



Why is Ballet class etiquette important?

There are a few basic elements present in all Ballet classes that are done a specific way simply because that's the way dancers do it. Observing these bits of tradition and etiquette will help you to feel more at home in your class and provide an atmosphere that encourages deeper learning. The rules become stricter as you progress through a leveled system. These rules are not ballet specific - they are valid for all types of dance classes.

General Ballet class etiquette tips

Be on time. Ballet class starts at the barre and if you're late, not only will you have missed vital exercises but you'll have to place yourself into a space on the barre causing those in front and behind you to have to shift their positions, which isn't fair. There are some Ballet teachers who, once the class starts, shut the studio door and that's it - there's no entrance for any latecomers. Here at KCBS a teacher will not keep you from coming into the classroom, but may ask the late student to sit out and observe (especially if you have missed a large portion of the warm-up).

If you are late and the teacher lets you take class, or if you need to leave the room for some reason, please **wait until the end of an exercises before you rejoin the class.** You can stand quietly at the edge of the room until everyone finishes dancing and then you can join in on the next combination.

There's really **no talking** in Ballet classes, whether you are a kid starting out, a teen in intermediate classes, or a grown-up there for fun. It's a time to concentrate on the teacher and on your own body, and your dancing improves with no distractions like comparing yourself to or gossiping with the person next to you. A good Ballet class has a quietly courteous atmosphere.

Body language is extremely important in ballet class. Ballet teachers are constantly 'reading' students' bodies in order to give them specific instruction. If you are standing there with your arms crossed and/or slumping, the teacher will think you are bored or surly or uninterested. Please keep in mind that we are looking at you for the whole class, and how you stand, your facial expression and what you do with your arms tells us how well you are listening and whether or not you are interested in improving.

And no matter what else you do, **do not let your teacher see you yawn** in class! It is considered to be extremely rude. We all know that in reality it is an oxygen thing, but to yawn while your teachers are talking to you sends out the worst message of all – that even though your teachers are giving you their time and expertise, you do not care.

Do not watch the clock for your teachers or **tell them that class is over** if they run a few minutes overtime. We, your teachers, are acutely aware of time and it appears that you are wishing the class to be over if you tell the teacher that class should be over. However if your teacher runs VERY overtime, you have every right to let them know. Nicely.

Be aware of your body. Your teachers will always push you to your limits – that is their job. You need to learn how to listen to your body and be sure you do not work so hard that you cause yourself real pain. Discomfort is good – it means you are pushing your limits. Pain means you have gone too far. It is important that you figure out for yourself where the line is between the two.

Take corrections with a positive mindset. All teachers want to see their students thrive and improve. It can be confusing for young dancers to understand that the only way to improve in ballet is to be corrected. Corrections should be seen as a compliment, not a criticism. A teacher will not ask a student to do something that they cannot achieve. The teacher sees potential in the student and is asking the student to work towards that potential. Sometimes teachers are very passionate when they deliver their corrections. This is not a negative personal statement to the student. It simply means that the correction is VERY important.

Retain your corrections. If you do not understand a correction, you need to ask your teacher to explain it again. When a teacher gives a correction over and over again, it means that either the student did not understand, or that the student does not remember the correction from one class to another. Repeating or rewording the correction is something the teacher can do to fix the situation, but if a student simply does not remember it, then it will be frustrating for both parties. We understand that it takes time for the body to gain muscle-memory for corrections and as long as your teacher sees that you understand the correction and are trying to achieve it, they should be satisfied.

Asking questions is ok if you are asking a question about the combination or something that is pertinent to the moment – such as: “Do we do the combination en croix?” Or “My nose is running. May I please go get a tissue? ”

Making **comments** or asking questions about things that are **not related to ballet class is not appropriate.** It takes up teaching time, and gets everyone in the room off topic. Some teachers will give their students a few minutes to socialize at the

start of class. Others jump right into teaching. Learn which teachers do what and you will know when you need to socialize outside of class time.

If you have a question, **please raise your hand and wait for the teacher** – do not interrupt your teacher when they are in the middle of giving a combination or correction– unless it is an absolute emergency.

