

Dance in Schools: Footwear

As the Subject Association for dance we recommend that students and teaching staff have bare feet for all for dance lessons in school. The specialist knowledge below, taken from Safe Dance Practice by Quin, Rafferty and Tomlinson (2015), provides a clear rationale that can be embedded into your risk assessment and safe practice policy.

'The interaction between the footwear and the foot surface in terms of shock absorption, stability, and friction affects the body's biomechanics and therefore affects the potential for injury. The use of socks (worn in place of shoes) is very common. Although many dancers would plead the benefits of improved traction and the perceived comfort or performance enhancing powers of wearing socks (smoother turns, easier gliding motions of the feet and so on), socks can affect the surface properties of a dance floor by polishing it and actually creating slippery patches (Wanke et al, 2012) as well as presenting slip hazard due to reduced grip (Whitlam, 2012). If socks need to be worn for any reason they should be used only by experienced dancers performing well controlled, low-risk movements (Stein et al, 2014).' - **Quin, Rafferty and Tomlinson, 2015, p4**

If footwear is necessary for a particular style or environment, it is essential that only specialist footwear is worn, and we advise that non-specialist trainers are not appropriate. The advice below should be adhered to in order to demonstrate best practice and reduce the likelihood of injury.

'Footwear can be an injury risk when it is not appropriate for the activity or the environment. All dance shoes should fit the dancer well and provide proper support for the activity. Dancers should wear their shoes in gradually and discard them when worn out. In the recreational context, the need for specialist footwear may not always be emphasised so dancers might wear running or sports shoes that do not have the correct properties for the safe practise of specific styles. Dance leaders should advise their participants on the most suitable footwear for the activity.'

- **Quin, Rafferty and Tomlinson, 2015, p3**

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Quin, E., Rafferty, S., Tomlinson, C. (2015). *Safe dance practice: An applied dance science perspective*. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics