



### Feis Guidelines

The word “feis” is pronounced “fesh.” It is the Gaelic word for festival. Following are some tips for competitors and parents. Please take time to read these guidelines and prepare in advance. You should bring folding stools or chairs for you and your dancer and maybe a blanket to create your own space. There is always food sold at feisanna but bring some of your own snacks/drinks. Bring these guidelines with you for the big day.

### Adjudication at Feiseanna

Each dancer's performance in a solo event is evaluated by an adjudicator (a judge). The number of adjudicators will vary depending upon the level of competition. In the Beginner through Open categories, competitors dance before one judge. In the Preliminary and Championship levels, competitors dance before multiple judges, usually three. In the case of special dance-off or a regional championship event, there may be five judges.

In most dances, competitors dance two or three at a time, with the exception of the non-traditional set dance that is performed individually. (Traditional set dances such as St. Patrick's Day and the Blackbird are usually performed two to three at a time.) Depending upon the level of competition dancers will perform two to three "steps" for each dance (see below).

Category	Dance	#Steps
Beginner through Open	Reel, Light Jig, Slip Jig, Hornpipe, Treble Jig	2
Preliminary & Championship	Slip Jig, Hornpipe Reel, Treble Jig	2.5 3

The Irish Dancing Commission has established a 100-point scoring system for judging competitors. A dancer's performance is evaluated in four categories with an equal percentage of points in each of the categories (*i.e.*, 25%). The categories are timing (rhythm), carriage (deportment and style), construction of steps (complexity), and execution (presentation). In ceili or figure dancing, distribution of the 100 points is 30 points for timing, 30 points for figures, and 40 points for deportment and style.

At most feiseanna, after the judge has scored all the competitors in an event, the scoring sheets are collected, dancers' raw scores are ranked, and the first, second, and third place competitors are then listed on a posting board (sometimes 4th, 5th, *etc.*, as well). Dancers who have placed may then collect their medal/ribbon by showing their competitor number card at the awards desk. In group dance events, adjudicators will typically use one competitor number from the group. Again, this is how it works at most feiseanna. Each event is governed by their own policies on the number of awards they wish to distribute.

### **When should I arrive?**

See the appropriate feis website and corresponding syllabus (list of rules and instructions) for the feis start time. Beginners should plan to arrive early because all beginners dance first with figure (group) dancing. Beginners are defined as those dancers who have not been dancing with a registered teacher for more than a year. Even if a dancer decides not to compete in the first year, he/she is still an Advanced Beginner after the (roughly) first calendar year is up. More advanced solo competitions (Advanced Beginner, Novice, Open/Prizewinners, Preliminary, and Championship) start immediately after Beginners and Figures, usually with the youngest age groups first. They don't always announce stage assignments, or how many are in each competition prior to the event, so we really don't know when a dancer will compete. For first-time feis goers, we strongly recommend planning to arrive early and plan your morning with the following guidelines.

### **May I change into my costume when I get there?**

Obviously, there will be rest rooms to change in. However, they may be crowded with few places to hang hangers, *etc.* So, if you choose to change there, leave yourself enough time to deal with the dressing rooms.

### **What do I do when I get there?**

Parents and friends will have to pay a fee to get in, but competitors are exempt. Grab a program book when you pay. All of the dancers and their numbers and competitions are listed in this book, as well as the map of where to find each stage and what competitions are on what stages (stage assignments). At this point, you should seek out the registration desk. At the registration desk, you will pick up your child's number (written on an index card). He/she should fasten this somewhere on the front of their costume. Some feiseanna provide a hole punch and string to tie it around the child's waist to avoid sticking their costume with pins over-and-over again. Watch that you don't place the number such that it gets torn or wrinkled. When your child is finished dancing, you may need their number to pick up awards, so do not discard it until the results are posted.

Find a spot for you and your child while you locate your child's competition numbers on the "stage assignments" page in the program book or on a separate sheet. Depending on the size of the feis, there could be from 6–9 different stages throughout the facility sometimes in different rooms. Check the back of his/her competitor number card for the competitions and those are the stages you need to watch. Each stage has a large board listing all the competitions being held there and stage monitors will mark off completed competitions. The stages will also post the "Now" and "Next" competition. Note: The back of the number card will not list what type of dance it will be, so bring with you from home the list of dances (numbers and names of dances) your child entered. But if you forget—some feiseanna will have the syllabus on hand to check—the reel is always the lowest number, then jig, slip jig, treble jig and hornpipe. For instance, if your child's number card reads "50, 51, 52," the reel is 50, jig 51, and slip jig 52. Boys, however, do not dance the slip jig in competition.

## Who are the other dancers in my child's competitions?

There are dancers from other Irish dance schools from all over the southern region. Each school creates unique steps for its dancers, so the dance steps will not be the same.

## What happens when my child dances?

For each competition, the dancer should check in at their stage when their competition is marked as "Next." (Careful, boys competitions are sometimes very small and therefore quick.) Once at the stage, the "stage monitor" (the one with the clipboard) checks in your dancer and soon thereafter lines them up to walk on stage and dance. They line up on stage (about twelve at a time) and dance two steps, right and left foot, two dancers at a time. These steps are practiced in dance class. At the beginner level, either the adjudicator or stage monitor will tell the dancers when to start. At any level above beginners, dancers will required to start on their own.

Dancers are taught in class to start on their own at all levels, but sometimes nerves get the best of them. It is all part of the learning experience. Mistakes are welcome as sometimes recovering from these mistakes with grace offers more growth than a flawless performance.

## Where do I check whether my child has won?

There is an area where the results of all competitions are posted, the location of which is usually listed on a map found in the feis program book. By finding your child's competition number on the results board, you'll find the competitors who placed in that competition. If your child's number is not listed among the places awarded, reinforce the importance of the performance in front of a crowd and other positive features of the experience that day.

## If my child has won, where do I go?

To the "awards" desk area! The "awards" area can also be found on the map in your program book. Inform the volunteers at the awards desk of your competition number. Your dancer will show his/her number card as ID and sign for the award. And congratulations!

**Good luck and as always, good sportsmanship!**

## United States Regions

