



## What is Creative Dance?

**Creative movement or dance is a systematic and thoughtful curriculum that involves the guided exploration of concepts, the building blocks of movement, as well as structured improvisation.**

A class might be described as facilitated rather than taught because the class leader is providing opportunities for children to discover and experiment with dance skills which are the 'primary colors' of ballet and dance technique: concepts like tempo, movement quality, spatial organization or relationships, and emotion.

Creative dancers use their imaginations, creativity, and self-expression. They learn good listening skills, proper classroom etiquette, and how to move safely with other children, as well as learning respect and tolerance for others. They learn and practice basic motor skills and use a variety of music and props that enhance self-awareness, control and coordination.

Classes are structured to instill a sense of predictability as well as a safe place for the younger child to learn cooperation, increase self-esteem, and attain a sense of accomplishment through skill mastery.



## Age-Appropriate Learning

**When done right, creative dance is exactly like playing.**

From the time we are babies we decipher our world through investigation. We explore shapes, sizes, textures, patterns, and other foundations of higher level thinking, through play. It is the best way for your preschooler to learn.

Early childhood educators encourage preschool and kindergarten programs that are designed for the mind of a young child because it has been found that most children under 7 or 8 are not ready to be taught focused subjects while sitting behind a desk for long periods.

Dance is no different. To benefit from the intense focus and concentration of a ballet class, which is very structured and contains extended periods at the barre, it requires a physical and mental maturity not available to many younger children.

Creative dance is perfectly suited to offer preparation of the mind and body for a younger student, gradually helping them to learn self-control and increasing their ability to focus. This prepares them for the rigors of technique class, just as preschool readies students for reading and math.



## *Creative Dance For Children and Beyond*

An Introduction for Parents  
by Nichelle Strzepiek ~ [DanceAdvantage.net](http://DanceAdvantage.net)



## How Does Pre-Ballet Compare?

Traditionally, pre-ballet is a class that introduces dancers of about 6 to 9 years of age to the ballet class format (barre, centre, traveling), movements, and techniques (including turnout). It prepares these young students for more intense and detailed ballet instruction.

“Pre-ballet” taught to children younger than 5 or 6 combines a large helping of creative dance (or something else) with very basic ballet instruction like feet and arm positions. Children of this age do not have the muscular control to safely perform most ballet movements.

Dance institutions often mislabel pre-ballet and creative dance classes, offering a class that has little to do with either discipline. While these movement experiences are not without value - participants *do* learn classroom etiquette, following directions, and other skills - they may offer little meaningful preparation for dance technique or for expressing oneself through movement.

**Quality early dance education thoughtfully prepares children for a future in dance and other physical activities.**

## Experienced Teachers

While dance for young children should certainly be playful and fun, any program for this age group should be taught by teachers with experience and be specifically designed to match the needs of dancers who are in crucial stages of brain and motor development.

Most children would prefer not to stand in a line practicing the same movements over and over. They enjoy exploration and the freedom to make choices; to discover rather than mimic.

Required to guide a child through this discovery process is a knowledgeable and specially trained instructor.

## Just for Kids?

**The concepts of creative dance are appropriate for any age or level of dancer and will enrich the education of dancers no matter what style or technique they study.**

Through creative dance, movers young and old are introduced to the basic elements of dance, including proper alignment, patterns, tempo, levels, rhythm, and spatial awareness.

**The skills developed in creative dance are essential in life and in dance, making them a beneficial, if not vital, portion of any dance curriculum for ALL age groups.**

Activities frequently offer problem-solving opportunities that increase in intricacy as the student grows and develops. The dancer is given multiple options about how, what and where he/she will dance. Students use these decision-making skills in improvisation and to create short or long pieces of choreography.

Improvisation encourages the dancer to think on their feet, react to others, and expand their movement vocabulary.

Choreography requires the ability to remember and predict a sequence or pattern of movements (skills essential to understanding mathematics, science and reading).

Performances, both informal and formal, help the dancer become more comfortable in front of large groups.

In creative dance, students learn to appreciate their own individuality. As they observe and participate in class they witness that every dance and every dancer is special and unique, which builds confidence and self-esteem.

Dancers also learn to work independently and in a group, and discover that perseverance and dedication lead to success.

## Further Reading

### **The Dance of Independence**

How parents can help little ones, new to dance, prepare and adjust in their class so that both parent and child can learn to enjoy this dance of independence.

[danceadvantage.net/dance-of-independence](http://danceadvantage.net/dance-of-independence)

### **Help! My Child Doesn't Listen to the Dance Teacher**

Get strategies and tips for what to do when your child won't follow directions or is disruptive in dance class in this two-part article.

[danceadvantage.net/child-doesnt-listen](http://danceadvantage.net/child-doesnt-listen)

### **Helping Your Preschooler Become Body Aware**

Ways you can move with your child to increase body awareness, advance motor skills, and have fun, too.

[danceadvantage.net/preschool-body-awareness](http://danceadvantage.net/preschool-body-awareness)

### **Choosing a Dance Program for my Preschool-Aged Son**

Why creative dance is great for boys and what to look for and look out for when searching for his classes.

[mysoncandance.net/choosing-a-dance-program](http://mysoncandance.net/choosing-a-dance-program)

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