GRAND JETE STUDIO OF DANCE
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STUDENT ASSISTANT
HANDBOOK
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DANCE | ACRO | GYMNASTICS

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1 | Introduction

Being invited to assist your dance/gymnastics teacher in classes is a great honor. It usually means that he/she has observed characteristics like your dedication, your willingness and cooperation in class, and perhaps your caring or compassionate nature. Perhaps, in you, your instructor may see the spirit of a future teacher and would like to cultivate and nurture these qualities. As does “great power,” great honor comes with “great responsibilities.”

What kinds of responsibilities can you expect? And how can you make the experience a good one for you and the teacher you are helping?

2 | **Responsibilities**

The responsibilities and tasks left to assistants may differ from teacher to teacher. However, the following are some general duties that you might expect or that may fall to you should you take on the role of an assistant in a dance class

• Help with attendance/roll-taking

• Walk among the students as your teacher leads the class:
    Making corrections
    Assisting a struggling dancer
    Correcting students who are misbehaving or not following instructions.

•Lead certain warm-ups or exercises while your teacher:
    Handles the above tasks
    Steps out for a moment
    Handles a more severe discipline issue
    Observes you in order to give some tips

• Help children during shoe changes, bathroom or water breaks

• Hand out props or set up items to be used in class

• Keep an eye out for potential hazards like untied shoelaces or poor spacing/awareness while children are dancing

• Be a source of positive and enthusiastic energy in the class

• Keep students on task and focused

• Offer encouragement to dance students during the class

• Help to line up students and to keep them in line

• Lead or participate in choreography/recital dances

• Answer basic questions that parents may have

• Work seamlessly with your teacher by anticipating his/her needs so that together you can provide a fun and supportive learning environment for younger dancers

As you can see being a teacher's assistant involves a lot more than just showing up for classes. Your role as an extra pair of eyes, ears, arms, and legs for your teacher is an important one!

• **Don't wait to be asked** especially when you've been assigned small tasks that are done for each lesson (like taking roll or handing out stickers at the end of class). This is what it means to anticipate. Developing this awareness is important if you want to be a great assistant.

• **Be unobtrusive.** When you see a student that needs your help or correction, address or pull them aside quietly so that you don't distract other class members.

• **Don't be a distraction.** Follow the lead of your teacher. If he/she is trying to get the class to pay attention, that is your job too. Unless you are leading or teaching, you are there to help keep the students' attention on your teacher or on what they are doing (not to pull focus to yourself).

• **"Sandwich" your corrections between two good things.** For instance, say something like "Anna, you are pointing your toes nicely, try to keep your knee straight when you tendu. You are being a great listener today!"

• **Offer positive reinforcement** instead of yelling or complaining about bad behavior. In fact, some of the techniques in this post about teaching tots can help you interact with the kids (tots or not).

• **Be prepared and on time.** Being prepared can be anything from having the proper clothes or shoes with you to knowing the exercises or dances that you are supposed to lead.

• **Ask questions, give suggestions, and save the silliness until after class whenever possible.** Your teacher is counting on being able to focus on her class of students without worrying about you (or your behavior) at the same time. You will be the focus when it's your turn in class.

• **Show your enthusiasm without being silly.** Use a bright tone of voice (think of making your voice slightly higher) when you talk to the children, use a lot of energy when you demonstrate, and smile a lot. This will show your enthusiasm and still keep the kids focused and paying attention. You can have fun as long as you are not distracting the students from what they are doing.

• **Be ready for the unexpected and try to handle things maturely when they do.** If you work with very young children you must be prepared for the occasional "accident" and its aftermath. You can also expect that sometimes kids will say some pretty funny or strange things. Again, watch your teacher for how to respond in an appropriate, kind, and respectful manner.

• **Know when to refer a parent to your teacher.** If you are approached by a parent with a question and are not sure how to answer, don't make it up. If it seems the parent is upset it is not your job to deal with the problem. If a parent wants you to know why or why not things are being done the way they are, it is best to let your teacher address this. If you are uncomfortable in any way with the question, it is okay to pass it on to the teacher!

• **Give corrections and discipline with confidence.** Admittedly, it can be kind of strange to suddenly be "in charge" when you are normally a pupil yourself. But even though the children in your class probably look up to you, they are not likely to listen to you if you don't speak clearly and firmly. Sandwiching corrections and being positive may help you to feel like you are not being mean or yelling. Try to avoid making requests in the form of a question (For ex: "Are you ready to put the props away?"). This gives the impression that they have an option to say no. (Instead try "Alright, it's time to put the props away!" in a way that sounds as if you are excited to be moving on to the next activity as well).

• **Communicate clearly with your teacher.** If you have a question, ask at an appropriate time. If you are not sure what is expected of you, don't be afraid to ask or find out how you can improve.

• **Get some sleep.** You are probably a busy teen or pre-teen with homework, dance classes, and other activities in which you are involved. If you are well rested you will be more useful to your teacher and be more energetic in your classes (all of them). If you are missing sleep to fit everything in, maybe you should discuss this with your parents and teacher. Adding an apprenticeship to your activities may not be in your best interest right now.

