



Prairie North

Dance

Dance where we live, live where we dance.

Offering Irish Dance Classes to Manitoba's Interlake Communities



Parent Handbook

2025-2026 Dance Season

Our Philosophy: Dance is for Everyone!



We will work together to voice, share, create and celebrate the stories of our families and our communities through the modality of dance and creative movement. The environment of Prairie North Dance will always be safe; mentally, emotionally and physically for everyone who walks through our doors. Every student will be met where they are at and supported to achieve meaningful success from both their teachers and classmates. Honest, effective and timely communication between teachers and students will be a hallmark of Prairie North Dance.

Lacey Blowers

Director/Owner, Prairie North Dance

Our Dance Curriculum

Prairie North Dance is a technique and skills-based, dance and creative movement program with its instructional foundation rooted in Safe Dance Practice and Brain-Compatible Dance Education. Our program is progressive and allows dancers to develop at their own pace while feeling challenged and empowered by the growth in their technical dance skill set. All dance classes at Prairie North Dance will have instructors who:

1. Create a physically and psychologically safe and supportive environment.
2. Understand relevant anatomical principles and biomechanically sound alignment.
3. Implement effective physiological preparation and progression in dance technique and skill acquisition.
4. Minimize injury risk and understand injury management.
5. Tailor delivery of dance technique and movement instruction to the specific needs of the participants.

Currently, Prairie North Dance is offering Irish Dance Solo and Ceili classes, where students will learn a mixture of traditional, modern and performative Irish Dance. Irish Dance is unique in the dance world as it encompasses two complementary, yet different shoe types/styles of dance: Light show (Soft Shoe) and Heavy Shoe (Hard Shoe).

For Light Shoe/Soft Shoe, dancers wear ghillies (sometimes referred to as pumps or soft shoes) and learn a series of different styled patterned dances. There are

four main Soft Shoe dances that students will learn: the Reel, Single Jig, Light Jig, and Slip Jig. The style of soft shoe is characterized by a lightness on the feet, incorporating many technical skills like high kicks, jumps, and turns, and is similar to ballet in look and feel.

In addition to learning the solo dances, students will have the opportunity to use their soft shoe skills to participate in Ceili dancing, which is a form of traditional Irish social group dancing, typically performed at large social gatherings. Ceili dancing involves a variety of soft shoe step combinations and formations with the goal of emphasizing interaction and community participation through the medium of dance.

For Heavy Shoe/Hard Shoe, dancers wear hard shoes (sometimes referred to as Jig Shoes) that look similar to tap shoes. Except, instead of metal plating screwed into the bottom of the shoe, a Hard Shoe/ Jig Shoe has rounded down fibreglass tips on both the tip/ front of the shoe and the heel. Heavy Shoe/Hard Shoe dances differ from soft shoe in that they are a powerful, percussive style of dance made up of intricate rhythms and explosive, athletic movements. It is often compared to tap dance, as it makes sound with the shoe's tip and heel and has much of the same technique as tap. There are four main Hard Shoe dances that students will learn: Treble Reel, Hornpipe, Heavy Jig, and a Traditional Set.

The technical elements involved in Irish Dance (both Soft Shoe and Hard Shoe) include timing, rhythm, lift, volume, crossing, turn-out, toes, extension, posture, and stage presence.

Competitive Irish Dance

Prairie North Dance believes in providing a wide variety of meaningful performance opportunities for our dancers. For dancers who wish to pursue a competitive performance environment, this means engaging with our local, provincial, national and international dance community organizations that host competitions.

These performance opportunities will feel natural for the participating dancers and will not put undue pressure on either our dancers or their families. We want dancers to feel comfortable and prepared for these types of performances. Dancers are supported through constant guidance and mentorship throughout the experience. This helps to ensure all dancers are looking at these performance opportunities through a lens of growth and learning.

Dancers and their families can choose whether they would like to participate in any of the dance competitions offered throughout the dance season. This allows each dancer to maintain control and autonomy over their bodies as they build their relationship with dance.

Some seasons of life will see dancers participating in several competitions in a calendar year. Others will see dancers enjoying the pursuit of their dance craft in the class setting only, providing them with the time and ability to shift focus and energy to other important areas in their lives.

