

# Hogan School of Irish Dance

## Information Sheet for Parents



### Shoes

There are two types of Irish Dancing shoes: soft shoes & hard shoes. The soft shoe has a soft leather bottom and long laces that tie up over the ankle and arch of the foot. This is the shoe that beginners start in. (Beginners may wear simple black ballet slippers or sneakers for the first month until their soft shoes arrive.) Once a dancer has progressed and learned a number of soft shoe dances, they will be ready for the hard shoe, which has a fiberglass tip and heel and smaller laces. There are many soft and hard shoes manufacturers, but there are really only two types that I would personally recommend: Rutherford (good soft and hard shoes—I would never buy any other kind of hard shoe) or Antonio Pacelli (I love their soft shoes). Really, the best way to get the right size is to try the shoe on in person, which you can do at competitions, where vendors sell them. But for now, you will have to measure the size of your child's foot and order the shoe via phone or internet, which will work just fine. The soft shoes usually run about \$40-\$50 a pair, the hard shoes \$130-\$150. Listed below are two websites where you can find shoes:

[www.rutherfordshoes.com](http://www.rutherfordshoes.com)

[www.antoniopacelli.com](http://www.antoniopacelli.com)

P.S. Don't let them trick you into buying any fancy stuff—you don't need anything fancy—just a regular pair of soft shoes.

### Dress

For competition, appropriate attire is required. In the beginning, girls wear either a simple school jumper or a dance "school" dress (i.e. the team dress that all the girls in the dance school wear) and matching bloomers. Boys wear either black pants (which I prefer on my boy dancers) or a kilt, and a black long sleeve dress shirt and tie, and if they opt, a vest over the shirt, but this is not necessary. If wearing black pants, boys should wear black socks. Most importantly, dancers should look neat, tidy, clean, and kempt.

For girls, there is the issue of how to wear their hair. Again, the idea is that you want the child to look neat and tidy. There are a couple of options. You may put the child's hair in a nice bun or ponytail—you can make this a little more fun with some ribbons that match the dress tied around the bun. You may leave the child's hair down (as long as it is neat-looking/brushed) and have her wear a matching headband or one with ribbons tied around it, etc. You may curl the child's hair the night before and have her wear it down with a headband. The final option is a bun wig (sometimes called a "wiglet"). I do not allow my dancers to wear long, curly wigs.

Also for the girls is the issue of makeup. Girls 10 and under are not allowed to wear makeup. For dancers over age 10, please show discretion in application of tasteful makeup.

For performances, we have a standard black leotard with black/gold skirt that the dancers often wear. Frequently the girls will also dance in their school dresses. If a beginner dancers are given a cameo appearance in a performance, Allison will let them know beforehand so that they can acquire the appropriate costume.

## Feiseanna

An Irish dancing competition is called a “fesh” (pronounced fesh). They are day-long events where dancers compete in their different dances according to age and skill level. They can be a lot of fun and helpful to the dancers in that it often motivates them to practice and improve their dancing—they may compete in solo competitions or group competitions (special dances in which they dance with partners from class). Age levels often go by the year, and age is determined by the child’s age as of January 1<sup>st</sup> of the present year (age level examples: under 5, under 6, under 7, etc.). Skill level is determined by how long you’ve been competing and how well you have done at previous competitions. The first level is beginner—children compete at this level for a full year, regardless of how many first places they win. The next level is advanced beginner. At this stage, if a child wins two first places (in each dance—so, at two different feises they would have to win first) against at least 5 competitors, they are eligible to move up to the next level—novice. And this same rule applies at all levels—novice, prizewinner, and preliminary championship. As you read in the class rule sheet, there are national standards for moving up, but mine are a stricter, as it ensures that the child truly is ready to move up and will stand a chance to compete with the dancers at the next level.

No one has to compete if they don’t want to! Some children are perfectly happy attending classes and dancing in shows, and don’t like the stresses and pressures of competition—we acknowledge and support this viewpoint at our dance school.

## Feis Registration

Information on feiseanna is available on the website: [www.hogandance.com](http://www.hogandance.com), click on the word “Feiseanna”.