

5 Key Traits of Good Sportsmanship



By: Jeanne Weller

You've probably heard that it's important to "be a good sport", but what does that actually look like?

While good sportsmanship primarily rests with the dancer, it is also a good reminder that the adults involved with a dancer's competitive journey should be mindful of the example they set regarding sportsmanship including inside the studio, at home, and during competitions.

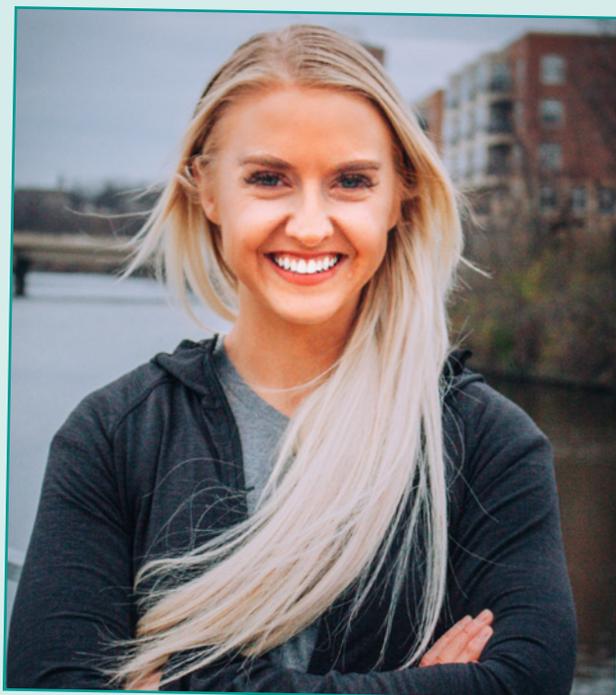
Part of a successful dance journey is developing key character traits that will help a dancer grow in every area of their life. These traits will ultimately help the dancer grow as a person and help them throughout their life, both on and off the competitive stage. Here are the five key character traits of good sportsmanship and why they are important!

I.) CHARACTER TRAIT #1: BEING HUMBLE

Have you ever talked with someone, and they end up spending a large portion of the conversation telling you about all the competitions they've won, things they've achieved, and how great they are? Chances are, if you've had this encounter, your eyes started to glaze over about one minute in. And you didn't really enjoy that interaction.

Of course, everyone likes winning, but part of being a good sport is staying humble. This means not walking around gloating and proclaiming how *amazing* you are and how you are so much better than everyone else. Staying humble is being grateful for your achievement, but also knowing that doing better than someone at a dance competition

Jeanne Weller fell in love with Irish dancing at the age of six and competed at the World level individually and with teams. Later, her passion turned to a focus on the fitness required for excellent dancing that many dancers miss in their dance training. She went on to pursue a bachelor's degree in Exercise and Fitness along with becoming certified in Personal Training and Group Exercise. Feis Fit initially designed



customised dancer training programmes as well as running Irish Dance boot camps in the USA. The programme's success helped many dancers achieve and exceed their competitive goals. Jeanne prides herself on helping dancers enjoy

the challenges of Irish dancing in a positive and supportive community. Feis Fit's successful programme is now globally recognised with offerings for customers online and in person.

does not mean that you are a better person than them, and knowing you always have room to improve yourself. Let your dancing speak for itself and remain in a constant state of growth. No matter how amazing a dancer you are, you still have more ways to learn and grow.

CHARACTER TRAIT #2: RESPECT

This is a big one as there are many people involved in your dancing that you should show respect to. And, when you are



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respectful, you show consideration and care for others. This is a key part of being a good person and showing good sportsmanship.

RESPECT FOR DANCE FRIENDS!