Do not ask to go to the bathroom in the middle of barre. You should go before class and if you need to go after barre, you can ask your teacher. Of course if you have an emergency – we want you to take care of it.

Do not ask to get water unless you are having an immediate concern. You should bring a water bottle to class so that you do not have to leave the room when given a water break. Every time a student leaves the room, it takes time to get everyone's focus back.

Do not make 'requests' for particular steps. This is a touchy subject. Students do not realize the effect that they have on their teachers with this particular issue. Your teacher has a class plan and it is disrespectful to ask her to change it or to question it. Most students do not realize that it makes a teacher feel this way when all the student did was ask if they were going to do a particular step in class. But the teacher has a lot of things to accomplish in the syllabus, and has a plan on how to accomplish this. It may be an innocent question, but it actually undermines the teacher's authority when a student interjects their wishes – it feels like the student doesn't trust that the teacher knows what they are doing, and when asked in front of other students it intensifies the issue.

Please come to each class with your **ballet notebook**, if required, and be prepared to write your corrections/homework.

NO gum!

Ballet barre etiquette

On the barre, make sure you've got enough room between you and the people in front and behind so that you can do a grande battement in each position and **not touch either the person in front or behind you**. Older dancers are asked to angle in or out for big movements so that no one gets kicked. I have seen young dancers kick each other on purpose just for fun – that is not acceptable, even if it is supposed to be playful.

When you change directions at the barre, please **turn towards the barre**.

Be ready to start. All of our students from Level 1 up have learned or will learn how to perform their preparations. It is the student's responsibility to be in our traditional starting position (bras bas) before the music starts. This gives the student a moment to think about the combination and technique. Do not make the teacher (and the rest of the class) wait for you to get ready. This wastes precious class time.

Etiquette for dancing in the center

When you move into the central space of the studio, make sure you have enough room around you - **don't crowd other people or allow them to crowd you.** You should have enough space around you to stretch out your arms and not touch anyone or the walls.

If you take turns to do steps, **don't talk, hang on the barres, or sit down in between the steps** that you do. Pay attention when the other class members are doing their steps. When your group is finished and it is time to change groups, please do so quickly as a sign of respect to the group that is preparing to dance.

Clothing and personal hygiene

Good etiquette demands that you observe the 'rules' of your environment. In Ballet class that includes ensuring that you come to your class **wearing the correct dancewear/uniform.** Please help young students in remembering to have ALL of their uniform with them.

You must **dress appropriately** for your class. Please mend ripped tights and leotards. Please do not buy your student leotards that are risqué or inappropriate for their age. Make sure it looks like a leotard and not a bathing suit. **Please make sure dancewear is clean.** We suggest that if your dancer has multiple classes each week, that you have more than one leotard in your class color. You are only required to have one uniform leotard, but if you are in **levels 3 and up, please have at least two leotards in your class color** to alternate between washings.

Your hair must be neatly pulled back and adequately secured. Your appearance is not the only issue. Your hair also impacts your technique and can be a health and safety issue. Dancers who do not have their hair pulled back appropriately run the risk of creating bad habits, like unknowingly flicking their head to get their bangs out of their eyes, or not spotting because their hair hits them in the face when turning. If your hair is not secure, you may have to stop dancing and leave your dancing space, which causes any dancers who are dancing with you to lose their focus when you leave your spot. If they are behind you on a travelling step, it may actually cause a collision. Also, if your hairpins fall out, another student may slip on it.

On a slightly sensitive note, please be sure that dancers who need it, **wear deodorant** and carry some in their dance bag to renew when needed.

If you feel like your teacher is too 'mean' or too rigid, please come talk with me.

Sometimes teachers get frustrated and say things that children misinterpret to mean that they are not good dancers. As a School, this is not an impression we want our students to be left with. We do however want our teachers to demand discipline and respect (and they should return that respect to their students).

I know that this is a LOT of information. It is a lot for young students to learn and for older students to retain. Your support through talking about this with your child will help us immensely. Ballet Etiquette is important for our students not only because of the self-discipline it instills, but also because it is a mechanism for growth and improvement. It creates an atmosphere in which learning and respect for self and others are of the utmost importance.

Thank you for being a part of Kansas City Ballet School.

Yours,

Grace M Holmes