

NESTING STEPS E-BOOK & POSING GUIDE



**THE PERFECT
ADDITION TO
VOLUME
PHOTOGRAPHY!**

**DON'T LEAVE HOME
WITHOUT THEM!**

MichelleSkarpness.com

Welcome to this guide designed for photographers!
This eBook provides step-by-step
instructions for building a versatile set of 5 nesting steps
perfect for travel and volume photography. Additionally, it
includes a section for uploading and
showcasing posing options and usage ideas. Thank you for
your purchase.

C O P Y R I G H T 2 0 2 5
M I C H E L L E S K A R P N E S S

MICHELLE



SKARPNESS

CEO & PHOTOGRAPHER

Michelle Skarpness has been crafting breathtaking images for over 25 years—and somehow still looks as timeless as her work. With a camera in hand for over two decades, she travels 6 states doing dance photography. Her portfolio boasts an MTV special, Minnesota Twins legend Kent Hrbek, and features in Canvas Rebel Magazine and Cost of Living Diaries, where her photography and business savvy shine.

Fueled by a love for photography, razor-sharp business insight, and a knack for customer service, she is ready to outfit you with some fun props & poses.

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CONTENT

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1
INTRODUCTION

2
OVERVIEW

3
MATERIALS & TOOLS

4
DIMENSIONS & CUTTING LIST

5
ASSEMBLY INSTRUCTIONS

6
ASSEMBLY INSTRUCTIONS

7
NOTES

8
POSING IDEAS

NESTED STEPS INSTRUCTIONS

OVERVIEW

These blueprint outlines the construction of a set of five nested steps for dancers to stand on for posing groups.

All steps are 15 inches high.

The largest Step 1 is 25 inches long and 16 inches wide.

Step 2 is 24 inches long and 15 inches wide.

Step 5 and the smallest step is 21 inches long and 12 inches wide.

Other steps are scaled proportionally to ensure nesting with a 1/2 inch clearance per side.

The steps are built with 3/8 inch plywood for a balance of weight and durability, reinforced to support dancers' weight, and designed for compact storage.

i am not a contractor, but these are what i use for my steps. Build & use at your own risk. Not liable for accidents.

MATERIALS

- Plywood (3/8 inch thick): 2 sheets of 4 ft x 8 ft plywood (birch or oak for smooth finish)
- Wood glue: 16 oz bottle
- Wood screws: 1 inch flat-head screws (150-count, suitable for 3/8 inch plywood)
- Sandpaper: 120-grit and 220-grit
- Primer and paint (optional): 1 quart each for finishing
- Non-slip tape (optional): 2 inch wide, 10 ft roll for top surfaces
- Wood filler: 8 oz for smoothing joints
- Corner braces (optional): 1 inch x 1 inch metal L-brackets (20, 4 per step) for added stability

TOOLS

- Circular saw or table saw
- Jigsaw (for precise cuts)
- Drill with 3/32 inch drill bit and countersink bit
- Screwdriver or drill driver
- Measuring tape
- Carpenter's square
- Clamps (4–6, at least 12 inch capacity)
- Paintbrush or roller (if painting)
- Safety gear: Safety glasses, dust mask, ear protection

DIMENSIONS

The steps are rectangular boxes with open bottoms.
All are 15 inches high, designed to nest with
a 1/2 inch clearance per side.

The first step is 25 inches x 16 inches x 15 inches,
the second step is 24 inches x 15 inches x 15 inches, and the fifth
step is 21 inches x 12 inches x 15 inches.
Steps 3 and 4 are scaled proportionally to ensure proper nesting.

Step	Length (in)	Width (in)	Height (in)	Notes
1 (Largest)	25.0	16.0	15.0	Specified dimensions, nests Step 2
2	24.0	15.0	15.0	Specified dimensions
3	23.0	14.0	15.0	Nests inside Step 2
4	22.0	13.0	15.0	Nests inside Step 3
5 (Smallest)	21.0	12.0	15.0	Specified dimensions, innermost step

TABLE 1: DIMENSIONS OF THE NESTED STEPS.

- Clearance: 1/2 inch gap per side between nested steps for easy stacking/unstacking.
- Top panel thickness: 3/8 inch plywood for all steps.
- Side panel thickness: 3/8 inch plywood for all steps.

CUTTING LIST

From 3/8 inch plywood, cut the following pieces for each step. Label each piece (e.g., "Step 1 Top," "Step 2 Front"). The thicker plywood provides better stability than 1/4 inch, but corner braces are still recommended.

ASSEMBLY INSTRUCTIONS

Step 1: Prepare the Pieces

1. Cut plywood to the dimensions in the cutting list using a circular or table saw. Use a carpenter’s square for straight cuts.

