



GHSA

Competitive Dance Guide

For coaches

2025-2026

GHSA State director: Penny Mitchell- penny@ghsa.net

GHSA State Dance Liaison- Colbie Wilson

State dance advisory committee: Kenzie Cash, Beth Chappellear, Melissa Darnell, Sean Freeman, Suzanne Muck, Brianna Smart, and Carmen Yarbrough



Dates and information

October 1 Deadline to register to host a dance competition.

Complete a sanctioned event application & contract found on GHSA MIS site (app.ghsa.net)

October 20 First day for practice

- Teams are allowed to attend camps after the last day of school-the first day of the new school year.
- Competition routines may not be practiced until Oct. 24.
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Oct. 31 Deadline to register for competitions

November 8 First day allowed to host/attend a competition

January 23 Deadline to submit a roster on the MIS site

January 31 Last day allowed to host/attend a competition

February 11 & 12 State finals @ Classic Center, Athens, GA

- Please refer to the GHSA website dance page for additional information. www.ghsa.net/dance
- Refer to the GHSA Constitution and By-Laws located at www.ghsa.net/constitution for eligibility, coaching, and all rules governing Competitive Dance.

The season & tournaments

Tournaments/competitions:

All competitions must run similarly to the state competition. Official GHSA judges must be hired for varsity and junior varsity teams.

Season:

- **The number** of regular season contests allowed (not including state):
 - 6 Varsity
 - 4 Junior Varsity
- Competitive Dance season ends after the state championship competition.

Camps/clinics:

- Camps nor clinics (choreography) may occur during the official season if they are taught by an outside coach. Outside coaching is not allowed during the official season.
- Coaches must be listed on your Athletic Roster for your school.

Tryouts and Practice:

- There are specific rules that govern tryouts and practice. Out of season practices may be held in preparation for tryouts only. Once tryouts are complete, no practices may be held until school is out. Practices for tryouts are limited to a maximum of 10 consecutive school days between the last day of the season until the last day of school.
- Schools may not bring in outside individuals to conduct their tryouts including national associations, dance instructors (unless he/she is a community coach), former students except seniors currently enrolled in their school. Contracting outside judges is allowed.

Team requirements:

- Team rosters should be submitted by the coach before January 23rd at www.app.ghsa.net. Log in information can be obtained by contacting the Athletic Director at your school.
- All varsity rosters must include students in grades 9-12 that are currently enrolled in the school they are representing.
- All athletes participating must have been declared eligible and cleared by the GHSA office.
- A team may have a roster consisting of up to 20 dancers, but must have at least 7 dancers to make a team eligible for state competition. Falling below this number will constitute a 5-point deduction per dancer.
- Teams may choose to perform dance routines in up to 2 of the following categories: Jazz, Hip Hop, High Kick, and Pom.
- If a team competes 2 routines, half the team +1 must compete in both routines.

- The length of a routine shall be a minimum of 1 minute and 40 seconds and a maximum of two minutes. Going below or over this time will result in a 5-point deduction per 15 seconds.
- Teams can be coed or all girl.
- Props are not allowed. Poms are the only props that will be allowed for dance.

Team Scheduling & Personnel

- Each school will select the tournaments (competitions) they wish to enter by selecting them on the Sanctioned Events page on the GHSA website. <https://www.ghsa.net/sanctioned-events>
- Go to the contracts page, complete the form, print and send it and the entry fee to the host school before October 31st.
- Varsity teams may compete in 6 regular season competitions.
- Junior varsity teams may compete in 4 regular season competitions.
- No team member may compete in more than a total of 6 competitions.
- A team may not be involved in an exhibition during the season.
- All teams must compete in a minimum of 3 competitions to be eligible for the state championship.
- To qualify for state, a team's selected routine must be scored at a minimum of three times.

Coaches:

- Coaches are responsible for explaining GHSA procedures, guidelines, and sportsmanship to all athletes and their parents/guardians. Any issues or concerns anyone may have at an invitational or tournament should be addressed with the local school, coach, and principal, never with the officials.
- **The coaches, teams and/or parents/guardians should have no contact with officials prior to, during, or after the competition.** (Unless you are the host of the competition) Any concerns or issues should be addressed by the school coach, Athletic Director, or principal in writing to the state dance director, Penny Mitchell.
- All coaches, team members, and parents should always conduct themselves professionally. If an incident occurs, all are subject to removal from the event. Sportsmanship is of utmost importance to the safety of our athletes. Officials may determine if a sportsmanship violation has occurred and a deduction may be issued, or a report may be filed with the GHSA office.
- Coaches are responsible for knowing the rules put in place by the GHSA Constitution and By-Laws, the NFHS Spirit Rules book, and the Dance Coaches Manual. You can order a rules book from the GHSA office or nfhs.org.
- Coaches are required to take the online rules clinic offered at www.learn.ghsa.net
- ***Coaches are responsible for the information in this Competitive Dance Guide.***
- **Coaches must submit their music for each routine in the ClicknClear portal before it is performed.**

Conducting a Tournament:

1st things first- application

Go to the GHSA website.
Go to affiliate login.
Contact your athletic director if you don't have a username and password.
Click on Sanctioned Event Application.
Complete the form.
Ask your Principal to electronically sign the application.
Wait for GHSA approval.
Click on scheduling/Contest Contracts.
Add your contract. GHSA will approve.
Remember to check SAT Saturdays and plan accordingly.

- All state sanctioned dance competitions should be set up as close as possible to the state competition:
 - Provide ample warm up space.
 - Contract judges from the list of GHSA officials to judge the high school teams by contacting the booking agent- Colbie Wilson: cmwilson0120@gmail.com
 - Have competitions for high school teams that are separate sessions from middle school, club teams, solos, etc.
 - Let teams know that the boundary lines are the lines of the basketball court.

Duties of the tournament host

- All hosts must be familiar with the competition guide, review the guide with the scorekeepers, the music person, and timers prior to the event.
- The host should be a member of the school's personnel. This should not be a parent or booster club member.
- The host should be familiar and well versed in how to run a GHSA tournament.
- The host should seek sanctioning from the GHSA, complete the contract to be posted on the website, hire the DJ or music person, and make a rotation schedule to be sent out at least 2 weeks (updating as necessary) to the attending schools.
- The host should contact www.tourneywire.com for the computer program. With this program, the host school should make sure Internet is available in the judges' area.
 - Before the tournament hosts should do the following:
 1. Contact the booking agent, Colbie Wilson, as early as possible.
 2. Obtain contact information for all officials and the Head judge from the booking agent.
 3. Remain in contact with the booking agent and all officials providing details and timelines, as well as names of teams competing to be sure there are no conflicts of interest.
 4. Provide meeting place/restrooms for the officials when they arrive and during the day.

- Sessions for Middle school teams, solos, duets, etc. may choose to use other officials who are not GHSA officials.
- Competition Officials Pay:
 - \$11.50 per judge (1-12 routines)
 - Must pay for a minimum of 12 teams.
 - 9.60 per routine (over 12 routines)

Uniforms:

Where to find the rules:

- Guidelines for the GHSA Sanctioned Dance are listed in the dance team guide, and will also follow the NFHS Spirit Rules Book.
 - Apparel and Accessories are covered under **Rule 3 Section 1** of the NFHS Spirit Rules Book.
 - NFHS Spirit Rules books may be purchased online at nfhs.org and Amazon.
- b. Fabric must cover the skin from the bra line to the knees in front and in back (tights, body liners, or pants).
- c. Hair must be secured above the waist for both males and females.

Summary of Costuming Rules:

Uniforms should be appropriate and follow GHSA constitutions and By-laws.

- Dance Team uniforms/costumes should be selected and appropriate to both the sport and the athlete.

Fabric must cover the skin from the bra line down to the knee. (This can include tights, mesh, shorts, etc.)

- Male dancer's uniform/costume must have fabric from the chest and shoulder blades down. They must adhere to the same rules as female teammates.
- Two dance shoes must be worn – no dance paws or foot undies.
- Shoes with wheels on them are not allowed. (Example: roller skates, roller blades, heelys, etc.).
- Wearing sock and/or footed tights without shoes is not allowed.
- Earrings, nor any other jewelry, are not allowed for dancers and all spirit participants per NFHS.
 - Apparel can only be manipulated if it is attached. It can be removed and discarded, but once it is discarded it cannot be picked up again- it then becomes a prop.

Costuming Overview from the NFHS Handbook:

- “Hard” jewelry is not permitted, unless it’s securely affixed to costume- i.e. no rhinestone earrings
 - Exception: Religious medals may be taped to the body under the apparel without chain. Medical medals may be taped to the body and may be visible.
- Fingernails, including artificial nails, must be kept short near the end of the fingers.

- Hair must be worn in a manner that is appropriate for the activity. Hair devices and accessories must be secure.
- Apparel and accessories must be appropriate for the activity.
- When standing at attention, apparel must cover the midriff front and back.
- Any area that is visible below the bra line to the knee must be covered by fabric. (Tights, pants, body liners, etc.)
- A participant in a full head and/or body costume, or loose, flowing costume must not spot, execute stunts/lifts or tumble with the exception of a forward roll or cartwheel.
- Dancers must wear footwear that is appropriate for the activity.
- Airborne tumbling with the exception of front and side aerials.
- At minimum, footwear must cover the ball of the foot
- Dance paws and foot undies are illegal.
- Half soles are only illegal if you are being stunted or lifted. Then, the entire foot needs to be covered.
- **Change: 3.1.3 b2--Airborne tumbling with the exception of front and side aerials, kip ups, and headsprings half soles can be worn.**
- Glitter that does not readily adhere to the hair, face, body or costume is not permitted.
- Participants must not chew gum or have candy in their mouths during practice or performance.
- Supports, braces, soft casts, etc., that are unaltered from the manufacturer's original design/production do not require any additional padding. Supports/ braces that have been altered from the manufacturer's original design/production must be padded with a closed-cell, slow-recovery foam padding no less than one-half inch thick if the participant is involved in partner stunts/lifts, pyramids or tosses. A participant wearing a plaster cast or walking boot must not be involved in partner stunts/lifts or pyramids.
- A single/partial/whole manufacturer's logo/trademark (no more than 2 ¼ inches) is permitted on the apparel

Specific Examples are located in the NFHS Handbook Sections 3.1.1-3.1.4 regarding legality of specific situations.

Tryouts:

- Tryouts can consist of 10 consecutive days starting the day after the State competition through the end of the school year.
- Eligible students must be currently enrolled at the school or a rising 9th grader. Students must meet academic eligibility requirements.
- Varsity and junior varsity teams may be selected, but only varsity teams can compete at the GHSA Dance Team State Championships. JV teams can compete at GHSA Invitationals only. (JV teams can allow 8th graders to compete on their team)
- Once a team is selected, team activities including choreography, camps, workouts, practices, etc. cannot begin until June 1 (after the Memorial Day dead week ends).
- Competitive Dance is a winter sport, and the season runs October 21, 2025 through February 12, 2026. The period of August 1-October 20, 2025 is considered the off season, therefore choreography of competition routines cannot be taught or practiced during this time.**

Camp:

- A. Summer camps can occur between the last day of the Memorial Day dead week-July 29. This can include choreography camps and travel camps. The July 4 Dead week is June 29-July 6.

Spirit:

- A. Dancers and dance teams can practice outside of the competition season in any activities affiliated with the school, which include basketball games, football games, pep rallies, musicals, recitals, etc.
- B. Spirit activities offer dancers another outlet to showcase their talents and school pride by participating with marching bands, theater groups, sidelines of football games, parades, etc.

State Championship- February 11-12

Awards for the state championship will be given in the following:

A-2A Jazz, Pom, Hip Hop

3A-5A: Jazz, Pom, Hip Hop

6A: Jazz, Pom, Hip Hop

High Kick divisions will be determined by the number of teams competing. This will be decided mid-January.

The next few pages explain the new rubric for GHSA which will be implemented in 2025-26.

Georgia High School Association Competitive Dance Rubric

Jazz

The Jazz division encompasses a range of styles, including jazz, Broadway, contemporary, lyrical, and modern. Teams may incorporate a blend of these styles in their routines. Performances should showcase a high level of difficulty through advanced dance techniques such as turns, leaps, and extensions. Choreography should align with the music, with emphasis on musicality and synchronization. In addition, teams are expected to engage the audience and evoke an emotional response - such as excitement, laughter, joy, sadness, or a sense of drama—that aligns with the chosen style.

Technique

Techniques of Skills	10 pts	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Proper execution of leaps, turns, jumps, and extensions
Technique Displayed in other Movements	10 pts	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Correct technical execution used in movements specified above and demonstrated in all other choreography.• Includes technique displayed via carriage and posture, balance, and transition movement• Speed and intricacy of transitions and footwork
Difficulty of Technical Elements/Movement Difficulty	10 pts	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Level of difficulty in technical elements, regardless of execution quality• Consider the complexity and nuance of movement, skills, and transitions in music and lyrics. Note: These elements will be evaluated based on their presence and intention, regardless of how well they are executed. <p><i>ALL the above items will be considered, REGARDLESS OF THE QUALITY OF EXECUTION</i></p>

Execution of Routine

Execution of Musicality	10 pts	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Execution of choreography to the music.• Capturing subtle nuances in vocals, instrumentation, tempo changes, rhythmic shifts, and lyrical cues. <p>Emphasis is placed on how movement and transitions reflect, interpret, or elevate the musical demands.</p>
Uniformity of Movement	10 pts	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Uniformity and consistent full-body alignment across the team: Evaluates the uniformity of body placement and positioning among all dancers; individual deviations or errors are taken into account.
Execution of Spacing and Transitions	10 pts	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Uniform spacing• Smooth execution of transitions

Choreography

Originality of Concept/Movement	10 pts	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Routine presents a fresh, innovative concept• Dancers' movement showcases creativity and includes unexpected, imaginative elements throughout the performance
Visual Effect and Design	10 pts	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Formations and transitions are purposeful and visually impactful, using elements such as ripples, levels, and canon to create dynamic group visuals and pictures.• Demonstrates effective use of fundamental dance elements—space, shape, time, and energy—to enhance overall stage picture and audience engagement
Musicality of Choreography	10 pts	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The routine consistently reflects the tone, emotion, and intricacies of the music from start to finish. <p><i>Note: Any deductions for inappropriate music or movement will be applied here only after all other elements are fully credited—no points will be deducted from other categories.</i></p>

Showmanship

Communication and Projection by Dancers	10 pts	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ability to connect with audience and provoke appropriate emotional response• Authenticity of performance
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Hip-Hop

The Hip-Hop division encompasses elements of community, self-expression, and storytelling. This category welcomes all street and hip-hop styles, or a fusion of styles, as long as they stay true to the genre. This genre encompasses breaking, popping, locking, house, krumping, and freestyle, among others. Choreography should align closely with the music, highlighting musicality, rhythm, and timing. Choreography in this category should embody the core elements of hip-hop dance: groove, rhythm, texture, and freestyle energy, along with a strong connection to the beat and lyrics of the music. Use of space, levels, dynamics, and timing are essential in shaping the overall impact. Judging will focus on synchronization, execution of style, creativity, and the ability to engage and connect with the audience. Emotional expression—whether through intensity, joy, humor, or drama—should feel genuine and appropriate to the music.

Technique

Hip-Hop Technique	10 pts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proper execution of hip-hop styles presented: Dancers clearly and accurately demonstrate authentic hip-hop styles (e.g., breaking, popping, locking, waacking, house, krumping, stepping, etc.). Style is consistent with the intent of the choreography and visibly rooted in hip-hop vocabulary.
Movement Quality	10 pts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dancers demonstrate intentional, grounded movement with control of speed, direction, and energy. Movement flows continuously without unnecessary pauses or visible resets.
Difficulty of Hip-Hop Movement	10 pts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Routine includes intricate, fast-paced, and technically challenging combinations. Credit is given for athletic elements or tricks when they are true to a hip-hop style that flows and provides continuity within choreography (e.g., freezes, footwork, power moves from breaking). All elements are judged for their challenge level regardless of performance quality.

Execution of Routine

Execution of Musicality	10 pts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Movements are precisely aligned with the rhythm, lyrics, and dynamics of the music Dancers reflect changes in tempo, accents, and musical details throughout the routine
Execution of Spacing and Transitions	10 pts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Uniform spacing Smooth execution of transitions
Execution of Style	10 pts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All team members display a unified and consistent approach to the chosen hip hop style(s), reflecting the intent of the choreography Consider any individual or small group lapses in style execution <p><i>Individual errors or breaks in style considered</i></p>

Choreography

Originality of Concept/Movement	10 pts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Original, risk-taking, and inventive routine structure and choreography. Movement of dancers throughout routine includes creative and unpredictable elements
Visual Effect and Design	10 pts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Effective use of levels, group movements, transitions, ripples, and formations to enhance the stage picture Visual interest is maintained throughout the performance
Musicality of Choreography	10 pts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Choreography reflects the mood, energy, and structure of the music Tricks, if used, are fully integrated into the routine and enhance—not distract from—the style <p><i>Note: Any deductions for inappropriate music (DQ) or movement will be applied here only after all other elements are fully credited—no points will be deducted from other categories.</i></p>

Showmanship

Communication and Projection by Dancers	10 pts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Performance quality and audience engagement Dancers perform with confidence, intention, and energy that is authentic to hip-hop culture Emotional connection with audience is evident and appropriate to the style
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High Kick

Each High Kick routine must include a minimum of **45 kicks at or above waist level**, performed by **at least 50% of the team**. Any dance style may be incorporated to support the routine's structure; however, **specific technical elements such as turns, leaps, jumps, lifts, or tricks are not required but are encouraged to add to the overall visual effect**. Routines may show difficulty through the **complexity, variety, and structure of kick sequences**, as well as the **height, tempo, and control** of the kicks. All movement—both kicks and non-kick choreography—should enhance the **musical interpretation** and contribute to **visual and rhythmic unison**. Teams are expected to maintain strong **performance quality**, including confident stage presence and **emotional engagement with the audience** that matches the routine's tone—whether it's energetic, dramatic, joyful, or lighthearted.

Technique

Kick Technique	10 pts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kicking and supporting leg and hips correctly positioned Correct prep and ending position and toes pointed Kicks are pulled up and down Good body line and posture, with shoulders down and correct arm placement Head precision/placement
Technique Displayed in Other Movements	10 pts	<p>All dance movements outside of kick sequences are performed with strong technical precision.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Includes proper body alignment, posture, and core engagement. Dancers maintain balance and control during transitions. Technique is evident in any jazz, pom, or hip-hop-inspired sections. <p><i>Note: Leaps, turns, and extensions are not required—do not deduct points if they are not included. Emphasis of the routine should be on the kicks. Whatever choreographed movements you choose, in your creative discretion, to do in between your kicks will be judged here.</i></p>
Technical Difficulty of Kicks	10 pts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number and structure of kick sequences Height and pace of kicks

Execution of Routine

Execution of Musicality	10 pts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Execution of choreography to the music. Capturing subtle nuances in vocals, instrumentation, tempo changes, rhythmic shifts, and lyrical cues. Emphasis is placed on how movement and transitions reflect, interpret, or elevate the musical demands.
Uniformity of Movement	10 pts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Uniform placement of entire body by entire team Uniform kick height <p><i>Individual errors considered</i></p>
Execution of Spacing and Transitions	10 pts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Uniform spacing Smooth execution of transitions

Choreography

Originality of Concept/Movement	10 pts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Original and inventive routine structure and choreography. Movement of dancers throughout routine includes creative and unpredictable elements
Visual Effect and Variety of Kicks	10 pts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strong visual use of formations, transitions, ripples, levels, and movements to create group pictures Variety of kicks performed - consider use of varying kick height, angles, style, and combinations.
Musicality of Choreography	10 pts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The routine consistently reflects the tone, emotion, and intricacies of the music from start to finish. <p><i>Note: Any deductions for inappropriate music or movement will be applied here only after all other elements are fully credited—no points will be deducted from other categories.</i></p>

Showmanship

10 pts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ability to connect with audience and provoke appropriate emotional response Authenticity of performance
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Pom

Pom routines may incorporate **any style of dance**, and there are **no required technical elements** such as turns, leaps, jumps, kicks, lifts, or tricks *but are strongly encouraged*. Instead, difficulty should be demonstrated through **precise, complex pom motions and dance technique** that require control, strength, and coordination.

Choreography should align with the music's rhythm, accents, and energy to highlight **musicality and synchronization**. Judges will also evaluate the **creative and purposeful use of poms** to enhance visual patterns, transitions, and overall impact.

Teams should perform with strong **audience engagement**, using expression and performance quality to convey an emotional tone that matches the routine—whether fun, powerful, joyful, or dramatic.

Technique

Pom Technique and Execution	10 pts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Arm movements are executed with correct technique, including shoulders down, straight wrists and elbows, and precise placement Core-supported, strong, and controlled motions Smooth, effortless execution with ease of movement Footwork should match the sharpness and timing of arm motions, avoiding disengaged lower-body movement Weight transfers should be clean and controlled, demonstrating grounded, intentional movement
Overall Dance Technique	10 pts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All movements and dance beyond pom motions are performed with proper technique, including control in posture, balance, transitions, and any technical elements from jazz, kick, military, lyrical, or hip-hop styles.
Difficulty of Pom Motions	10 pts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complexity, risk, and control of pom motions—judged regardless of execution

Execution of Routine

Precision and Uniformity of Movement	10 pts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Entire team performs movements and handles poms with consistent placement and technique.
Execution of Spacing and Transitions	10 pts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clean transitions and uniform spacing, including any transitions between props if used.
Execution of Musicality	10 pts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Choreography is performed in sync with the music, highlighting vocal accents, musical details, and changes in rhythm or tempo.

Choreography

Originality of Concept/Movement	10 pts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Original and inventive routine structure and choreography. Movement of dancers throughout routine includes creative and unpredictable elements
Visual Effect	10 pts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strong visual use of formations, transitions, ripples, levels, and movements to create group pictures
Musicality of Choreography	10 pts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The routine consistently reflects the tone, emotion, and intricacies of the music from start to finish. <p><i>Note: Any deductions for inappropriate music or movement will be applied here only after all other elements are fully credited—no points will be deducted from other categories.</i></p>

Showmanship

Communication and Projection by Dancers	10 pts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ability to connect with audience and provoke appropriate emotional response Authenticity of performance
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NFHS Deductions

Music- over 2 minutes: -1.0

Missed skill: -1

NFHS minor rules violation (jewelry, apparel, nails, glitter, etc) -1 per participant

NFHS major rules violation (illegal moves, drops, lifts, etc) -5