

SNPSD Safe Dance Practice Summary

Amongst the responsibilities of the teacher's ongoing duty of care is to consider accepted principles of safe dance practice. All movement activity entails potential risk of injury and the teacher cannot eliminate it altogether, but should mitigate it in class and choreographic scenarios.

The Australian Curriculum defines Safe Dance Practice as '*the practice of selecting and executing safe movement. The focus is on providing dance activities and exercises which allow students to participate without risk of injury. All dance movement should be performed relevant to an individual's body type and capabilities*'.

Certain movement done by certain individuals is often deemed "**contra-indicated**" – i.e. **should not be attempted**. This will depend on the age, experience, skill level, alignment, strength, flexibility and control of the individual. Given that teachers work with students who often lack in these qualities **there are many movements**, which are contra-indicated.

The main areas, which are at risk of injury, are –

- **the knee**, which is susceptible because it is a hinge joint, which works optimally in one plane.
- **the foot and ankle**, which are relatively small structures which bear large loads, particularly when they leave and return to the ground.
- **the back**, because it is susceptible to injury, because it is structurally complex, with its network of bones, cartilages (discs), muscles and nerves and its great potential for movement.

Unsafe Movements include (but are not limited to) –

- **Forced extension of muscles** (stretching) in manoeuvres like full splits, leg mounts, reverse leg mounts, penchés
- **Full head or neck** rolls
- **Hyper-extension** of the back – in elements like back arches, bridges, walkovers (Forward or Backward)
- **Any form of "knee drop" or "toe-over"** – single leg or two-legged, "Sarah Jane", "Toe-breaker"
- **Any uncontrolled or unaligned landing from a jump**, (frequently as a result of poor "form" in the air)
- **Hyper-flexion** (extreme bending) of the knees (under load) i.e. deep knee bends
- **Loading the back with weight** (lifts or weight-sharing) where the shoulders, hips, knees and feet are not aligned.
- **Movements** which involve **ballistic (bouncing) stretching of muscles**
- **Acrobatic elements** – cartwheels, aerial cartwheels, biranis, somersaults, flick-flacks, assisted flips, fly-rolls. Frequently these are poorly performed and controlled and when executed in a space full of other bodies, represent a risk to other performers.

Please note that much of the movement noted above often has very little relevance to the theme or intent of the dance work presented. These are the "Ta Da!" or "Look Mum, No Hands!" moments and relevant, interesting and impressive alternatives are always available.

SNPS Dance reserves the right to prohibit the use of unsafe, high-risk or poorly executed movements or elements in dress rehearsal or performance.