

Chelmsford

Dance

Centre

MEMBERS GUIDE



Welcome to our Family!

Firstly, I would just like to take this moment to welcome you to the Chelmsford Dance Centre.

Whether you or your child are dancing for pleasure, fitness, medals, competitions or taking part in our Dance Teacher Training Program (otherwise known as "The Academy"), you can be assured of our utmost attention at all times.

If you have any questions or queries about your class, please visit the Frequently Asked Questions section of our website, or call us on 01245 473355.

Since starting the business from scratch back in 1991, I have prided myself in getting to know everyone personally. To be fair, as the studio has increased this has become more and more difficult, as over 1200 people a week currently pass through our doors, and I am relieved that modern technology such as emails and distribution methods such as Social Media can help me out with this task. However, please be assured of my personal attention.

What I can promise, however, is that should any part of our product not come completely up to scratch, I would very much like to hear from you, and will work personally to remedy any shortfalls.

Likewise, if you are enjoying what we do I would like to hear about your experiences as well. If for example, a member of our team is doing a great job, then please let me know!

All of our staff are handpicked, and most have started with us as children and gone on to the teaching side of things, and we are very proud of them. One of my jobs is to deliver training to them personally on a weekly basis, so your comments are always gratefully received, and you can rely on my discretion as well.

I do spend a large amount of my time in the studio, deliberately trying to catch the team "doing things right" which I enjoy very much, but there is no better substitute than hearing your views.

Also, should you wish to receive my guidance on classes, lessons or the development of your dancing feel free to let me know.

Our Members Guide covers the pertinent information that you may need, however it is not exhaustive, so if you have any questions please just ask.

Should you wish to contact me my email is phil.meacham@chelmsforddance.com, or call me at the studio on 01245 473355.

Warmest regards

Phil Meacham

How our Membership system works

We operate as a club, and as such have two types of membership, Trial Membership and Full membership.

Trial Membership

This is automatically given to anyone joining us for their first class or lesson and lasts 6 weeks. This enables you to benefit from our member's prices for services for that period and use of the club bar as well.

Full Membership

At the end of the six weeks, you will receive an email offering you the opportunity to purchase a full 12 month membership for just £30, which as well as continuing the benefits already stated also delivers discount vouchers for dance shoes, free tickets for our members nights that we hold (usually up to 6 a year, which would normally cost £8 each), and an all-important complimentary welcome drink at the bar.

Junior membership (for under 16's) also includes a free personalised T-Shirt with the child's name on it, which forms our uniform on our Peanut & Rockers Clubs on Saturday mornings.

Club Etiquette

As a family-run business, we pride ourselves on being well mannered dancers, and uphold wherever possible a really simple and straightforward common-sense standard. This helps to maintain a friendly club atmosphere that we as a school are well known for, where everyone may enjoy their dancing throughout the years in a comfortable environment. Most of these etiquettes are very common within the dance industry, and your teachers have been literally brought up with these instilled, as most of us have danced since a very early age.

Some of the more obvious ones are: -

Booking lessons can often be a time-user, and so wherever possible we encourage people to have a regular reoccurring weekly lesson at the same time each week. If this is not possible, or if you prefer to book lessons ad-hock or maybe every few weeks, you can do this by either phoning the office on 01245 473355 or by using our Client Booking portal via our website. This will allow you to book lessons up to 3 weeks ahead or, if you have a regular booking, you can also manage these bookings this way at your convenience. If you need help setting this up, please let us know.

When sharing the studio floor, it is usual custom to be working on the stationary dances or technique in the centre of the floor, which leaves the outside, or “Line of Dance” available to clients dancing the progressive dances. Your teacher will usually help you with this when you start lessons.

Please always ensure you are correctly attired. Generally, “smart casual” is the order of the day.

For 4 - 16 years classes, children are required to wear the CDC t shirt to all classes. These are included in their annual membership and can also be purchased separately on our website. Dance shoes are recommended.

Competitors should wear practise wear and correct dance shoes to all private lessons, team classes, and practise.

Proper good quality dance shoes will be needed for dancers at SCD3 and above. This is both to protect our world-class standard floor, as well as the safety of other dancers should they be accidentally trod on. Ladies – please make sure you are using heel-protectors as well please, as this very much reduces the risk of injury.

