

PREPARING FOR YOUR FIRST (1ST) FEIS

So you are ready to start competing and preparing for your First Feis. Here is a guide of what to expect, what to bring, rules, and checklist. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Annie, Eileen, Patti or any of our experienced “Feis Moms and Dads.”

What is a Feis?

A Feis is an Irish Dance Competition. There are several levels to competitive Irish Dance. These levels are First Feis, Beginner (B1), Beginner 2 (B2), Novice, Prizewinner, Preliminary Champion and Open Champion. A dancer competing in their First Feis will only dance up to four dances: reel, light jig, slip jig and single jig. Beginners through Prizewinners are also called the “Grades.” Grade dancers will dance 7 dances at the Feis: Reel, Light Jig, Single Jig, Slip Jig, Hornpipe, Hard Jig and traditional set (B1 and B2). When a dancer has reached the Novice and Prizewinner level, they will be taught a non-traditional set dance at their teacher’s discretion. More information about moving dances from one level to another can be found in the MSID Family section of our website, on the Beginner’s Page. (See, www.mcbrideirishdancers.com).

Preliminary and Open Champions dance 3 dances – their choice of reel or slip jig, hard jig or hornpipe and a set dance of their choice. These are also called the “Championship Dances.” At a Feis, a champion dancer can choose their dances; however at a Major Competition (“Majors”), such as the Oireachtas (Regional Qualifiers), the North American Irish Dance Championships (also known as “NANs” or ‘Nationals’) and Worlds, they are required to dance certain dances, usually reel/hornpipe or slip jig/hard jig, and a contrary set dance. A dancer must qualify to dance at a Major.

Feis Day

If you have not already received your competitor card from Annie or Eileen prior to the Feis, the first thing you will need to do when you get to the Feis is pick up your competitor card. This card contains the number that has been assigned to your dancer. The judges will only know your dancer by their number. They do not know which school you dance for or your name. The competitor card needs to be attached to your dancing costume. Several of the vendors at the Feis will be able to sell you a plastic card holder with a ribbon through it. Place the card in the cardholder and tie the ribbon around your dancers. If your dancer is a young man, then pin it to his vest.

When you receive the competitor card, please check it to make sure it has all the correct dances listed on the back. You should have received a copy of the Feis Schedule from our school via email. We also usually post the schedule on the Home page of our Website. The schedule (or time table as it is also known), will let you know what time your dancer is set to dance and on what stage. If you need help interpreting the Schedule, please let us know. Any Feis volunteer will be able to help to, but you should review the schedule and know which stage your dancer will be on before you head out to the Feis.

It is your responsibility to be at the correct stage and on time. It is a normal rule to be present at least one (1) hour prior to your dancer's first dance. Sometimes competitions move more quickly than anticipated on a stage. If your dancer is still on a different stage, just let the stage monitors know, and they will usually hold the competition. After your dancer has completed all their dances, head out to the awards area and check your results. Results are posted by competition number, competitor number (and name) and placing. You will need to have your competitor card/number with you in order to pick up your results and awards (medals). For special dances, such as treble reels, girls reel special or boy jig specials, they will sometimes call the dancers up on the stage to present their awards. Many of the tabulators, such as FeisInfo and Feisworx will sell your dancer's individual results (also known as "marks") to you so you can see any judge's comments and where your dancer came in compared to the others in the

competition. The costs for results vary in price from \$5 - \$7. You will need to present your competitor card/number to buy your results. This ensures that no one else can purchase your results. Please show your results to your instructor.

A Feis can be a bit overwhelming at first, but you will get the hang of it and just roll along with it. It is important that you treat all Feis staff, competitors and teachers at a Feis with respect and courtesy. How you treat others will reflect on your dance school, good or bad. Please be patient during the trying times, and always feel free to ask one of our experienced parents, a stage monitor, any Feis volunteer or your dance teacher if you have any questions.

FEIS ETIQUETTE

- Do Not approach judges or musicians at any time.
- Obey all Feis Rules. Every Feis is at a different venue and the rules may be different at each.
- Be on time for your dances – the judges will not wait for you.
- Be polite to Feis Staff. They are all volunteers and they are trying their best to make things run smoothly and on time.
- Clean up after yourself. Please don't leave garbage lying around.
- No Flash Photography – EVER! It is against CLRG and NAFC rules. It can also be dangerous for the dancers on stage.
- No videotaping allowed!
- Respect other people's space and possessions. Everyone is camped out for the day – and it can be cramped quarters sometimes. Try to make the best of it.
- Depending on the Feis, coolers, blankets, lawn chairs or other items may be prohibited. Please make sure to check the Feis' syllabus.
- It is an official rule of the CLRG and NAFC that dancers are to be fully clothed at all times. Dancers are not permitted to walk around in bloomers and undergarments.
- Be Nice to your fellow competitors. Just because you are competing against each other does not mean you cannot be friends. It is better to make friends than enemies. Congratulate – don't criticize.

