



District Irish Dance Academy is fully accredited and registered with An Coimisiún le Rincí Gaelacha (CLRG) based in Dublin Ireland. District Irish Dance Academy is part of the US Southern Region. The information in this document offers a summary of Competitions Rules and guidelines that pertain to students of the District Irish Dance Academy (DIDA). Dancers (and their families) are encouraged to carefully read the syllabus of any feis in which they plan to enter.

Learn more about the organization and the region at  
[www.clrg.ie](http://www.clrg.ie)  
[www.idtana.org](http://www.idtana.org)  
[www.southernregionirishdance.org](http://www.southernregionirishdance.org)

## **AGE BRACKETS AND LEVELS**

Competitions are categorized by level and age. A dancers age category is determined by their age on January 1. For example, a dancer who will turn 8 during this calendar year was 7-years-old on January 1, therefore that dancer qualifies to compete in the "Under 8" (U8) competitions for the entire calendar year. (For the purposes of this rule a competitor whose birthday occurs on January 1 shall be deemed to be under the age attained on that date.)

## **BEGINNER GRADE**

A Beginner is a competitor who has not yet taken a full year of Irish dance lessons, thereby giving beginners a full year with such status. Because the "feis year" (Jan-Dec) is different than the "school year" (Sept-June), dancers who began lessons in September may keep Beginner status until December of their second year of lessons. *A Beginner must move into the Beginner 2/Advanced Beginner category the next year.*

## **ADVANCED BEGINNER GRADE**

An Advanced Beginner is a competitor who has completed a year in Beginner or started competing after finishing a full year of Irish Dance lessons. Beginner and Advanced Beginner hard shoe tempo is always "fast" or traditional speed. *An Advanced Beginner who wins 1st, 2nd or 3rd place will advance to the Novice level in that particular dance the next calendar year.*

## **NOVICE GRADE**

A Novice is a competitor who has moved beyond the Beginner skills and is ready to perform more difficult steps in competition. For hard shoe dances (treble jig and hornpipe), Novice competitors are offered a choice of music tempo: "slow", also known as Oireachtas speed, or "fast", also known as traditional speed, based on teacher discretion. *A novice who wins a 1st place will advance to the Prizewinner category in that particular dance. Novice dancers must place 1st in all 4 dances (reel, slip jig, hornpipe and treble jig) to be considered a Prizewinner dancer.*

## **PRIZEWINNER GRADE**

Prizewinner is the final grade level. A dancer remains at Prizewinner Grade until qualified for Preliminary Championship. *Prizewinner dancers must place 1st in all competitions with 5 or more dancers (reel, slip jig, hornpipe and slip jig) at least twice each before advancing to Preliminary Champion.*

**PRIZEWINNER ADVANCEMENT TO PRELIM:** *A dancer remains at Prizewinner Grade until qualified for Preliminary Championship; dancers do not "move up particular dances", as is the case in the previous Grade levels. Class changes will be made at instructor discretion and will happen at appropriate times throughout the year to ensure a smooth transition.*

## **WHAT IS CHAMPIONSHIP LEVEL COMPETITION AT A FEIS?**

Championship competitors will perform a minimum of two rounds of competition: one soft shoe round and one hard shoe round. Instead of the 2 steps performed for each dance at Grade levels, Championship competitors will perform either 3 reel steps or 2.5 slip jig steps for the soft shoe round (boys/men must perform reel for this round); and either 3 treble jig steps or 2.5 hornpipe steps, and/or a set dance for the hard shoe round. Entrants in any Championship event may not enter in any other regular grade solo events, but may enter in Figure Dances and/or special competitions for which they are eligible per the syllabus (e.g. traditional set, treble reel, non-traditional set dance). Championship events require at least three adjudicators. Scoring for championship events is based on the Irish Point system. Prizes are awarded in proportion to the number of entries.

## **PRELIMINARY CHAMPIONSHIP**

In accordance with DIDA rules, this event is open to a competitor who has placed 1st in their four competitions at the Prizewinner level OR earned a recall at Oireachtas (if permitted to compete at Oireachtas by teacher discretion) before competing in a Preliminary Championship. Competitors are typically required to perform a soft shoe dance (reel or slip jig) and a hard shoe dance (treble jig or hornpipe). *A dancer who wins two 1st place Preliminary Championship awards in one calendar year will move to*

*Open Championship the following year (as of January).* If the second 1st place win does not occur within the same feis year as the first win, as soon as the second win is achieved the dancer must move up to Open Championship level immediately. (In the case of back-to-back Feiseanna only, which occur on successive days, the 1st place win in the first feis will not require a change of the dancer's status for the second feis.)

## **OPEN CHAMPIONSHIP**

This is the highest level of competition. In accordance with CLRG and IDTANA-SR rules, a dancer must compete in Preliminary Championship in order to qualify for Open Championship, and must qualify via the method currently in place (i.e. two 1st place wins). An open championship event will include three rounds of dancing - hard shoe, soft shoe and set dance.