Contacting the Studio

We have invested heavily in an advanced phone system which allow efficient call routing. In addition to the studio reception and office, we also operate from two other external offices which are off-site. Where possible calls are routed off-site first to allow lessons and classes to continue uninterrupted as much as possible. Even information regarding events may be accessed by through the system using recorded messages. These are very helpful. There are however times when you just need to speak with a human – and we understand that. Therefore, there are also options to enable this to happen easily. Just follow the menu prompts.

Electronic communication is just a natural and normal part of life now, and this also helps us to concentrate on teaching when required. Each of our teachers have their own email address and they are encouraged to reply as soon as is practically possible to any communications. More senior staff also have direct dial numbers, these are displayed on the website. If the staff member is teaching, these calls go straight to voicemail, and the teacher is notified that you have left a message. Once again, they are asked to reply to you at the earliest opportunity.

In addition there is always the option to message us via Facebook or even using the online chat function built in to our website. Again, we aim to reply as quickly as we can – but sometimes we are all teaching, so please bear with us.

Dance Shoes

Having the correct equipment is very important for any sport, and as such having the correct footwear is just as important for your dancing.

A good dance shoe will enhance your dancing whilst protecting your feet and ankles. This is very important for ladies and children.

There are many companies that provide dance shoes, however, as with everything in life you do get what you pay for. At the Chelmsford Dance Centre we recommend Supadance, who are the world's leading manufacturer of dance shoes. When it comes to choosing the right shoe for you, there are a few things to look out for.

The Difference between Ballroom and Latin Shoes and Regular Shoes

The biggest difference lies in the soles. Ballroom and Latin shoes have a thin layer of suede sole, this allows the shoes to glide well on the floor while also retain a certain level of grip. Ballroom and Latin shoes are also very flexible, enabling the dancers to articulate their feet and show off their techniques

When to Buy Your First Ballroom Shoes

Shoes are not required at beginner level; however, we recommend that you get them ASAP. Preferably 8-12 weeks into dancing. The shoes will allow you to become a better dancer. Whether it is because you can rise further onto your toes in a Ballroom shoe or stand more forward on the balls of your feet in a Latin shoe, a dancer in flexible dance shoes will usually dance slightly better than an equal dancer in limiting street or dress shoes.

The Different Types of Ballroom Shoes

Women Latin Shoes

These shoes are open toe, generally look like sandals; heels are long and thin, ranging from 2 in to 3.5 in. Beginners are recommended to choose 2.5 inch heels.

Women Ballroom Shoes

These shoes are closed toe, closely resemble court shoes; heels are shorter and slightly wider. This should usually be your second pair of shoes if required

Men Ballroom Shoes

Men's Ballroom shoes have a much lower heel, often 1 in. and the heel base is wider than that of men's Latin shoes. They resemble regular dress shoes.

Men Latin Shoes

Men's Latin shoes have a higher heel, usually 1.5 in. But unlike women's Latin shoes, the heel area is much bigger. This should usually be your second pair of shoes if required

Dance Trainer

Dance trainers are usually split sole canvas sneakers specially designed for hip hop. Other features include a breathable arch and tongue, as well as a spin spot for increased control and balance.

How to Find the Right Shoes

Ballroom and Latin shoes must fit your feet well. Just half a size bigger or smaller can make a huge difference in your dancing. So please do not purchase a pair of shoes one size smaller just because it is on sale. We recommend that when you purchase your shoes, buy a pair that fits snugly on your feet they will loosen up and therefore fit your feet comfortably. However, do not get shoes that are too tight, because they will injure your feet.

Recommendations for Newcomers

Women - For newcomers, your first pair of shoes should be Latin shoes, since both Latin and Ballroom style dances can be danced in Latin shoes. We recommend that you get a pair of flesh tone Latin shoes, since they elongate your legs and blend your feet into the floor.

Men - For newcomers, your first pair of shoes should be Ballroom shoes, because it is far easier to dance Latin and Ballroom in Ballroom shoes due to the lower heel and wider base. Most of men's shoes are black, so go with a black pair

Heel Covers (for Ladies)

Heel protectors perform three important tasks: they protect the floor, grant you more traction, and most importantly, they protect your heels. If your heels are not properly protected this will cause problems. The tips of the high-heeled dance shoes are generally made of hard plastic. Most dance floors are made of wood. The most compelling reason for using heel covers is to protect your dance shoes. The little heel tip on the heel is the first thing that will wear out, and replacing it will cost about £6 or more, and are available in the studio. These heel tips wear away quickly when they aren't protected; just one dance can wear them down to the nail that is keeping them attached to the shoe. The heel protectors are much cheaper and more convenient than constantly replacing the plastic heel tips.