Step	Piece	Quantity	Dimensions (in)	Description
1	Top	1	25 x 16	Top surface
1	Front/Back	2	25 x 14.625	Height = 15 - 3/8
1	Sides	2	15.25 x 14.625	Width = 16 - 2 x 3/8
2	Top	1	24 x 15	Top surface
2	Front/Back	2	24 x 14.625	Height = 15 - 3/8
2	Sides	2	13.75 x 14.625	Width = 15 - 2 x 3/8
3	Top	1	23 x 14	Top surface
3	Front/Back	2	23 x 14.625	Height = 15 - 3/8
3	Sides	2	12.75 x 14.625	Width = 14 - 2 x 3/8
4	Top	1	22 x 13	Top surface
4	Front/Back	2	22 x 14.625	Height = 15 - 3/8
4	Sides	2	11.75 x 14.625	Width = 13 - 2 x 3/8
5	Top	1	21 x 12	Top surface
5	Front/Back	2	21 x 14.625	Height = 15 - 3/8
5	Sides	2	10.75 x 14.625	Width = 12 - 2 x 3/8

Table 2: Cutting list for 3/8 inch plywood.

2. Sand edges with 120-grit sandpaper to remove splinters, then finish with 220-grit for smoothness.
3. Label pieces clearly to avoid confusion during assembly.

ASSEMBLY INSTRUCTIONS

Step 2: Assemble Each Step

For each step (build from Step 1 to Step 5):

1. Dry-fit pieces: Place the top panel on a flat surface, align front/back panels, and attach side panels.
2. Apply wood glue along edges where panels meet the top and each other.
3. Clamp panels, ensuring square corners.
4. Drill pilot holes (3/32 inch bit) through the top into front/back/side panels (3–4 holes per edge) and sides into front/back (3 holes per joint) to prevent splitting.
5. Secure with 1 inch screws, countersinking slightly. Wipe excess glue with a damp cloth.
6. Install 1 inch x 1 inch metal L-brackets inside each corner (4 per step) using 1/2 inch screws to reinforce the 3/8 inch plywood structure.
7. Fill screw holes with wood filler and sand smooth once dry.

Step 3: Test Nesting

1. Stack steps to verify nesting with 1/2 inch clearance per side.
2. Adjust if needed by sanding or trimming tight spots with a jigsaw.

ASSEMBLY INSTRUCTIONS

Step 4: Finishing

1. Sand surfaces with 220-grit sandpaper for smoothness.
2. Apply primer (if painting) and let dry per instructions.
3. Paint with durable, non-glossy paint to reduce photo reflections. Apply 2–3 coats, sanding lightly between coats.
4. Apply non-slip tape (optional) to top edges for dancer safety.

Step 5: Final Inspection

1. Check stability: Place each step on a flat surface to ensure no wobbling.
2. Test weight capacity: Gradually apply up to 250 lbs to confirm structural integrity with corner braces.
3. Photograph setup: Arrange steps (e.g., staggered or aligned) and test with dancers posing.

NOTES FOR PHOTOGRAPHERS

- **Lighting:** Position steps to minimize shadows. Use softboxes or diffusers for even lighting.
- **Posing:** Arrange dancers to create depth (e.g., taller dancers on central steps). Ensure stability during dynamic poses.
- **Storage:** Nest steps for compact storage. Store in a dry area to prevent warping.
- **Maintenance:** Inspect for loose screws, brackets, or wear. Touch up paint and reapply non-slip tape as needed.

SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS

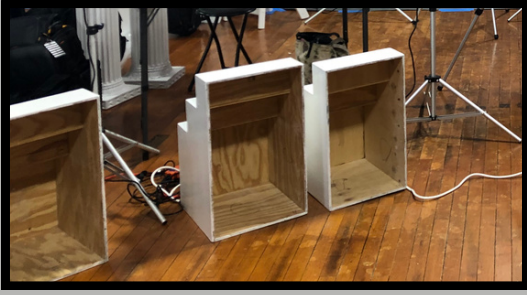
- **Weight limit:** Each step supports up to 250 lbs with corner braces and proper construction.
- **Stability:** Place on a flat, non-slip surface.
- **Dancer safety:** Instruct dancers to step carefully and avoid jumping to prevent tipping or damage.

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POSING IDEAS

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LABELED FOR EASY GRABBING



PAINTING DAY

WAITING FOR DANCERS

SMALLER SCHOOLS DON'T NEED ALL OF THEM!



PRO TIP!!!!

This PPG Breakthrough Paint is absolutely the best for tap shoes and wear & tear. Well worth the price!!

IN ACTION



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PHOTOGRAPHY

THANK YOU!

If you need any help or suggestions just let us know! If you have any fun posing suggestions - send them to us!! Maybe we'll use them in our next version!!

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