

# Competition Essentials Q&A

## Costumes/Clothes

Costumes are not allowed for the Bronze and Newcomer levels. What this means: no beads, no sequins, no rhinestones for the girls, no plunging necklines for the guys. When you are trying to decide what to wear, be sure that it does not restrict your movement! If you have any questions about what to wear, feel free to bring in what you're considering to lessons and we'll let you know if it's suitable.

Standard:

*Girls* - Skirt at least knee-length. The longer and the more flowy, the better. Dance tights or regular high-strength tights recommended.

*Guys* - Button-down shirt, preferably white. Belt and black dress pants, black dress shoes, black socks, black tie.

Latin:

*Girls* - Skirt above the knee. Please wear booty shorts. Dance tights or fishnets are allowed (dark tan color recommended).

*Guys* - Button-down shirt, plain t-shirt that can be tucked in, or Under Armor; belt, black pants + dress shoes, black socks.

Notes:

For USADance competitions (this means Ohio and MAC) no costumes are allowed in newcomer through gold. They are only allowed in Open. Guys, at USADance competitions, please wear a white shirt in standard as any other color is not allowed. You may wear a black shirt with or without a black vest in smooth if you wish.

## Accessories

*Girls* - Feel free to decorate yourself with a shiny pair of earrings (but make sure they are not too heavy especially if you are dancing Jive), a shiny necklace, and bracelets. Hair accessories are also permitted (including decorative flowers, colored or shiny hairpins, etc.).

*Guys* - Guys get off easy here. No need for any accessories, except for that black tie!

## Makeup

*Girls* - You will need to do stage make-up, not everyday make-up. This means a solid foundation, plenty of mascara or fake eyelashes (make sure you apply this after doing your eye make-up), and a strong lipstick. Your eye shadow make-up should be brighter on the inner edge of the eye and darker on the outer edge. Make sure you ask an upper-level dancer on the team to help you with your eye make-up your first time, or at least to give you an estimate of how strong it should be.

*Guys* - Nope!

## Hair

To Start:

*Girls* - Wet your hair and put a big handful of gel through it. Then tie everything tightly in a ponytail and using a fine toothed comb, smooth it out. From there (with wet hair remember - but not dripping wet) take different strands from the ponytail and tie them into a nice bun. Be creative, but make sure it is very tight and strong! If in doubt, add more gel before securing a strand of hair. At the end, when your "creation" is finished, add a LOT of hairspray to make everything stay. During two-day competitions, it's your choice whether to wash your hair and re-do everything the next day. Some of us just sleep with our hair creations as they are (if well done, they should stay in exactly the same position) and touch them up with some hairspray or gel the second day. If you're not sure how to do this, feel free to ask a higher-level team member to help you out!

*Guys* - wet your hair and take gel through it. Your hair needs to shine and also be rock-hard. If your hair is slightly longer and it permits it, pull it back. Definitely don't let it hang around, and don't spike it unless your hair is too short to be slicked back.

What You Need:

*Girls* - Strong hold gel, strong hold hairspray, lots of hairpins, maybe a little flower or some hair jewelry, fine toothed comb, extra hair ties.

*Guys* - Strong hold gel, fine toothed comb.

## What to Pack?

- Sleeping Bag/Blankets
- Towel and sweat towel
- Toiletries: contacts, eyeglasses, toothbrush, toothpaste
- Sewing kit, duct tape, scissors
- Changes of clothes
- Pajamas
- Makeup/Hair products
- Deodorant (very important!)
- Dance shoes and dresses/costumes
- Pair of flip flops, dance sneakers, socks, or comfortable shoes to wear when you're not dancing (do NOT always wear your dance shoes when you're not competing in a longer stretch of time if you want to feel your feet afterwards!)
- Sweat pants and sweatshirt (or team jacket!)
- Snacks: fruit (especially bananas! They are great for energy), granola bars, veggie snacks, chocolate (great before Jive or Quickstep or during an energy slump), energy drinks especially if you dance multiple levels in multiple styles and regularly make at least semifinals.

Keep in mind we're traveling in vans and it's only day(s)—a duffel bag or small carry-on suitcase should be enough. If you want to, you can feel free to bring some school reading with you - however, don't expect to get too much schoolwork done at competitions. Generally, you will want to dance, meet new people, watch others compete and cheer them on, and have a good time.

## How to Prepare?

A few months to a couple of weeks before a competition, slow practice yields the best results. Go through the moves that you will do (or your routines) slowly while practicing the correct connection with your partner (even if you don't have one you can imagine that you do when doing that exercise), the correct foot placement, leg, hip, body action, and arm styling. In standard and smooth, practice correct rise and fall, lead and follow, foot placement, frame, arm styling, and movement. Do everything in a very slow and controlled fashion, and don't forget to do lots of drills. This is also the time to take lots of private lessons to improve your technique. Even if you don't practice that much, private lessons can help you learn to do the correct movements and look much better in competition.

You should regularly introduce faster-paced practices in your schedule. Doing the movements slowly can teach you the right habits, but only practicing them at ever-increasing speeds will help you do them correctly in competition. As competition time rolls closer, you should be practicing at a faster pace than before and only fixing problems in your technique. Finally, one week before the competition you should stop practicing technique slowly altogether and do rounds. This means you should go through the dances in 1.5-minute increments with music to speed, and without many breaks between them. This will help you build stamina and solidify the technique you have practiced into fast dancing.

The day of the competition don't worry about practicing your technique very much. Go through your moves or routines mentally or once or twice physically with your partner, to music speed. Most importantly, you should warm up properly, stretch a bit (but don't overstretch or you'll risk injuring yourself) and prepare mentally to perform on the competition floor. When dancing, you should not be thinking about what you should be doing with your body. The technique is either in the muscle memory, or you'll just look worried and not perform enough. Instead, focus on having fun, smiling, and performing! Guys, apart from focusing on these three aspects, you should also make sure you don't hit other couples on the floor - it's called floorcrafting, and it's something that is very important to your quality as a competitive ballroom dancer.

Team spirit is also an important part of the competitions we attend! Make sure you wear your team jacket (especially with the awards floor), make an effort to spend time with the other team mates (get lunch/dinner together, hang out at and after the competition), and cheer each other on!

After the competition, go through the videos you took with your partner and your coach during a private lesson, and work on technique starting from that.