

Artistry Dance Center 2011-2012

Mini Movers Handbook

Melissa Cook, Artistic Director/ co-owner
Tina Strausbaugh, Studio Director/ co-owner
Sian Packard, Mini Movers Director

We are very excited to welcome your little one to our Mini Movers program. Mini Movers come into the classroom with little or no dance experience, but make the most amazing progress by the end of the year! We look forward to being part of your child's physical, mental and creative development this year.

We know that as a parent you have a vision for how you think the first day will go, and you probably have a few questions too. That's where this little handbook comes in. If after reading it you have any questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to contact us.

Separation anxiety is one of the most common issues on the first day. It may help to explain to your child before they arrive that mommy will watch them on the TV during the class, and that mommy won't leave. It also helps to arrive early on the first day in order to get them acclimated to their new teacher and environment. Many times a 2 year old will cling to you as they walk in the studio door for the first time. This is an unknown environment and everything is new. A quick hug, and reminder that you'll be watching and waiting for them is the best course of action. You can be assured that our teachers are all experienced with helping these little ones adjust. Some of the children will come into the room and never look back, some children are slower to settle in, and some aren't ready for a class experience just yet. As parents, we won't know until we try. Don't be alarmed if your child just stands on their spot and stares at the teacher. They are simply observing their environment. They will dance when they are ready! Please remember that it sometimes takes a few weeks in order for a child to warm up to the idea of dance class, even if they LOVE to dance.

Our Mini Movers program is designed as a teacher/child class. Our policy is that parents are not in the class with their child. For safety reasons, and to avoid any distractions, we need to keep the door to the studio closed during class. If you arrive *once class has begun*, please ask at the front desk for assistance in taking your child into the class. Young children are easily distracted, and the disruption of someone entering is difficult for most. Also, as outlined below, the class is carefully structured to build on itself over the course of each class. Therefore we do not allow anyone to come into class more than 10 minutes after the class has begun. You can always make up a missed class (for whatever reason) in any other Mini Movers class of the same level.

What happens in Class

The class is run on a regular routine to aid in learning all aspects of dance. Proper dance technique, terminology, rhythm, and musicality are acquired through consistency, repetition, and affirmation. A structured environment promotes these expectations, as well as the emotional and social growth of a dancer. Our classes are designed to support the development of all these skills.

This is what you can expect:

Before class the dancers line up at the studio door. We have a reminder checklist posted on the door ~

1. Did you go to the bathroom? *Please do not skip this. A child that needs to use the bathroom during class is generally unable to concentrate or do their best, and when someone needs to leave the class to use the restroom it is extremely distracting to the rest of the students and generally causes a chain reaction. Most children of this age have no problem getting through a 45 minute class as long as they have used the bathroom right before class. In the event that a child does need to use the restroom, please be aware that a parent or other designated adult needs to be available.*
2. Ballet shoes on with ties tucked in ("bunny ears" hide inside the shoes so that dancers aren't distracted or tripped)?
3. Dance bag with tap shoes?
4. Hair pulled up and away from the face (such as ponytail, bun, braids)?
5. Dressed according to dress code?
6. Hug and a smile!

Dancers wait until invited in by their teacher before entering. Everyone puts their bags against the wall and sits on the floor in the center. Now it's time to dance! Class begins with warm-ups on the floor in a circle, then moves to center floor time. To support spatial awareness we use colored tape (and other markers) on the floor to help them learn to dance in formation. After this, dancers practice big movements across the floor. When ballet concludes, dancers take off their ballet shoes, put them in their dance bag, and put on their tap shoes with teacher assistance. (**It is very important that all shoes & bags are labeled with your child's name to avoid confusion or loss of shoes. **) Then we're off to tap which has a similar routine of circle time, center floor, and across the floor movements. Upon the conclusion of tap, dancers return to their bags to take off their tap shoes, put them in their bags, and line up to leave. At all levels of dance, we expect our students to practice politeness and respect to their teacher and fellow dancers. For the mini movers, we reward their effort with stickers at the end of class. The teacher will remind the dancers throughout class what is expected of them to receive a sticker.

Beyond Class Time

Parents often ask us what they should practice at home, and does their child have "homework". We do not send home homework per se, but there are lots of things you can do at home to help your child have an enjoyable and successful time in class. Practicing putting on ballet and tap shoes, carrying their own bag, and talking about polite and respectful class behavior are all things that can be done at home. Practicing actual dance technique and terminology is best done in a very informal and playful way at home. Some kids just love to go home and practice what they've learned, and you couldn't stop them if you tried! Others are content to just dance in class. That is perfectly o.k. Our goal is to instill a love of dance in these little ones. Hopefully for their lifetime. Remember dance is an art, and as such it is as much about the heart and emotions as it is about the technique. If they enjoy themselves, the technique will follow. So put on some music and dance around the house, but don't worry about whether it's all "correct" or not.

Also, don't worry about practicing choreography before the recital. There is no need. All the choreography is based on the skills they are working on in class. They practice combinations of these skills in every class, and so without even knowing it, they are learning choreography! The actual performance choreography is taught incrementally over many weeks, giving ample time for everyone to learn it.

We welcome your comments and suggestions, and hope you and your child will have a wonderful experience at Artistry!

You can reach us by phone at 540-370-4866 and by email at –

Sian – sian@artistrydancecenter.com

Melissa – melissa@artistrydancecenter.com

Tina – tina@artistrydancecenter.com

**Please see the general Studio Handbook for policies not specific to Mini Movers.