It is up to each dancer and their family to decide the pace of participation in competitive dance opportunities, as Prairie North Dance believes dancers should always be in control of where, when, and for how long they move their bodies through dance.

Throughout the dance season, Prairie North Dancers have the opportunity to participate in several local, in-person dance competitions, including:

- **The Rockwood Festival of the Arts - Teulon, MB**
- **Dance Manitoba - Winnipeg, MB**
- **Entertain Us Dance Competition - Brandon, MB**

As a rural dance community that serves Manitoba's Interlake, we know that barriers to accessing resources

are common for our families, in all things, not just dance. To combat this, Prairie North Dance has put a central focus on finding ways for our dancers with competitive dance goals to achieve those dreams without being held back by either distance or the increased financial cost that comes with having to travel long distances for in-person dance competitions.

Breaking down these barriers to access for our dancers and their families is achieved by joining dance communities and organizations that have their roots in the same values as we do. Prairie North Dance is proud to be a part of the Enchanted Feis community, who hosts International Dance competitions via their live streaming Feis (competition in Irish) platform. Through Enchanted Feis, our dancers are able to compete in International Irish Dance competitions from the comfort of our home dance studio.

The Enchanted Feis series expands the world view and experience of dancers around the globe by allowing dancers from all over the world to compete, regardless of their location. The Enchanted Feis accepts all affiliated and non-affiliated Irish dancers. It is affordable and accessible, providing a new opportunity for all Irish dancers.

This Cyber Competition is held multiple times per year and features beginner through open categories for Irish dancers of all ages and skill levels.

Produced by Enchanted Productions, LLC, the Enchanted Feis is a Live-Stream only competition ensuring fairness and honesty for all competitors with a one-take approach. On feis day, all entries are produced on schedule, based on dance, age group, and level.

With each Feis being streamed live, dancers and viewers are able to watch the full competition, in real-time! This allows family members and fans who are not able to attend an in-person Feis to experience and participate in the competition, and support their favorite dancers, from anywhere.

The Enchanted Community of judges come from various backgrounds, all holding their organization's certifications. Three adjudicators are used for each competition and provide every dancer with scores, placements, comments, and tailored feedback, including adults and the open level. Along with this

valuable resource, every dancer shines, receiving premier and unique awards in each category, shipped timely and directly to their door.

The Enchanted Feis enhances the global Irish dance community by providing an easy and affordable experience, accessible to all.

Knowledge is Power

Education Focused Dance Practice

Prairie North Dance prioritizes research-based Safe Dance Practices to support our goal of creating "Dancers for Life". Dance is an extremely high-impact sport, and without the proper training program and support, injuries can occur.

This is why you may see competitive Irish Dancers "retire" from the sport at very young ages (16-20 years of age is the average). Although there are many reasons, the main one is – you simply can't dance beyond a certain age because your body won't let you.

This is not okay. We know that dance is part of our cultural heartbeat, and it can and should be done for life. Prairie North Dance will always prioritize education and scientifically researched methods of dance practice.

This means our teachers will consistently learn, grow, and train with the best in the field in order to bring our dance practice into the present and future, giving our dancers the ability to truly dance for life.

The core foundation of Prairie North Dance is "knowledge is power." This knowledge needs to be shared in an age-appropriate context and in a timely fashion. To achieve this, Prairie North Dance will regularly host information meetings so everything we learn, as dance teachers and practitioners, is passed on to our dancers and the families who support them.

By taking care of ourselves here in our local dance community, we will not only better ourselves and lay the foundation for lifelong engagement in the sport of dance, but also be a lighthouse of support for others in the dance world who may be looking for a different way to engage with dance and hone their craft.



A foundational desire of Prairie North Dance is to be able to create dance shows that connect multiple genres of dance from the people who live on this land. To network with other cultural dance practices, we must build our own dancer base first.

Irish Dance as a dance form does not currently have a solid, transparent foundation rooted in safe dance practices, so this is what we are working to build here at Prairie North Dance. With a solid foundation in movement, our dancers will be able to learn traditional steps and then move towards a more contemporary style of dance, where we collaborate with other dance styles to create material that feels good and allows us to tell the stories we want to tell through dance.