- Lookout for your fellow McBride Dancers. Support each other and if you can, be there for each other at the stages while they are competing.
- Remember that you are attending Feisanna to have fun, improve your dancing and winning is not everything. Just because you don't win does not mean you are not a good dancer!
- Dancers, remember your parents! They have sacrificed a lot for you. The art (sport) of Irish Dancing has many expenses and they do this for you because you love it. So the greatest way to thank them is for them to see you enjoying yourself on stage, doing your best, and dancing your hearts out while smiling and laughing. Great memories and friendships can be made through Irish Dance and participating in Feisanna. These memories and friendships will last you a lifetime and will remain with you long after the dance shoes are put away for the last time.

OTHER USEFUL INFORMATION

- There are usually vendors at dance competitions, selling dance shoes, music, jewelry, candy and other Irish and Irish dance themed items. (**Warning to Parents: Wallets BEWARE!!**) If you wish to purchase shoes but are not sure of the size, please find one of your teachers and ask for help. Most shoe vendors are also very experienced with fitting shoes.
- Usually Annie and Eileen are at all local competitions trying to catch as many competitions as they can. Because of the nature of a Feis, they cannot be everyone at once. They will do their best to see every one of their dancers. Please do find them and show them your results so they can celebrate with you on your achievements for the day!
- As stated before, and in all Feis Syllabi, absolutely **NO VIDEOTAPING OR FLASH PHOTOGRAPHY IS ALLOWED**. Each teacher's steps are considered proprietary material. If you wish to videotape or photograph your child in costume dancing on the big day, do it outside of the competition area(s).

FINAL REMINDERS FOR BEGINNER DANCERS

- Check your shoelaces before going on stage. Double knots are mandatory!
- Keep your chin up. Look for something straight in front of you and look above it. Do not look at the Floor.
- Ignore the other dancer. Do your steps as you know them; if the other dancer starts or ends differently, just continue your dances as you learned them.
- If you make a mistake, or bump with another dancer - just keep going. The judge may not have seen your mistake. Try not to make an “Oh No” face.
- Make good use of the stage. Be confident that you belong there, because you do!
- After you finished your dance, bow, and look out for the other dancers as you go back into line.
- **SMILE!!** You have worked hard and everyone wants to see you do well and look your best!

FEIS CHECK LIST

Boys: Tie, white shirt, blue vest, black pants and black socks.

Girls: White Shirt, Blue or Black Skirt, white poodle socks and headband.

Girls may also wear the Blue School Dress.

- ✓ Ghillies, boy's reel shoes and hard shoes (polished)
- ✓ Poodle socks plus one extra pair
- ✓ Kick pants (girls)
- ✓ Wig and headband (If using them)
- ✓ Bobby pins and hair clips
- ✓ Hairspray
- ✓ Sock Glue
- ✓ Duct Tape (or Gaffer's Tape or Gorilla Tape – used on hard shoes to keep them from slipping on stage – if Duct tape – do not buy the shiny rolls – buy the matte or ridged finished)
- ✓ Safety pins/sewing kit

- ✓ Highlighter and pen (for making notes on your comp card)
- ✓ Water or other hydrating drinks, and snacks
- ✓ iPod or other mp3 player with Irish music
- ✓ Band Aids / antibacterial cream (if needed)
- ✓ Hand wipes or hand sanitizer
- ✓ No jewelry or fingernail polish (unless it is clear)
- ✓ Items to keep siblings (and dancers) occupied during the long day
- ✓ Sports tape, blister cushions and other injury supplies (as needed)
- ✓ McBride Jacket or T-Shirt (To show team and school spirit)
- ✓ Positive Attitude and winning Smile!

Before the Feis, you can start preparing yourself for the day of competition by getting enough rest, eating well (protein and carbs to fuel your energy). Drink plenty of water – it is the best fluid for your active body!

If you have any blisters or other injuries, take care of them well in advance of the Feis so they do not hurt during competition or become worse after.