Children's Shoes

Girls shoes

These are a sandal type shoe, in either leather or satin with a regulation heel. Again a good fit is very important for little growing feet. A good dance shoe will provide cushioning and protection around the ankles. Girls do not need to go into heels until they are approximately 12 years old. This does differ from child to child so please speak to Zara or Phil before you move your daughter into heels.

Boys Shoes

Boys shoes come with either a Ballroom or Latin heel, as for Men we recommend a Ballroom pair as both Ballroom and Latin can be danced in these.

Private Lessons

There is no faster way to enhance your learning than enjoying the one-to-one attention that a private lesson provides. Your teacher is able to purely focus on the areas for improvement that only you need and will quickly be able to establish the learning style that suits you best, helping it all click into place. Along with this also comes the advantage of tailored tutorage. If you have your heart set on a certain dance or if you would prefer to work on one style more than the other, private lessons offer you the complete control over which ones you cover and when.

Not only does this faster progression also contribute towards cost effectiveness, but you can also bring along a partner and split the cost if you wish! Another benefit of private lessons are the flexibility of either choosing to purchase a set of vouchers or you can simply pay as you go! Either way, with us just needing 48 hours' notice of cancellation you gain the benefit of not having to miss a session you've already paid for.

The Etiquette for a private lesson is much like what you may have already experienced in a class. We take a relaxed approach to attire but recommend wearing smart/casual clothing that allows you to move freely and feel comfortable while using shoes that are not stiletto nor have too much of a grip - freedom of movement is key. It is always advisable to eventually use proper dance shoes to ensure you get the best from your effort but these are not necessary to get started.

Lessons are easy to book and can be done at the studio or over the phone. You can even manage your own booking online by requesting your website login details. You even get to choose how long your lesson is for and how often. But private lessons are taught seven days a week so we are confident we will be able to find a time that suits you.

Examinations

Why do examinations?

The answer to this is simple. Taking an examination on a regular basis gives an opportunity to develop your dancing standard, with a fixed date as to when a certain standard should be achieved.

Having an examination date planned in your diary, gives you a set date upon which to aim to ensure that everything for your dancing is correct. The examination will cover

ability to dance the routine, dancing in time with music, correct footwork and rise and fall, as well as giving a frank and honest appraisal of your overall style and deportment.

The best example to use for a medal test or examination is being the equivalent to an MOT on the car. It is an opportunity to have a good check over and make sure everything is where it should be in order to develop to the next level.

The examinations themselves are very “Non-Scary”, and consist of two parts. A pre-test in front of the school Principal to ensure that a dress rehearsal of the main examination is taken place, during which honest and genuine feedback will be given to you.

The second step is the main examination with an external examiner sent to us from the National Association of Teachers of Dancing (NATD). These usually take place on a Sunday and are approximately one month after the pre-test. This gives plenty of time to tidy up any of the points raised on the pre-test.

Examinations start at the simple PSDT1 (Popular Social Dance Test), with the first one being in Cha Cha Cha. The PSDT2 is then Jive and Waltz. Following this, the next examination is Pre Bronze and the finally Bronze level. Advanced dancers can progress right through to and beyond Gold Medals.

Another important factor to remember when considering examinations is that it also gives a date and goal for your dance teacher to ensure your lessons do not just wander on without a set aim.

As previously mentioned, the pre-test which occurs approximately one month prior to the NATD examination, takes place at the Chelmsford Dance Centre. The times for each person to dance either with their partner or with their teacher are displayed on the website which is www.chelmsforddance.com. It is always important to remember that the pre-test is a full-dress rehearsal of the main examination and as such it is important to arrive at least 10 minutes prior to your scheduled dancing time.

When the examiner is ready you will be escorted into the dance studio from reception and it is customary to say Good Morning or Good Afternoon to the examiner. You are then ready to dance your routine. At the end of the routine the examiner will have a quick word with you and talk about any improvements that could be made in anticipation of the main exam. If the examination is successful you will also be handed your invoice for the main exam. It is important to remember that the pre-test is a free service offered by the Chelmsford Dance Centre in order to help you get the highest marks on the day that you can. The invoice handed to you relates to the fee for the NATD and will clearly give a payment date on it. Please also check at this stage that your name is

correctly spelt and this is the spelling that will appear on your certificate following your successful examination.

