

# 31 THINGS DANCE JUDGES WANT TO SEE YOU DO

**1 SMILING**  
If you watched two dance competitors of equal skill, but only one was smiling - you'd stick to watching that one.

**2 STANDING TALL**  
It doesn't matter if you're actually tall or not - competitive dancers that work on their posture can look gigantic (in a good way) on the dance floor when they stand tall.

**3 CHIVALRY**  
Leaders guiding their dance partners on and off the floor. Followers matching that by waiting for the leader, and allowing them to guide them off the dance floor. It's chivalry, and ballroom dancing has kept it alive.

**4 RECOVERY**  
Try this: Complete. Fall down. Get back up... and you may get a standing ovation.  
OK, so maybe that's going a bit far, but a bump, a stumble, or anything else can reveal more about your character, than your dance ability.

**5 YOUR NUMBER**  
Nothing will drive the dance judges crazier than not being able to mark someone because their number was difficult to see.

**6 CLEAR TIMING**  
Timing is one of the most objective things in dancing. It should be precise, and clear to the viewer.

**7 BALANCE**  
It would be really tough to look your best while off balance. Depending too much on your dance partner can make you look less confident and, sorry in advance... heavy.

**8 CLEAN FOOTWORK**  
Good footwork is essential to great dancing, but it should only highlight other nice things about your dancing.

**9 A FRAME**  
An overactive frame has a way of deactivating other important dance skills.

**10 STRATEGIC COSTUMING**  
You are being judged much sooner than you may realize. A well planned costume that flatters your body type starts you on the positive side of things.

**11 PICTURE LINES**  
There should be a few moments in your dance competition routine that are, in the words of Tonia Kosovich, "Diamonds". These are the picture lines, the dips, the sways, the applause moments that you build up to.  
Note: Your entire performance doesn't need to be, and shouldn't be, one non-stop diamond picture line.

**12 THE BASICS**  
It's important to point out that dance judges don't know your choreography, but they are fluent in the basics. So if you want to keep their attention, speak a little of their language.

**13 LESS FLUFF**  
You don't get points for the things you attempt and can't execute (like some other sports). If you can't do it on Time, on Balance, then shelf it until the next Dance-O-Rama.

**14 BODY RHYTHM**  
Have you ever tried running without moving your arms? Weird right? Well, it is awkward because your entire body is a physical machine. When your Latin dancing progresses, your Cuban Motion will take hold of more than just your hips, and that will activate the physical machine. Eventually, not dancing with your arms and torso will feel just as weird.

**15 FUN**  
Yep, you can fake a smile... but judges can see through that. What is tougher to fake is if you're actually having fun. Being overly serious, looking upset, or just downright angry is off putting and doesn't win you any "enjoyable to watch" votes.

**16 POISE ON AND OFF**  
What do you look like when you're waiting to walk on the floor. How do you enter? Exit? A judge can see all, and form a lasting impression.

**17 FLOORCRAFT**  
Are you stuck in the middle? Playing bumpercars? Using one section of the floor, facing the wrong way... all of these can erode any semblance of confidence and presence on the dance floor.

**18 STAMINA**  
If you need an oxygen tank, 2 gallons of water, a chair, a masseuse, and a cardiologist to get through your final dance - you may be lacking in this area.

**19 MOVE**  
No matter how you do it, movement is what catches the eye.

**20 AWARENESS OF PARTNER**  
The audience is not your partner, and neither is your hand, your shoe, or your reflection through the rhinestones on your sleeve. What you are looking at is what is important - try to include your partner in that equation.

**21 CLEAR FOCAL POINTS**  
Thinking of #20, sharp contrast can make for powerful moments. You can achieve this by rehearsing where you are looking throughout your routine. If you know the timing of your dance choreography, this is a good layer to include next.

**22 LEADING AND FOLLOWING**  
No matter how ninja-like some "following-challenged" dancers can be, a certified dance judge can spot any lead and follow shortcomings from a mile away. Even if it is choreographed, the goal is to make it look authentic. Dancing is a conversation set to music, not someone speaking on behalf of their partner. So leaders are the action, followers are the reaction, and save "finishing each other's sentences" for romantic comedies.

**23 SMOOTH TRANSITIONS**  
You've just executed 5 reverse turns in a row, a change step, and... whoops. Transitions are critical in an Olympic relay event, and they are equally important in competitive ballroom dancing.

**24 VARIETY OF ENERGY**  
Everything that stays the same, regardless of speed, will begin to look monotone. Giving your dance routine some different slow-to-fast, or fast-to-slow dynamics will keep things interesting to watch.

**25 VARIETY OF ARM STYLING**  
Taking a page out of step #24, and apply that to your arms. Ballroom, Rhythm, or Latin - slow, full, quick, direct - having a few different costuming options with your arm styling can make your routine difficult to look away from.

**26 CONFIDENCE**  
Don't apologize for anything (unless you bump into someone). People that are lacking confidence only show it when they apologize with their body language. Slumped shoulders, eyes down, timid movements all convey an apologetic, unconfident demeanor and can take away from your performance. Not to worry, a Dance-O-Rama has more than one day for that exact reason. By the end of the day, and the entire day after that - your confident self shows up for the party.

**27 VOLUME**  
Attention Tall People: Your limbs are long and beautiful - if you use them to their maximum. Attention Not-As-Tall People: Your limbs are not as long, but when you stretch, and fill things out, they are just as beautiful. Dance to your maximum, and you'll never look "not-tall". "Volume" is like posture for every part of your body.

**28 CHARACTER OF THE DANCE**  
If you danced with no music playing, would it still be clear which dance you were doing to the judges and audience? That's the character of the dance. Making Waltz look different from Foxtrot, and Cha-Cha different from the Swing.

**29 MUSICALITY**  
Musicality is only achieved through excellent timing. Showing that you are listening to the music, responding to the music, and accenting the rhythm through creative choreography and great balance shows the audience that you are enjoying the music beyond just the meter of the music.

**30 GRATITUDE**  
A bad result can reveal more about someone's character than a good one. Showing gratitude "to the finish" means that you take pride in your hard work, in the personal accomplishments you've made, and the work that your partner did alongside you until your costumed self is no longer in the ballroom.

**31 POINT OF VIEW**  
Showing great fundamentals, clear technique, and consistent timing are all objective. The choices you make, your point of view, are subjective. Whether that is with the emotion you show, the style points you emphasize, or some other theme to your delivery - it's all a point of view. This is what separates the top dancers from a group of great ones.