## **WHAT ARE MAJOR COMPETITIONS?**

The three common Majors are the Oireachtas (Regional Championships), the North American Championships, and the World Championships. Other majors competitors include the All Irelands, the All Scotlands, the Great Britains and the British Nationals, to name a few. Registration for majors is restricted to eligibility and sometimes geographical location. Only a TCRG (certified teacher) may register students for a Major. Each competitor represents his/her Irish dance school, and teachers are expected to present students of appropriate dancing caliber, regardless of a student's competition level.

**OIREACHTAS QUALIFICATION:** Oireachtas Trad Set is open to advanced level dancers who have mastered the St. Patrick's Day Traditional set dance. Eligibility for Oireachtas solos is Preliminary Championship level. **All dancers must consult with their teacher in order to determine which set dance they will compete**

*\*Adopted June 2025, effective January 2026. In order to compete in solo championships at the Southern Region Oireachtas, a dancer must compete in at least one regular feis in an upper-level category commensurate with their level (i.e., Prizewinner Grade, Preliminary Championship, Open Championship, or Adult category events) in the 365 days prior to entry submissions for the Southern Region Oireachtas. Teachers must attest at the time of entry that each soloist has met this requirement.*

To be eligible to compete at the North American Championships, dancers must be Open Champion level, or must have qualified at Oireachtas. Per CLRG and IDTANA-SR rules, placing in the Oireachtas or the Nationals does not change the status of a competitor at feiseanna. To be eligible to compete at the World Championships, dancers must compete at Oireachtas, regardless of their current competition status, and must qualify either at the Oireachtas or at Nationals.

**MAJORS REGISTRATION:** It is important that all dancer's info is correct for when we put in Majors registration (which is always put through by District Admin). Practice + admin fees will automatically be added to the registration total and posted to CB accounts. Dancers participating in Majors are expected to take their training seriously.

## **HOW DOES A DANCER PROGRESS THROUGH EACH COMPETITION LEVEL?**

Eligibility for each competition level is determined first by CLRG and IDTANA-SR rules, and second by teacher discretion. Important Note: Competition level does not necessarily coincide with Class level. Dancers compete representing their school, and teachers are expected to present students of appropriate dancing caliber for the given level. If a teacher determines that a student is unprepared for a certain level, that student may need to refrain from competing in events at that level even if he/she is eligible. The status of a dancer for Grade level competitions follows the eligibility for each Grade during the given calendar year.

According to CLRG and IDTANA-SR rules, the status of a dancer does not change unless there are five or more dancers in a competition. Therefore wins in events of less than five dancers will not count toward eligibility for the next Grade level. **(In the case of repeated wins in age groups which tend to have small competition groups, teacher discretion may determine that the student is ready to progress to the next level.)**

In general, DIDA students are encouraged to remain at the Grade level for which they are eligible for as long as possible. This helps a dancer to build confidence in competition. **More importantly, it also allows time for the student to prepare the more difficult steps and skills in class that will be needed for the next level of competition.** It is very common for dancers to have some of their dances at different Grades. If a DIDA student qualifies for the next Grade level and, per teacher discretion, is ready to perform the more difficult steps of the next Grade level, the student may be permitted to move that particular dance up before the end of the calendar year. Check with your teacher before registering for a higher grade event at the next feis.

## **WHAT COSTUMES ARE PERMITTED AT EACH GRADE LEVEL?**

At District Irish Dance, we strive to promote individuality and confidence in every dancer who steps foot in our studio. The "wigs and jigs" impression is a largely inflated, singular image of the Irish dance competitive circuit. We encourage both recreational and competitive tracks. **We promote the option of natural hair and**

**traditional, understated costuming, as well as an ongoing refocus on the quality of dancing and the art form itself.** We strive to ensure our school image is in keeping with tradition, and we want to make sure that families feel that their wallets are not overwhelmed by expensive costume elements.

Beginner skirts and class costumes are available to order throughout the year through Prime Dress Design.

## **WHAT'S THE HURRY?**

There isn't one!!! Competition should motivate students to practice with increased discipline and to continually improve their dancing technique and skills. First and foremost, dancers should enjoy dancing well. Hopefully, this will be rewarded with medals and trophies, but judging is subjective, competitions can be close, and results will vary. Success should not rely solely on competition results and awards. DIDA dancers (and parents!), PLEASE remember to keep it in perspective, and keep it fun! All DIDA dancers represent the District Irish Dance Academy and DIDA programs. Dancers are expected to be courteous of ALL competitors, and particularly supportive of dancers from their own school, even when competing against each other in solo dance competitions. Anything contrary to these basic principles of team spirit will not be tolerated, and in extreme cases may result in a dancer not being permitted to compete. Feiseanna are an opportunity for dancers to enjoy Irish Dancing in a unique way. The memories, life lessons learned, and friendships will last long after the dance shoes are hung up for the last time.