

Ideas for Surviving Recital Week (A-Z)

Specific guidelines, practices and traditions are in place at most dance studios to guide recital week activities, and those practices will vary from studio to studio. The following are meant as general supplemental advice from dance parents on how to best prepare yourself and your child for recital week. Naturally, if any of the following differs from your studio's practices, you should follow your studio's rules.

Accessories - Use a Zip-Loc bag to hold any accessories (hairpiece, gloves, etc.) for each dance. If you have four dances, use four different bags. Use a Sharpie to write the name of the dance on the bag, plus a list of each accessory item. The list serves as a checklist before you leave home for the recital, when getting dressed, and when repacking items after each dance is complete.

Clothing Racks - Reasonably durable clothing racks with wheels can be purchased at stores such as Wal*Mart. If your child is in several dances and/or plans to dance again next year, it's a smart investment that keeps you organized, prevents wrinkles, and provides a little dressing privacy. Hang costumes on the rack in the order they will be needed in the show.

Garment Bags - Put all costumes and their accessories into garment bags -- one costume per bag. This keeps the costumes clean and everything organized and together. Put your accessory bag inside the garment bag.

Drinks - Keeping dancers hydrated is important, but try to stick with bottled water. Colored fruit juices and dance costumes DO NOT go together!

Extra Everything - Recital weekend is not the time to get a run in your tights without a backup. Have at least one extra pair on hand of each color that you need. Also bring extra hair gel, hair nets, bobby pins and hair spray with you. A few less obvious items that may come in handy include:

- Baby wipes/Shout wipes (to fix makeup mistakes or dirty hands);
- Baby powder (for itchy costumes);
- Safety pins (for emergency costume repairs);
- Clear nail Polish (to repair minor holes/runs in tights when there isn't time to change them);
- Tylenol, Advil, Motrin or your pain reliever of choice;
- Extra contact lenses (because the show can't be stopped to search the stage for one);
- Band-Aids (the "invisible" kind -- stage is not the place for Sponge Bob Band-Aids)

Family and Friends - Family members and friends don't belong backstage or in the dressing rooms during rehearsals or the recital. The same applies during intermission and after the show. There is a lot of backstage activity in a limited space, and dressing rooms are a private area. Remind your family and guests to be respectful of these areas. If they wish to greet a performer after the show or present flowers, they should do so in the lobby areas or any special area designated by your studio.

Label Everything - Put your child's name on everything. These are busy days and it is easy to lose a piece to a costume, shoes, accessories, etc. Of course, use care not to ruin costumes in the process, and be sure to write in inconspicuous places.

Makeup - Use the makeup that you are directed by your studio to use. Makeup is as important to the look as the costume. You wouldn't send your child onto the stage wearing a different costume than everyone else just because you think a certain color looks better than the chosen costume. Why do it with makeup? Everyone should strive to look as identical as possible -- costume, makeup and hair.

Nail Polish - Your studio will have its own policy, but, in general, colored nail polish shouldn't be worn during recital. You may think those bright red nails look great, but to the greatest extent possible, everyone should look alike. A French manicure is generally acceptable since it enhances the natural look of nails.

Passing Time - Rehearsal and recital days are often quite long, so consider bringing a deck of cards, a game, a book, or activities that will keep the kids busy while they are waiting to perform. Avoid markers, glitter and glue that can ruin a costume.

Patience - Bring plenty of patience to recital week. You will need every ounce of it.

Performance List - Make a list of all of your child's dances and note the corresponding act number in the show. Type or write an 8-1/2" x 11" page with your child's name at the top followed by a list of their dances in order of show appearance with the number alongside (to help gauge change time). Make several copies -- one for you to carry, one to tape on the wall in the dressing room (which is why your child's name should be on it), and an extra one to replace the one you'll probably lose.

Planning - Recital isn't an "on that day" activity. Pull together all of your costumes, accessories, shoes and makeup several days in advance to give you a little cushion in case something isn't exactly right. Make a check list of your child's routines, listing their costume, color tights, shoes, and any accessories. Make sure you have all your supplies before arriving at the performance location. The checklist helps when leaving to ensure that you have everything.

Shoes - Give dance shoes a little extra attention before the recital to make sure they look nice, but check with your studio for guidance before using any polishes or cleaners on them.

Timing - Be sure to arrive at the rehearsals and the recital at the time when you're instructed to do so. You will need all the time that your studio directors says you will, and the show will start whether you are ready or not.