4 | **Dress Code**

All of our assistants are expected to Come in proper dress code for class. This includes GJD attire or all black. This include t-shirts, tank tops with our logo or designs. Longer sleeve designs in the winter months. Black leggings or shorts.

Hair must be pulled back and out of the dancers face. Buns, Braids or Pony Tails are acceptable. Hair down will not be allowed.

Absolutely no jewelry

Footwear is required for the style of dance you will be assisting. If you are in genres of classes that require Jazz, Ballet, Lyrical shoes ect. Those shoes must be worn during the duration of class to set an example for the class you are assisting.

5 | Safety

Young children entering the studio may not have very much social interaction time with other children yet. Their time in the studio not only teaches them gross motor skills but also is a large part of their social development.

You may see behaviors such as:

-Pushing/Shoving
-'Hands on' mirrors/other children/inappropriate touching -Inability to share
-"She/He pushed!"
-Excessive running
-Not listening
-Exploring away from class
-Touching or jumping on equipment

When the behavior is interrupting the lesson, hurting other children, unsafe or inappropriate the lesson must be stopped and the behavior must be discussed with the child. The teacher is primarily responsible for doing this, however as an assistant you can help make class be as efficient as possible by staying near the child that frequently becomes off task and helping them direct their focus/guide them/ encourage them, etc. In these early ages of child development, the social training is just as important as the dance/tumbling training the child is receiving.

In a perfect scenario all of our young students are participating in class, they are sharing, taking turns, following instructions and on task. Of course sometimes that doesn't happen though. Now that we know children are developing socially and emotionally as well as physically when they come into our dance studio we need to think about when behaviors should be tolerated (such as exploring, being off task) and when they should be stopped immediately.

Behaviors that should ALWAYS be stopped immediately:

-Anything that is unsafe or dangerous for the dancer/gymnast or anyone near the dancer/gymnast
-Anything that is invading someone's personal space/comfort
-Anything that will damage studio property

If a young child has become off task and the behavior is not something critical such as the above, we need to evaluate how and if we should intervene or if we should allow the behavior. Sometimes we should allow the behavior, as it may be a natural occurrence for the age/social development of the child.

If it is determined that we should intervene, here are some basic strategies you can use:

-Make eye contact with the lead teacher and see if they indicate with a body signal that you should approach the dancer and try and bring them back on task. The teacher may or may not use their voice to do this as verbal (speaking) attention to the off task behavior may reinforce the off task behavior and other children may also start becoming off task. As the assistant teacher position yourself near the off task child and see if “proximity control” (you being close to the student) fixes the off task behavior.
-Use the child’s name to collect their attention to bring them back into focus.
-Lower your body position to be in eye contact (same height) as the child.
-Use positive encouragement, ie “wow, this looks like a lot of fun, shall we do it together?” -Ask the student to demonstrate (children like to perform) ie, “can you show me?”
-Encourage and reinforce students who are on task, ie “wow, Suzie, such good listening, it looks like you are ready to start the next activity.”

It is important for assistants to discuss with their lead teacher which behaviors the lead teacher would like them to stop and which behaviors the assistant should allow. In addition the assistant should discuss with the teacher how they can be most beneficial helping. As well what limitations there might be if any, the assistant should not overstep the teacher.

6 | Injury Protocol

Minor Injury Protocol

1. Assess injury immediately
2. Ask questions per student Injury
 *Are you okay?
 *Where does it hurt?
 *Do you need Ice?
 *Do you want us to call your parent?
 3. Student rests for remainder of class or until they are ready to participate
 Please note in report)
 4. Lead Instructors will fill out an Injury Report and File with Student Record

Major Injury Protocol

1. Assess Injury immediately & keep injured area sustained and still
2. Ask questions per student Injury
 *Are you okay?
 *Where does it hurt?
 *Do you think anything is broken or torn?
3. Keep Student Calm
4. Lead Instructor will call Parent immediately to pick up of child for further medical assistance
5. Lead Instructor will Fill out Injury Report and File with Student Record

Major Injury Ambulance Protocol

In the case that an ambulance is needed please do the following

Dial 911 for assistance in transport of a student in need of immediate medical attention

Macungie Ambulance Corps | 610-966-2601

All medical supplies including bandaids, ice, etc are located in our medical tote in the entry way of Studio A.

7 | Sick/Absences

We understand that sometimes unavoidable emergencies or illness can occur at the last minute.

Social media is not an acceptable way to inform of your absence so ensure you email or call us as soon as you know that you will not be coming to class.

It is the responsibility of the assistant to arrange a qualified substitute teacher and provide them with adequate handover including Schedule and duties for your class.

If you have any upcoming obligations or events that will mean you are unable to assist for one or more classes, please let the studio know at least 2 weeks ahead of time and ensure you have organized a substitute assitant in advance.