



BLAKEY SCHOOL OF IRISH DANCE

Calgary | Saskatoon | Regina | Prince Albert | Penticton | Kelowna | Vernon

e-mail info@blakeyschool.com

FAQ for beginners:

HOW DO I SIGN UP?

Contact the Blakey teacher in your area, and we will assess your eligibility to join, then we will send you a registration form to fill in. Fees are paid by post-dated cheque, fee structures and payment options are outlined in your registration package.

WHAT SHOULD MY DANCER WEAR TO CLASS?

Dancers must come to class in shorts, a t-shirt or tank top, white socks, and have the appropriate shoes. Dancers should bring a water bottle to class. Food, toys, cellphones and other electronics are not permitted in the class environment and may be confiscated.

WHAT DOES MY DANCER WEAR TO PERFORM OR COMPETE?

Beginner dancers should wear their soft shoes, poodle socks, and should curl their hair. A costume can be rented from the school, or, alternately your teacher may recommend an appropriate blouse and skirt. Our dancers wear black hairbands, decorated with gems for a bit of sparkle. Your teacher will assist you in preparing for your dancer's first appearances! Later on, dancers are asked to wear a club dress or a solo dress, depending on their level of advancement.

CAN I VIEW MY CHILD'S LESSONS?

Parents are not permitted to view classes, as it can be distracting for dancers and teachers. We have family viewing days and holiday parties when the family members are invited to view a display and participate in ceili dancing. We also have a year-end show at the end of each dance season. Beginner dancers are invited to perform during St. Patrick's day week, at schools, nursing homes and other venues. This is a great opportunity to see what your dancer has learned!

HOW DOES COMPETITION WORK?

Not all dancers must compete, but it is encouraged. We do teach the required dances for competitive entries in all classes, and parents have the option to sign their dancers up for Feis (competition). When a dancer is ready to try a competition, your teacher will advise you that it's an option, and you can make a joint decision about how and when to get started.

WHAT COSTS CAN I EXPECT?

- Fees are paid directly to the teacher for your child's lessons. This can vary based on level, and number of hours in class each week.
- When starting out, you need to purchase soft shoes (anywhere from \$15 used to \$60 new), a pair of poodle socks, (\$15)
- Hard shoes are usually needed by the end of the first year, or in the second year (\$50 to \$200 used and new)
- When your dancer outgrows their shoes, you can sell them in our used shoe program.
- When your dancer is ready for their first show, you will need to rent a costume (price varies from \$25 - \$100).
- Solo costumes are paid for by the parents, when your dancer reaches that level, and can cost anywhere from \$500 - \$2500. Teachers can help you find the right dress for your budget. Dancers usually wear their solo costume for a full year, to each performance and competition, and then can sell the dress second hand to recoup some of their investment. Trends are always changing so it's important to consult your teacher before purchasing a dress
- Travel to competition is optional, and some fundraising is available to help with costs at the higher levels. Each family pays their own travel and competition fees.

HOW DO I CHOOSE A SCHOOL?

We advise that parents do a lot of research before joining a school. Make sure you are registering with a certified teacher "TCRG - Teacher of Comisiun le Rinci Gaelacha" (Teacher of the Irish Dancing Commission) as they have proven to have the ability, training and basic standard of instruction. Only registered TCRG's can enter dancers in competition.

Ensure that your chosen school suits your criteria, your philosophy and your desires for the child and for your family. It is difficult to move from school to school once you've enrolled.

This is because Irish Dancing is regulated by a governing body, in the Western Canadian Region and in Ireland. The rules of registered teachers dictate that dancers transferring schools must pay transfer fees (\$50 per family) and must sit out of competition for 6 months.

These rules are waived when a dancer moves to a new town.

Each school has its own choreography and technique, and when a dancer changes schools they must undergo what is referred to as a "re-styling period". Ask if you can try a class before you make a commitment.

For beginner dancers interested in enrolling in Blakey, we recommend you attend our year-end show, and come view a class prior to making your decision.

Transfers to Blakey from other dance schools are only considered under special circumstances and dancers must meet the teachers' criteria.

DO I HAVE TO DO A LOT OF FUNDRAISING OR VOLUNTEERING AT BLAKEY?

Varying commitment levels are offered for parents wanting to enhance their child's opportunities in dance. We have a minimum volunteer hour commitment based on what level your dancer is at. We don't do bingos or any other onerous fundraising activities, but we do ask parents to support pub nights, and other minor fundraisers when possible. Dancers at higher levels can participate in additional projects to raise funds for their expenses and for coach accompaniment to major or overseas competitions.

WHAT IS A FEIS?

"Feis" is an Irish word that translates to "Festival". A feis is a gathering of dancers to compete for advancement. Beginner, Advanced Beginner, Novice and Prizewinner levels are offered in the grades, as well as Preliminary Championships, Open Championships, Adult competitions and Teams (Ceili Dancing). There are often Celtic Art and Music competitions at feis also. All dance levels are grouped by birth year and age, so dancers only compete against their peers.

These events can be chaotic and also a lot of fun. Dancers love the challenge and have an opportunity to meet dancers from all over the country and the world. Our school is the host to two Feiseanna events, our annual Blakey Feis (4th weekend in January, in Calgary) and Blakey Saskatoon Feis (May long weekend, every 2nd year in Saskatoon). These events are run by the teachers and parent volunteers.

WHAT IF MY DANCER WANTS TO QUIT CLASSES?

At Blakey, we have a 2 week notice withdrawal policy. Withdrawals can only be processed if all school property (costumes etc) has been returned. If you supply post-dated cheques for the year, we will return your uncashed cheques to you following the withdrawal date.

If there is something you'd like to know that's not addressed here, please contact us!

Slainté,

Barb, Janice, Luanne and Laura