Prairie North Dance has a rigorous vetting process regarding the types of educational organizations and individuals we collaborate with to ensure that the above-mentioned goal is always at the forefront. That our dancers stay protected, because when dancers are safe, they have what it takes to challenge themselves and try new things on the dance floor. As the teachers at Prairie North Dance network with professional dancers, physiotherapists, occupational therapists, dance psychologists, somatic dance practitioners, etc., we constantly evaluate how to integrate what we learn into our dance practice. This will be an ever-changing lifelong pursuit that we want all members of our dance community to participate in. Here at Prairie North Dance, We NEVER stop learning and growing.

Student Dance Levels

Prairie North Dance uses a levelled organizational system to help dancers progress through our Dance Curriculum. As dancers grow and achieve success and meet the general and specific learning outcomes of each level, they move to the next level.

Prairie North Dance Levels include:

- 1. Beginner:** This level includes new students ages 5 or older, as well as existing students from 5 to 9 years of age.
- 2. Novice:** This level includes new students over the age of 10, as well as existing students who have learned all of their beginner level soft shoe dances, including the reel, light jig, slip jig, and single jig. Novice dancers also begin learning the basic hard shoe movements with the goal of learning a beginner level treble jig, hornpipe and 2 traditional set dances.
- 3. Advanced:** This level includes dancers of all ages who have completed their beginner/ novice level soft shoe dances, their beginner/Novice hard shoe dances, including Treble Jig, Hornpipe, 3-4 traditional set dances and a treble reel.
- 4. Championship:** This level includes all Advanced level dancers of any age who have mastered all of their advanced soft and hard shoe dances and are now working on custom Prairie North Dance Solo and Teams choreography. These students are competing at the Championship level at the national and international level.
- 5. Adult:** This level includes all new or existing students who are over the age of 18 who are wanting to dance casually OR who are wanting to compete in their age and level category at any Irish Dance competition.

When Can I Enroll

Enrollment occurs three times a year: In September, December/January, and March, lining up with the start of the Fall, Winter, and Spring Sessions. Students can choose to enroll and attend both the Fall and Winter Sessions (for a full year of dance instruction) or opt to choose only 1 session per year (either the Fall or the Winter). The Spring Session registration in March is only open to current dancers who have attended both the Fall and Winter sessions of that Dance Season and want to compete at local dance competitions as well as Irish Dance specific competitions through Enchanted Digital Feis.

Registration and enrolment for dance classes is done through the Prairie North Dance Parent Portal through Go Studio Pro (DSP).

Parents MUST download the FREE Parent Portal app via the link listed below:

<https://app.gostudiopro.com/online/prairienorthdance>

This link is also listed on our website, under the "For Parents/Dancers" page.

Once parents/dancers have created their profile in the Prairie North Dance Studio Pro Parent Portal, they will be able to sign up for auto pay and register and pay for classes for a dance session. All important documentation for each dance class will be available in the parent portal. Parents and dancers can also communicate directly with their dance teacher via the in-app messaging function. Parents can also contact Prairie North Dance via email, at prairienorthdance@gmail.com.



Season at a Glance

This is Prairie North Dance's third year of operation, and we are so excited to see familiar faces return along with new faces from members of our community!

Currently, we are focusing on building a solid foundation in dance and creative movement by offering both traditional and competitive Irish Dance classes. In future seasons we hope to establish a dedicated performance division where we can connect and collaborate with other local dance schools/studios to create shows and perform locally, using dance to tell the stories of all the people who share the land where we live.

Prairie North Dance offers both a recreational program and concurrent competitive program. Dancers who choose to compete with Prairie North Dance will have the opportunity to compete in both in-person and virtual dance competitions at the Regional, National, and World Open levels throughout the dance season.

All dancers will have the opportunity to perform for

their friends and family at our Dance Showcases, occurring on the last class of each dance session (December, March, and May). The structure of the Dance Showcase is informal and allows all dancers, regardless of age or skill level, to showcase their learning for the important people in their lives. Students choose what they will perform, with the support of their dance peers, teachers, and the audience.

Every showcase will have a parent / dancer information session following the performance portion, facilitated by the Prairie North Dance Teaching Staff. The information sessions will be focused on themes of dancer safety, health and wellness, and will include any new information regarding upcoming opportunities for our dancers in the next session. This will also be a great time for dancers and their families to ask questions related to Irish Dance or Prairie North Dance, as our teaching staff will be in attendance.