The NATD Exam will run much in the same way as your pre-test, with only exception being that you will be greeted by an external examiner, who will not give feedback at the end of the examination. Instead of the feedback the forms will be sent to head office for checking and then returned to the studio approximately two weeks after when you will know your result. A 65% competence gives a pass mark, 75% a commended and 85% and above Highly Commended.

Approximately three or four weeks after the forms have been returned to the studio we should be in possession of your award and certificate. It is quite often the case that there is a presentation event where you can come and have your award presented – a bit like the Oscars!

As we have mentioned previously, examinations are a very sensible way to keep your dance standard on track and subsequently enable good value for money to be delivered by the teachers. Generally, it is advised that one ballroom and one Latin American examination is taken every 12 months. This will help to keep your standard improving constantly, but not to the point of creating a stressful environment.

Having A Dance Partner

There are important things to consider when embarking on a journey to having a dance partner. Finding the right dance partner is the obvious first step, and you should always consider, age, grade of dancing, size and shape of the partner and finally a sensible matching of aspirations. It is also quite normal to have all girl or all lady partnerships in Ballroom and Latin American dancing.

The ideal person that will have details of other similar people to yourself looking for partners will of course be one of the Chelmsford Dance Centre teachers. Please mention to them that you are looking for a partner and they will bring it up at the weekly staff meeting to also canvas the other teachers at the same time.

Starting a potential partnership

The first thing to do once a potential partner has been sourced for you, would be to ensure a good and efficient conduit of communication, so the exchanging

of telephone numbers and email addresses is essential, and good straightforward and clear communication is key. Often, when partnerships dissolve in dancing it is because of a misunderstanding and subsequently a mismatch of aspirations or practicalities. So, this conduit of communication should always be free flowing and easy.

It is always a great idea to book a private lesson with one of the dance teachers and split the cost of the lesson between the two partners. This try out lesson is a perfect opportunity to see how the partnership may possibly develop moving forward, and get a good idea of each other's standard as well as for the teacher to see how the dances work together. What happens then? It is always a sensible thing to not commit to the partnership at the end of that first lesson, but instead for both partners, speak privately with the teacher after the lesson. That way no-one is in a position where they feel obligated to say yes or indeed no! You need to remember at this stage it is nothing personal, just trying out for a new dance partner.

Set the Ground rules.

This is the absolute backbone of any partnership, and so a sensible agreement should be reached between the partners on various matters, such as – How many lessons to have each week – To make a partnership successful, you will need at least one half hour private lesson split between you per week. Some partnerships have an hour, some have two!

Arrangements for arrival at the dance studio – For example picking each other up on route to reduce cost and so on. This would also include transport to competitions and events.

All Girl or All Lady partnerships

These are very common in the industry - mainly due to the unequal number of boys and men dancers compared to girls and ladies. The old saying is that "Boy partners are like Gold Dust" - and although this still holds true, the dramatic success of televisions such as "Strictly Come Dancing" have made some progress in addressing the balance. If however you embark on an All Girl or All Lady partnership it is usual and important that one person takes the man's steps in Ballroom while the other takes the man's steps in Latin. It is also advisable to change this over every 6 months or so to give equal chance for both partners to expand their abilities.

The potential for matching outfits.

It is very usual for outfits to match with partners, and this does obviously have a financial implication. However, outfits can be very cheaply and easily sourced within tight budgets in order to get a partnership started.

Practise

Practise is really important, and it is vital not to use expensive private lessons as practise sessions. Therefore, the opportunity to get together on a weekly basis and practise, even if it is in the living room at home, is invaluable. As a rule of thumb, as long as the studio is not busy we are always happy for couples to arrive, say, half an hour before their lesson and practise discreetly in a corner of the dance studio.

Dance Competitions

You do not need to be an experienced dancer to enter the Team Match competitions; they are open to anyone who wants to “give it a go”! These competitions are held between the Chelmsford Dance Centre and other dance schools, either at our studio or the others schools premises. There are many categories of dance for juvenile, junior and adult competitors.

For example:

- Team Match – under 16’s and Adults
- Under 10’s
- Juvenile
- Junior
- New couples (under 16)
- New couples (Adult)
- Adults under 35
- Adults over 35
- Adult and Juvenile
- Adult and Junior

We encourage as much support as possible at these events, so even if you are not competing we would love you to come along and cheer!

For information on the next competition or any other questions please feel free to ask a teacher.

