

Dorset County Dance Festival 2026 3: Rules of the Competition



Teachers and organisations must read and agree to the rules of the festival prior to entering any routines. This must also be made accessible to families and parents of the entrants.

New/Important rules are highlighted

Entries and Eligibility

1. This competition is for amateurs and students who do not derive the main part of their income from the teaching or performance of dance and theatre. This competition is not open to practicing dance teachers or individuals who hold a teaching qualification.
2. DCDF cannot accept entries from students who attend full time vocational training.
3. The age of competitors is taken as on 31st August 2025. Accuracy in birth dates is essential, incorrect age may lead to disqualification and, in cases of doubt, a form of ID may need to be produced.
4. The age of the eldest competitor in a duet/trio/quartet/group determines the class entered.
5. No competitor in a solo section may dance in a higher age category.
6. Entry fees are non-refundable unless the festival is cancelled by the DCDF crew in the event of unavoidable circumstances, at which point a percentage shall be refunded. In any other circumstance entry fees are completely non-refundable or transferable.
7. Late entries cannot be accepted.
8. For our first qualifying year, DCDF 2026 will limit total entries to 600, with a maximum of 100 per school. Priority entries will go to schools who have previously participated with us in 2025.
9. Please may we ask that schools and their families enter the festival with respectful consideration. Whilst we understand that some circumstances such as illness and injury are unavoidable, last minute withdrawals can affect the festival financially due to the loss of ticket sales, therefore please do think carefully about your entries. Furthermore, as we have a cap on entries to be as fair and inclusive as possible, by entering you will be taking up a space which other performers will be missing out on. We politely ask that performers do not take up a space at Dorset County Dance Festival if they already have prior commitments or intentions such as entry to another competition. Performers or schools who withdraw from many categories without reason may risk being unable to enter in following years. Thank you for your understanding.
10. The festival crew reserves the right to refuse entries without assigning a reason.
11. Pointe work is not permitted for competitors under 13 years of age.
12. Acrobatic, gymnastic, hip hop and street dance are acceptable only when combined with a strong dance technique. Contortion is not permitted.
13. A minimum of 5 and maximum of 16 dancers constitutes a group.
14. Competitors may not enter more than once in any solo category, twice for any duet, trio or quartet category, and only 3 times for group categories. Please note for AED, performers can only dance once in any duet, trio or quartet category however as we have Classical categories & Modern categories combined we have allowed 2.
15. All types of ballet, including classical, modern or stylised ballet must be danced in the ballet section. Contemporary and barefoot modern ballet must be entered in the contemporary section.
16. SUBSTITUTION- solo dancers may not be substituted, however in the event of the unavoidable absence of a partner, 1 substitute will be allowed in a duet, trio or quartet and 4 in a group. Any substitutions must be made aware to the festival crew at the sign in time for that specific class or earlier, however as certificates are pre-written we cannot guarantee we will be able to make name changes on these so close to the competition.
17. The festival crew may combine sections or classes when entries are small, divide a class when entries are large, and have the power to alter any other regulations or interpret or qualify any of these rules as the occasion may arise.

18. Competitors must dance in the correct programme order and report to the festival crew at their allocated time: absentees will risk disqualification.
19. NOVICE SOLOS- DCDF Novice sections are for dancers who has not received 1st place in that specific genre at this is any other dance festivals/competitions. e.g If you have previously placed 1st in a tap solo you must go into the open tap section, however if you've not placed 1st for ballet a solo, you will still be allowed to enter novice for that genre. Dancers may not enter novice and open sections for the same genre.
20. INTERPRETIVE SOLOS (improvisation)- open to all ages. The adjudicator will play their chosen music to the whole class first, then in order each performer will showcase their interpretation. For this section, dancers are not expected to wear a full costume, we recommend a simple costume such as a leotard and shorts (audition style attire) which may fit for all modern genres the examiner may choose.
21. CHOREOGRAPHY - Open to students 11yrs+ (date taken on 1st September 2024), may be a solo, duet, trio, quartet or group of any genre, however must have only been choreographed by the student. Students entering this category will be given printable pages for their 'choreography' journal to show the journey of this routine. This will need to be handed in (physical copy) when you sign in for the day to be given to the adjudicator. The adjudicator will use the journals alongside the performance to give their comments and marking.

Music

22. Music must be submitted at least a month before the festival via Play&Perform, including the competitor(s) name, category code, and title for character with any synopsis. Details regarding this will be emailed to teachers once entries have closed.
23. A backup of the music must be brought on a compatible device on the day. We do not have a CD player so this will need to be on a phone/tablet.
24. The festival crew are not responsible for the time limits and volume of the track. We have a trained music operator organising music who will set the volume for the duration of the track, if you require changes in the volume during the piece of music, this will need to be pre-edited.
25. The sound quality and any editing will be taken into account for adjudication.
26. Time limits for dances must not be exceeded. Times will be checked by the track length so please keep this in mind if any tracks have silence at the start or end. The DCDF crew can only accept tracks which are within the time limits stated on the syllabus. We will email organisations to flag any tracks which are over the limit, these then must be re-uploaded adhering to the limit. If tracks don't meet the requirements within our given time, the routine unfortunately will be included in the competition.
27. At the time of uploading your music files, for Narrative, Global Dance and Greek routines, a title of the dance and a short synopsis not exceeding 30 words must be submitted and will be announced by the music operator. Words over that amount may be edited to fit the limit. Spoken or recorded narratives after the synopsis announcement will be included within the time limit for the dance.
28. Pre-recorded tracks used in any Song & Dance performance must not including any singing or chanting.
29. Pre-recorded tracks used in any tap performance must not include any recorded tap or similar sound effects.
30. According to the British and International Federation of Festivals, Dorset County Dance Festival is not covered by the blanket copyright agreement in respect of music/songs from shows and that as a result, teachers/ performers need to obtain their own license for such items from Phonographic Performance Ltd. This relates to professional shows which are in current rehearsal or production worldwide. Teachers should ring the office, 07380 350080, with any queries on this matter.
31. DCDF does not accept liability for the infringement of copyright, recording or performing rights arising out of any competitor's accompaniment, choreography or performance. It contributes to a Group Licence to cover payment of fees for the use of recorded music at its events. Teachers and choreographers using music created from commercial recordings are advised that they are responsible for seeking permission to re-record from the recording companies concerned.
32. The Adjudicator will take into account the whole performance including the choice and interpretation of the accompaniment, the quality of recordings and suitability of recorded vocals.
33. Music with profanity is not allowed and tracks must be suitable for the style and age of the competitor.

