to overlook the things that confuse someone visiting for the first time.

Before your season begins, take ten minutes to walk through your studio as though you've never been there before.

Ask yourself:

- Is it obvious where visitors should enter?
- Is parking easy to understand?
- Can someone quickly identify where they need to go?
- Would a first-time parent know where to ask questions?

Better yet, ask someone outside your studio to do the same walk-through. They will often notice things that staff members no longer see. Be especially mindful to persistent clutter that maybe, through routine, you've just become blind to. We've all been there, the season gets busy, that pile of stuff that just got dropped in a corner and forgotten because the 'deal with it when we have time' time never arrived. New families see this kind of stuff right away.

Every small point of confusion, mess, disorganization creates a little uncertainty. Every uncertainty adds stress. Removing those small obstacles allows families to relax and focus on enjoying their first experience instead of worrying about logistics.



2. Remember That Parents Are Evaluating the Experience Too

Teachers naturally focus on making dancers feel comfortable, but parents are having their own first-day experience.

Many are wondering if their child will make friends, if they've chosen the right studio, or if they're doing everything correctly. Simple gestures can make a tremendous difference.

Greeting parents when they arrive, introducing yourself, explaining where they can wait, or simply saying, "If you have any questions today, we're happy to help," immediately creates a welcoming environment. Parents don't expect perfection. They appreciate feeling included.

Communication is a leading point of stress across the entire industry. Trend toward over-communication. Maybe a weekly or monthly email blast that summarizes what's coming up, important reminders, key dates, etc. It's especially helpful for new parents who aren't familiar with your studio's yearly routine and it's a great reminder to returning families. Post updates in multiple channels, or methods. Make it easy for families to consume your studio info. In the end, it save you from answering many of the same questions over and over again.

When parents feel comfortable, that confidence often transfers directly to their children.



3. Small Moments Often Leave the Biggest Impression

Families rarely remember every exercise from their first class. They remember how they felt.

- Did someone smile?
- Did a teacher introduce themselves?
- Did another dancer say hello?
- Did someone notice their child looked nervous?

These moments may only last a few seconds, but together they tell families what kind of community they've joined.

Creating a positive culture isn't built through one grand gesture. It's built through dozens of thoughtful interactions that happen every day.

The first five minutes before class often communicate more about your studio than the next fifty minutes of instruction.



4. Give Experienced Dancers the Opportunity to Lead

Older dancers often become role models whether they realize it or not. Why not intentionally use that influence to help welcome new students?

Consider asking a few mature dancers to serve as Studio Ambassadors during the first several weeks of classes. Their role isn't to teach.

It's simply to help younger dancers feel comfortable by introducing themselves, answering simple questions, helping students find the correct room, or inviting someone to stand with them before class begins.

Not only does this help new students feel included, it also gives experienced dancers an opportunity to practice leadership, kindness, and service. Those are qualities that extend well beyond dance.



5. Celebrate Courage Before You Celebrate Achievement

Every dancer remembers their first class. For some students, simply walking through the studio doors required a tremendous amount of courage.

While it's natural to celebrate technical accomplishments throughout the year, don't overlook opportunities to recognize the quieter victories that happen during those first few weeks.

Celebrate students who:

- introduce themselves to someone new
- try a skill they've never attempted before
- encourage another dancer
- keep trying after making a mistake
- demonstrate kindness during class

The behaviors a studio celebrates become the culture it creates.

Helping dancers understand that effort, character, and courage are valued alongside achievement builds confidence that lasts far beyond a single season.



6. Finish Every Class With Encouragement

Corrections are a natural part of dance education. They help students improve and continue growing.

Before class ends, however, take a moment to intentionally shift the focus. It's such a simple step that can have vast positive impact on studio culture.

A simple statement like:

"I loved the effort everyone brought today." or "I'm excited to see what we'll accomplish together this season." can completely change the way dancers leave the room.

Parents often ask one question on the drive home: "How was dance?"

What students choose to talk about is often influenced by how class ended.

Ending on a positive note helps ensure the last feeling they carry with them is one of encouragement rather than criticism.



7. Belonging Doesn't Happen in One Day

A great first experience isn't created during a single class.

It's built over the first several weeks as families begin feeling like they belong.

- Learning names.
- Checking in with quieter students.
- Welcoming someone back after they miss class.
- Introducing families to one another in the lobby.

These small moments don't require additional programs or significant time. They simply require consistency.

When students feel connected to the people around them, they're far more likely to remain engaged, build confidence, and continue dancing long after the excitement of the first class has passed.



8. A Simple Team Exercise

Before classes begin, gather your instructors for a short discussion.

Ask each person two questions:

- What's one thing that could make a new family feel nervous when they arrive?
- What's one simple thing we could do that would immediately help them feel welcome?

Write every answer down.

You may discover several improvements that cost nothing to implement but significantly improve the experience for every family walking through your doors. Sometimes the best ideas are already sitting inside your own team.



9. Closing Thoughts

Every studio teaches dance.

The studios that families remember are the ones that also make people feel welcomed, encouraged, and valued from the very beginning.

- Technique helps students improve.
- Relationships help them stay.

Creating a positive first experience isn't about impressing new families. It's about helping them feel confident they've found a place where their dancer can grow, belong, and enjoy the journey ahead.

The strongest studio cultures aren't built through one extraordinary moment. They're built through hundreds of ordinary moments handled with care.