



How To Accept An Award

What DanceMom.com believes every competition dancer should be taught.

We've all seen the kid – usually an older teen – who saunters across the stage in slow motion during dance competition awards, expecting the crowd to part like the Red Sea did for Moses, all the time displaying a “this is my 9th Platinum award; why can't they just mail this to me” scowl, not stopping long enough to acknowledge the presenter, taking the first step back toward her throne before the award is even in hand, and carrying the trophy at her side with the same disregard as if it were something just picked up from behind the family dog.

Dance studios spend hour after hour, week after week, month after month teaching and rehearsing dance technique and choreography in order to win at dance competitions. As far as we can tell, however, they spend very little time teaching their students how to accept the awards they've worked so hard to earn. DanceMom.com suggests that studios hold a refresher course at least once a year (perhaps at the rehearsal before the first competition of the season) to teach dancers how to accept awards, and we offer these pointers.

- **Know who is going to accept a group award.** Everyone loves to accept the quadruple elite platinum trophy with diamond sprinkles on top, but many dancers are slow to budge for those high silver awards, It's awkward as you sit pointing at each other, silently deciding who will make the walk of shame. Studios should have a designated captain for each group dance who is responsible for accepting the award, whatever the verdict.
- **Go to the award.** We know there are hundreds of other dancers on the stage with you and it's crowded, but simply standing, extending your arm and expecting the award presenter to bring the award to you is wrong. They are presenting you with an award for Heaven's sake. Care enough to go get it.
- **Look at the presenter.** While it's challenging to avoid tripping over the other dancers on stage, and you often need to look down as you are walking, at the point when you've stopped moving forward because you've gotten as close as you can get or need to get to the award presenter, look up and make eye contact with the presenter. Whether the presenter is the master of ceremonies or simply a stage hand, they deserve the respect of your acknowledgement.
- **Smile.** Once again, this is the payoff for all that work you did at the studio. Now the work is done, the dance has been performed and you've just been told that a group of people whose job it is to critique you actually liked what you did and think you should have an award. Be happy. Smile!
- **Accept the award with your left hand.** Okay, this one is old school, but you'll just have to trust us. If the award presenter's parents taught them good manners, they will hand you the award with their left hand while shaking hands with you with the right hand. Sadly, this custom has faded with time, but we still like it. Play it safe and keep your right hand free for the possibility of the handshake by accepting the award with the left. Better yet, *you* can initiate the hand shake. If your studio is taught to do this, we guarantee that teachers, parents, judges and competition organizers will take note of your studio's manners and sportsmanship. If being known as a polite studio isn't a priority where you dance, you're at the wrong studio.

- **Say “Thank you.”** Your mother already taught you this one. When you are given something, you say “thank you.” When your parents give you the big present you hoped you’d get for your birthday you say “thank you.” When your snotty brother passes you the mashed potatoes at dinner you say “thank you.” When your great aunt gives you the tattered sweater she wore to school in the 50’s, you say “thank you.” Gift = “thank you.” It doesn’t get any more basic than that. And, by the way, when accepting an award it’s “thank you” not “thanks.”
- **Be prepared to speak.** If you are fortunate enough to win one of the competition’s major awards, some competition hosts may briefly interview you. Be ready to state your name, your studio and your teacher’s name. Do it slowly and clearly, and feel free to throw in a little genuine emotion. Maybe wave to the audience and thank your mom. You’re a winner, so enjoy your moment!

A Few More Reasons To Care

Some who just finished reading our guidelines no doubt rolled their eyes and laughed them off as old fashioned, impractical or undoable. Really? Before you give up on manners and common courtesy, consider the following reasons why this stuff might actually be in your dancer’s best interest.

- **Practicing accepting awards = visualizing winning.** Ever notice how some athlete stare off into space prior to an event? They’re not disengaged. In fact, they’re very engaged because they are visualizing their perfect performance. Visualizing can be a powerful method of preparing for athletics, because it makes the perfect performance familiar to the athlete rather than something that has never been experienced before. By practicing how to accept an award, dancers condition themselves to believe that they can and will win.
- **People notice manners, and judges are people.** Studios go to great lengths to give their dancers every possible competitive advantage. In addition to teaching technique and choreography, they design special makeup applications, adorn costumes with hundreds of rhinestones and teach dancers when to wink and flirt with judges while performing. Studios also encourage or require dancers to wear garb displaying the studio name on stage during awards ceremonies. But why do that if they’re not also going to require them to be on their best behavior during that time? How students present themselves during awards gets noticed, and consciously or subconsciously, judges who are often present during those presentations can’t help but notice students and studios who comport themselves appropriately and those who do not. Does that get reflected in scores? We can’t say for sure. But if you think wearing false eyelashes makes a difference, chances are that manners are at least that important.
- **The backlash in your child’s future.** Much has been written recently about how the generation currently entering the workforce is having difficulty assimilating to the competitive work place. These twenty-somethings were raised on little league baseball where scores weren’t kept so that everyone could win, and soccer without goalies because protecting the net is just too much pressure for one child. Now in the workforce, they expect the accolades to continue with bonuses simply for showing up and instant rewards without the risk of failure. Guess what. It ain’t happening. We’re all in favor of building self esteem, but we’re equally supportive of giving our children realistic expectations of the world. To that end, it’s the responsibility of parents, teachers and coaches to help their child(ren) understand what competition is all about, and graciously accepting results (positive or negative) is one of the most important lessons of all.