2025-2026 Class Types and Schedule

Fall Session

Fridays: Advanced Adult Classes

8:00-10:00 pm
(Sept 12, 19 Oct 3, 17, 24 Nov 7, 14, 21, 28 Dec 5, 12 & 19)

Sundays: Youth Classes

(Sept 14, 21 Oct 5, 19, 26 Nov 2, 9, 16, 23, 30 Dec 7)

Beginner (Ages 5-6 yrs)

3:00 - 3:45 pm

Beginner (Ages 7-10 yrs)

3:45 - 4:30 pm

Novice (Ages 8 & up)

5:00 - 6:30 pm

Ceili Class - For Novice & up dancers, *including adults

6:30 - 7:30 pm

Advanced (Ages 12 & up)

7:30 - 9:00 pm

Winter Session

Fridays: Advanced Adult Classes

8:00-10:00 pm
(Jan 9, 16, 23, 30 Feb 6, 20, 27 Mar 6, 13, 20)

Sundays: Youth Classes

(Jan 11, 18, 25 Feb 1, 8, 22 Mar 1, 8, 15, 22)

Beginner (Ages 5-6 yrs)

3:00 - 3:45 pm

Beginner (Ages 7-10 yrs)

3:45 - 4:30 pm

Novice (Ages 8 & up)

5:00 - 6:30 pm

Ceili Class - For Novice & up dancers, *including adults

6:30 - 7:30 pm

Advanced (Ages 12 & up)

7:30 - 9:00 pm

Spring Competition Session

Fridays: Advanced Adult Classes

8:00-10:00 pm
(Apr 10, 17, 24 May 1, 8, 22, 29)

Sundays: Youth Classes

(Apr 12, 19, 26 May 3, 24, 31)

Beginner (Ages 5-6 yrs)

3:00 - 3:45 pm

Beginner (Ages 7-10 yrs)

3:45 - 4:30 pm

Novice (Ages 8 & up)

5:00 - 6:30 pm

Ceili Class - For Novice & up dancers, *including adults

6:30 - 7:30 pm

Advanced (Ages 12 & up)

7:30 - 9:00 pm

Policies & General Information

Absences

If a student is unable to attend class, please notify the studio in advance through the parent portal on the Dance Studio Pro App or by email at prairienorthdance@gmail.com

Behaviour

Anyone entering Prairie North Dance is expected to always demonstrate respectful behaviour. Please respect our space, instructors, students, and their families. Bullying and/or harassment will not be tolerated.

Observation

For all regularly scheduled dance classes, parents are required to bring their child(ren) into the dance studio waiting area 5 minutes before the start of class (the waiting area is located directly inside the backdoor to the studio – parents will see a seating area with a boot rack and bathroom).

Parents are responsible for making sure their child(ren)'s outdoor shoes are removed and placed on the boot rack and assist with any clothing changes/putting on of dance shoes, if their child is unable to do this on their own.

Parents can choose to stay in the waiting area for the duration of the class or leave once their child(ren) begin their class and return for pick-up at the end of class. For parents who choose to stay, please keep noise to a minimum, so as not to distract the students or teachers during class time.

Parents will be invited into the dance floor studio space to stay and watch for any special occasion dance classes/performances that are done in the future. This information will be communicated to parents through the parent portal on the Dance Studio Pro App or by email.

Emails & Go Studio Pro Parent Portal

All important information will be communicated to students and parents through the DSP (Dance Studio Pro) Parent Portal, as well as by email. Students and parents are responsible for checking their DSP Parent Portal and emails regularly.

Practice and Performance Videos via Marco Polo

In addition to the Go Studio Pro Prairie North Dance app and email, dancers and their families also have the opportunity to connect directly with their dance teacher(s) via the communication app, Marco Polo, for support regarding material being taught in our dance classes.

To improve access to practice videos and filmed performance videos by Prairie North Dance students, while still maintaining the highest level of protection digitally for our children, Prairie North Dance has chosen to partner with Marco Polo Pro to utilize their sharecast feature to easily share large video files with dancers and their families, without putting images of our children on the internet.

The Marco Polo app does NOT track or store user data, which is why it is the safest option right now for sharing digital footage with just our families (and not a broader internet audience).

Marco Polo is a free app (although there are paid version of it – Prairie North Dance has a paid subscription to their business form of the app, Marco Polo Pro), and you do NOT have to physically download the app to watch the videos.

To watch the sharecast/practice or performance videos, click on the links provided to you in the Go Studio Pro Parent Portal at the end of the first week of classes for the session. If you choose to NOT download the app, you will be prompted to sign-up to play the videos on the web (through an internet browser). Again, this is FREE (unless you choose to opt for a paid version of Marco Polo).

NOTE: If you choose download the app (there are both free and paid options), know that users of the app then have the ability to respond directly to posted videos via a video chat function (this is especially great for practice videos, as dancers can ask their teachers direct questions and teachers can respond in video format).

Class Drinks

All students should bring a water bottle for dance class.

Cell Phone Policy

All students who carry cell phones must put their phones on silent during class time and store them with their other belongings (bag, coat, outdoor shoes, etc.) in the waiting area beside the dance floor. Phones will not be used during class time but can be checked on break times.

Class Recordings

Parents, guests, and students are not allowed to take photos and/or videos during class time without prior Director approval.

Student Waiver and Media Release Form

Our Student Waiver and Media Release form must be completed and signed by all students/parental guardians by the first class of the season/session. This form is located in your Go Studio Pro Parent Portal – you will be prompted to sign it when you register your child(ren) for their class(es). It can also be found on our website <https://prairienorthdance.ca>, on the “For Parents/Dancers” page, at the bottom under the heading “Important Forms for Dancers/Parents”.

Missed Classes

There are no refunds for missed classes or make-up classes except when a class is cancelled by the studio. Refunds will be processed through the Go Studio Pro Parent Portal in the form of initial payment (the credit card on file) and will be reflected on your account page and in your Prairie North Dance invoice for the session.

Opening & Closing Time

The studio will be open 5 minutes prior to the start of class & close promptly after the last class of the evening. Please pick up your dancer on time after their class ends.

Year-End Dance Photoshoot

All Prairie North Dancers are invited to participate in our year-end dance photoshoot, courtesy of Tiny Fox Photography, on the last class of the Spring Session, May 31st, 2026. Dancers will take a whole school photo, class photos, and individual solo dance photos. There is no charge for these photos. Further details regarding the Prairie North Dance Photoshoot will be communicated to dancers/parents through the Go Studio Pro Prairie North Dance app and via email at the start of the Spring Dance Session.

Class Attire & Footwear

Footwear

Irish Dance shoes (Soft Shoes or Hard Shoes), or Ballet Slippers are **not** required to start dance classes with Prairie North Dance. All new students are welcome to do their first two months of classes in non-slip indoor runners (or if you already have dance shoes – you are welcome to wear any type of soft-soled dance shoes like ballet or jazz slippers).

When the dancer is ready to obtain proper Irish dance footwear, please let us know, and we will provide information on what to purchase for your dancer and provide you with multiple options of places to purchase from, including our local “shoe shop and swap” which is managed by one of our Senior Dancers/Teaching Assistants, Karin Love.

Students in the beginner class and the recreational adult class for the Fall and Winter Session do not have to purchase Irish dance footwear to participate in classes during these sessions. Students who are in any other level (Novice and up, including Adult competitive) and/or are participating in the Spring Session **MUST** have proper Irish dance footwear in order to perform/compete.

Attire

All students should wear socks or tights with their shoes for dancing. The white poodle socks that are typical for Irish dancers are not required for regular classes but are required for dance competitions and performances.

It is important to wear something that is comfortable and easy to move in. The clothes you choose shouldn't restrict movement, so jeans and ankle length skirts will not work for dance class. Students may wear athletic clothes, leotards, tutus and tights, or t-shirts and shorts – whatever you prefer to move your body in!

All dancers with hair longer than their shoulders, please have your hair tied back.

Performance/Competition Costumes

All competitive dancers who will be performing at local festivals, shows and/or competing in Irish Dance Feisianna (competitions) will need to purchase a Prairie North Dance costume through our custom online e-commerce store through Malley Sport. This costume will be used for all performances and competitions until the dancer either outgrows it and needs to replace the costume with a bigger size, or the dancer is at a championship level in competitions and is at the stage where they will be purchasing their own custom designed solo dress (female)/ vest (male) that is unique to them.