Everyone is at different levels and has different goals. Here is a common example among dance friends when it comes to respect: Let's say you really wanted to get in the top 10 at the Oireachtas. You've always gotten in the top 10 and you expect to do it again. Meanwhile your friend has never recalled and is just hoping to make the recall this year. You end up getting 25th place. You feel devastated and terribly disappointed with this result. Later, you run into your friend who asks how you did, and you respond by saying "terrible" and then add another comment saying 25th place is awful, and your hard work was for nothing, etc. Can you guess how your friend felt when you said 25th place was terrible? Probably not good. Remember, it is OK to be disappointed and to talk about your feelings but choose your words wisely with conscious consideration for who you are talking to.

respectful. Don't bad-mouth competitors or scoff if they place higher than you. That doesn't benefit you or them. Be kind and congratulate your competitors, then move on with your day. After all, your competitors play a big role in pushing you to become better, so that is something deserving of respect.

RESPECT FOR YOUR TEACHERS

Your teachers put a TON of work into helping you prepare for competition day, and they want you to dance your absolute best in practice and at every competition. Easy ways to show respect to your teachers include:

- Listening to their input
- Thanking them for their help
- Avoiding talking badly about them or other members of your school
- Offering to help them in some small way, even if just running to get them a coffee or a lunch on competition day when you know they have little time for anything but coaching their dancers! Small gestures go a long way with letting your teacher know you respect and appreciate them.

RESPECT FOR YOUR COMPETITORS

You don't need to be best friends with every person in your competition, but it IS important to be

RESPECT FOR THE JUDGES

Sometimes you will totally agree with the judges' placements, other times you may not see how the judges decided what they did. We've all been there. No matter what the outcome, choose to respect the judge's decision. It's OK to have your own opinions and talk about them with those close to you, but at the end of the day it's the judge's job to make the final decision about the competition outcome, so respect their choices and take what you learn from each experience to focus on your own growth.

RESPECT FOR YOUR PARENTS

Your parents invest a LOT of time, money and effort to help you do what you love. Talking kindly and giving a simple "thank you" can go a long way.

CHARACTER TRAIT #3: POSITIVITY!

Positivity is contagious. When you are practising positivity, it doesn't mean you're 'happy' all of the time, rather you intentionally focus on using your current situation as an opportunity to grow, learn, and serve the world around you. Is it good to always be positive no matter what? Not necessarily! It's important that you're honest



with your own feelings, express yourself, and adjust in your life as needed. It's also important that you learn and look for the good in situations and people rather than simply seeking out the negative aspects of every part of your day. An example of having a positive mindset may look like asking your teacher what you can improve after a disappointing competition, so you make a plan to improve those areas. You can still be disappointed *and* at the same you can use the competition as a learning experience. Also, remember after a rough dance class, that 'off' dance days are part of the process of improvement. You may not be 'happy' about it, but you still choose to grow from it.



CHARACTER TRAIT #4: SUPPORTIVE

Have you ever had one of those days where you don't do well at a feis, while your friend has the BEST day ever? You want so badly to be happy for them, but it's hard because you're feeling down and kind of envious? You're not alone. Here's the reality

"The better you get at learning from failures, the more successful you will become!"



of competing in Irish Dancing; there are going to be competitions where you do well, and others where your friends do well, while you don't do as well. It's all part of the game of Irish Dancing. Learning to be supportive of others even when you didn't do quite as well can be hard at first, but it's an important skill to develop. This is not only an important skill in dancing, but in life. In every relationship you have, whether it be school, work or elsewhere, there are going to be ups and downs. Sometimes it's your time to shine and other times it's someone else's. No matter how your results turn out, make it a point to be supportive of those around you.

CHARACTER TRAIT #5: RESILIENCE!

Part of being a good sport and a great athlete is knowing how to bounce back after defeat and having the ability to keep going despite setbacks. Experiencing failure and setbacks is part of the road to success. You may be coming back from an injury or struggling with a new dance move or perhaps not getting the results you want. The key is to learn from it and keep going. The better you get at learning from failures, the more successful you will become!

Alright friends, those are some of the key traits that make a good sport. And one last thing; remember that you can only control your own actions. You can't control what other people do or say, and whether they are practising good sportsmanship. But with that, being a good sport is often contagious and can create a ripple effect with the people around you. So do your part in practising good sportsmanship! **IDM**