

Online Safety for Young Dancers

A Guide for Dance Teachers to Share with Students

Dance and Social Media

Dance is a huge part of many young people's lives. Watching performances, learning choreography, following professional dancers and sharing achievements online can be inspiring, educational and enjoyable.

However, the online world also carries risks. Young dancers should be reminded regularly that staying safe online is just as important as staying safe in the studio. Here is information that can be shared with young dancers.

Think Before You Share

Photos and videos can feel like a great way to celebrate your progress or attract positive attention. While sharing dance content can be enjoyable, it is important to remember that:

- Once an image or video is shared online, you may lose control over where it goes.
- Images and videos can be copied, downloaded, edited or altered without your knowledge or permission.
- Content may be shared with people you never intended to see it.
- Images can sometimes be used in inappropriate, upsetting or harmful ways.

Even if something is deleted, copies may still exist elsewhere online.

Before posting, ask yourself:

- Would I be happy for anyone to see this?
- Do I know exactly who will be able to access it?
- Am I comfortable with this image remaining online?

Be Careful Who You Connect With

Not everyone online is who they say they are.

Young dancers should:

- Only accept friend or follow requests from people they know personally.
- Remember that someone being involved in dance, appearing successful, or having lots of followers does not mean they are trustworthy.
- Avoid private conversations with people they do not know in real life.
- Never feel pressured to continue communicating with someone simply because they work in the dance industry.

Knowing someone through the wider dance community is not the same as knowing them personally.

Video Calls and Private Communication

Young dancers should never:

- Accept video calls from someone they do not know personally.
- Take private calls with individuals simply because they claim to work in dance or appear well known.
- Feel pressured into showing themselves, dancing, changing clothes, or doing anything that makes them uncomfortable.

It is always okay to say no, end a conversation, or block someone.

Trust Your Instincts

If someone online:

- Asks you to keep conversations secret.
- Requests photos or videos.
- Makes you feel uncomfortable.
- Pressures you to do something.
- Behaves in a way that feels inappropriate or unsafe.

Stop communicating with them immediately.

Tell a trusted adult as soon as possible.

Speak Up

If something doesn't feel right, tell:

- A parent or carer.
- Your dance teacher.
- Another trusted adult.

Speaking up early helps keep you and others safe.

You will never be in trouble for asking for help if someone else's behaviour has made you feel uncomfortable or unsafe.

A Reminder for Dance Teachers

Dance teachers play an important role in promoting online safety and safeguarding.

Teachers are encouraged to:

- Regularly remind students about safe online behaviour.
- Reinforce that social media can be positive but also carries risks.
- Encourage students to speak up if they have concerns.
- Follow their organisation's safeguarding procedures whenever they become aware of a concern or disclosure.
- Report safeguarding concerns promptly in line with their safeguarding responsibilities and local procedures.

Regular conversations about online safety can help young dancers enjoy the benefits of the online dance community while reducing the risks.

Remember: Staying safe online is every bit as important as staying safe in the dance studio.