As our school grows, we hope to be able to facilitate a sale every winter for dancers and their families to buy/sell/swap their dance costumes and shoes that no longer fit with other families in our dance school who are in the market for different sized costumes/shoes for their dancers.

For female competition dancers, they will need to purchase the **Malley Sport Shortleeve Dress** (\$155). For male competition dancers, they will need to purchase the **Malley Sport Rugby Polo** (\$69) and provide their own black dress pants.

In addition, ALL competition students who are competing at the Novice level or higher will need to purchase the custom **Prairie North Dance Malley Sport Tracksuit jacket and matching Leggings or Skinny Pants** (\$199 for both) which must be worn at every competition or event where dancers represent Prairie North Dance in a public setting. While these purchases are a requirement for our competition dancers, any dancer, regardless of whether they will be performing or competing, can purchase custom Malley Sport wear or costumes from the online e-commerce store.

Our Prairie North Dance custom Malley Sport e-commerce store will be open for orders FOUR times throughout the 2025-2026 dance season, so parents will have multiple opportunities to purchase the required costumes/tracksuit should they decide their dancer(s) want to compete in the 2026 Spring Session competitions.

Mark your calendars! Our online store will be open again at the start of the 2025-2026 Dance Season on September 15th, 2025.

Order here:

<https://malleyteam.com/collections/prairie-north-dance>

When the store is open online, parents will be notified via the Go Studio Pro Parent Portal and provided with the link to the site. Parents can then order and pay directly through the site. **ORDERS WILL BE SENT TO PRAIRIE NORTH DANCE IN BULK** for distribution during regular class time once they have arrived. All orders made via the site are packed and labelled individually within the bulk shipment, to ensure everyone will receive their correct orders.

There are several garments available for purchase in the online store, in addition to the required costumes and tracksuits. It is completely up to each family if they would like to purchase additional Prairie North Dance garments when placing their orders. There is a lookbook of available garments in your Prairie North Dance Parent Portal app. The list of available garments for purchase includes: shortleeve dress (costume for girls), regular fit hoody, round neck tee, training shorts, rugby polo (costume for boys), skinny pants (joggers), full zip tracksuit top, full length leggings, tank top, shorts, studio skort, gym sac bag, and polar fleece jacket.

Size charts will be available in the Parent Portal as well as on the Malley Sport site. Please note, the Malley Sportwear sizes are **not standard** so we advise to measure against the size guide and not to go by your "standard size" or age. The garments are slim fitting, so if you are in between sizes, we recommend sizing up.

Financial Policies

Payments

Prairie North Dance accepts registration payments via the Go Studio Pro Merchant Services Auto Pay, accessible through your Go Studio Pro Parent Portal app. Accepted forms of payment through Auto Pay include debit and credit cards. Please speak to the Director prior to the first class of the session if you would like to pay in person for the session via cash, e-transfer, debit or credit.

All classes at Prairie North Dance are \$26 + GST per class. The cost for each session is determined by the number of classes in that session. For example, there are 11 classes total in the Fall session for the Beginner class, resulting in a tuition cost of \$286 + GST for the session.

Families with more than one dancer registered in a given dance session will receive a 15% multi-student discount off total tuition for that session. As well, Prairie North Dance offers a multi-class discount. If a dancer registers for 2 classes in a session, they will receive 10% off the total tuition amount. If a dancer registers for 3 or more classes in a session, they will receive 15% off the total tuition amount.

There is a one-time \$20 registration fee per family, per

year (the year includes the Fall, Winter, and Spring sessions) that will be added to your session payment at your initial registration. Example, if the registration fee is paid in the Fall session, it is not paid again when the student registers for the subsequent Winter or Spring session.

For more information, please contact us at prairienorthdance@gmail.com

Session fees must be paid in full before the start of the first class of the session.

Refunds

Refunds will only be issued up until the fourth class of the applicable session.

The refund issued will be for the remaining classes that the student has not yet participated in. Therefore, if a student decides the class is not for them by the fourth class and the parent chooses to withdraw their child, the parent has only paid for the classes their child has attended and will be refunded the amount for the classes the child has not attended.

Refunds will be via the same payment method used for initial session payment.