Costume and Props

34. Small props are permitted, but any prop that needs assembling side of stage, and any glass or breakaway props will not be permitted. Scenery, sets and staging are not allowed.
35. The combined weight limit for props is 10kg, may we ask that all props are kept to a minimum.
36. The competitor is responsible for setting and removing all of their own props for the stage, please keep this in mind when creating your pieces, especially for younger ones. All props are to be brought to the stage at the start of the session for which they are required, and removed at the end of the session.
37. The use of strobe lighting, smoke, pyro and naked flame during any performance is not allowed.
38. All props must be rendered fire-resistant before arriving to the theatre. The use of talc and/or oil anywhere on the body compromises safety and is prohibited.
39. In all types of ballet, including classical, modern and stylised, ballet shoes must be worn.
40. There will be no changing facilities at the venue, please arrive as ready in costume as possible. Competitors with quick changes will be authorised by the festival crew to use a space backstage.
41. May we ask competitors to do their best to cover their costume when in the auditorium and in and around the venue as this will be a public event.
42. Fixed tap (single sound) only may be used for tap dancing.
43. Costumes must be appropriate for the competitors age and category.

Back and Side Stage Etiquette

44. Tabs will only be of use during group categories, and will be closed between each group performance.
45. The stage is not available for rehearsal at any time.
46. The stage wings are out of bounds to all except authorised persons and competitors about to perform.
47. Organisation representatives will only be allowed backstage for group dances where quick changes may be needed. A maximum of 2 per school will be allowed in this instance.
48. No devices will be allowed backstage.

Safeguarding

49. Parents and teachers are reminded that the safety of young people in their care is their responsibility during the festival.
50. By entering routines you are agreeing to all of DCDF's policies.
51. Bullying or any form of intimidating behaviour towards dancers, teachers or the festival crew will not be tolerated and may result in permanent exclusion from the festival. This includes both face to face and cyber bullying.
52. Only appointed representatives with the appropriate checks will be permitted in the prep space and backstage for group dances, DCDF passes for these persons must be worn at all times.
53. Teachers will be responsible for their own first aid provision.

Film and Photography

54. Photography, filming, video or tape recording, and the use of mobile phones during any performance is strictly prohibited. Failing to comply may result in needing to leave the auditorium as well as disqualification for performers.
55. By entering the competition, competitors agree to perform before the cameras of which material may be used for publicity and promotion by DCDF and its sponsors. Any individuals who need consideration in this area due to a safeguarding scenario should be made aware to the DCDF crew prior to the event by email.
56. DCDF will aim to have professional photographers and videographers for the duration of the festival to capture all routines. The website password will be made public during the festival dates. Please note this service is organised and arranged by a separate entity to DCDF.

Adjudication and Reports

57. The adjudicators' decision is final and no discussion or correspondence concerning such decision may ensue.
58. The adjudicator reserves the right to not award any place when, in their opinion, the standard of dance is insufficient, or to individuals who infringe these rules.
59. Communication with the adjudicator concerning any matters relating to the competition by competitors, teachers or other interested parties prior to or during the competition is strictly prohibited.

60. Dancers will not be permitted to re-dance except in the under 7's sections or unless a technical issue occurs- both will be at the discretion of the adjudicator. Submitting incorrect music does not constitute a technical issue.
61. All trophies must be signed for at the point of collection. Any damage to trophies needs to be reported and families/schools/organisations will be responsible for the cost of any replacements or repairs.
62. Certificates are to be collected by your appointed representatives only. Any which aren't collected will be posted to the schools address after the festival which will incur a small postage fee.
63. Reports are all digital, they will be uploaded to a Dropbox folder specific to your school/organisation. Once they have been uploaded to your specific folder, the school is responsible for making these available for their performers. Folders will not be organised by performer, ALL reports will go into the same folder and from there, teachers are welcome to organise and distribute as they please.

General Festival Info

64. No food or drink is allowed in the auditorium.
65. The festival may run up to 30 minutes early, and can not be held responsible if performers miss their class.
66. Public access into the auditorium is by the main door only, where valid tickets/wristbands must be shown.
67. The festival crew cannot accept any responsibility for property left at the venue during the festival.
68. The auditorium doors will only open at the start of a category and AFTER adjudication. Once the first competitor for a category has begun, the auditorium doors will be closed for the duration of that category until adjudication (unless stated in the programme). After adjudication, we will allow a short pause allowing audience members to vacate or enter the auditorium for the following category.
69. We recommend all performers arriving at the venue at least 45 minutes before their scheduled performance time, and must sign in at our 'Registration Zone' at least 30 minutes before.
70. Performers will need to be by the 'Stage Door Sign In' just before adjudication for the class prior to theirs.

With very best wishes from all of the DCDF crew.