



# DANCER

## JOB DESCRIPTION

Dancers use their bodies to perform routines to music, tell stories, and express ideas for the entertainment of audiences. They can work on stage as members of a dance company or theater group, or perform in films, TV shows, and music videos. Dancers spend years training to hone their skills and build up their fitness and flexibility. They usually specialize in one genre, such as ballet, jazz, or street dance.



### SALARY

Junior in dance company ★★★★★  
Experienced dancer ★★★★★

### INDUSTRY PROFILE

Opportunities exist in dance, ballet, opera, and theater companies • Highly competitive industry • Many dancers are self-employed

## CAREER PATHS

Most dancers begin their training in childhood, attending ballet classes or dance school. If you choose this career, you can continue training at vocational dance colleges or at colleges that offer undergraduate and graduate programs in dance. The physical demands and brevity of this career mean that most dancers have an additional line of work, possibly in dance teaching or therapy.

**ASSISTANT** In this role, you help out with classes at a dance school. You may lead students through exercises, help with choreography, or play accompanying music. Many dance students have their tuition reduced by working as part-time assistants.

**GRADUATE** An undergraduate degree in dance or in the performing arts may give your career a boost. You can also train in your chosen genre of dance at a private dance school and pass examinations by various accredited bodies.

**DANCE NOTATOR** Records dance moves in a score (a plan of a dance), using figures and graphic symbols. This allows ballets and other dance pieces to be recreated at a later date or by other companies.



**DANCER** Performance is an important but relatively small part of a dancer's life. You spend the bulk of your time practicing to maintain skills and fitness, preparing for auditions for new roles, or rehearsing.

## SKILLS GUIDE



Excellent interpersonal skills to communicate with choreographers and other dancers about routines.



The ability to work in a team with a troupe of dancers, choreographers, and others.



An ability to master new types of dance and to meet the demands of an ongoing performance.



A high level of physical fitness and stamina to brave the rigorous cycles of training and performance.



Creativity to add individuality to choreography, and an innate sense of rhythm, timing, and musicality.



Motivation and the self-discipline to train and rehearse regularly, and maintain high levels of fitness.



**DANCE TEACHER** Trains students of all ages in different types of dance. Dance teachers work in dance and stage schools, as well as colleges, and may also teach related subjects, such as drama or performing arts.



**CHOREOGRAPHER** Works in theater, film, and television to create routines for dancers and other performers. Planning movements to fit the music and staging, choreographers need to work closely with musical directors and costume designers.

## RELATED CAREERS

- ▶ **MUSICIAN** *see pp. 38–39*
- ▶ **ACTOR** *see pp. 42–43*
- ▶ **ARTS ADMINISTRATOR** Plans and oversees programs of arts activities and events in theaters, museums, galleries, and music festivals. This may be a new career for dancers who have retired from performance.
- ▶ **CHILDREN'S ENTERTAINER** Provides shows and entertainment for children at parties, cruise ships, or family-centered hotels. Jobs can be sporadic or seasonal, and most entertainers have another line of work to supplement their income.

## AT A GLANCE



**YOUR INTERESTS** Dance • Music • Drama • Art • Mime • Musical theater • Self-expression • Fitness and sports



**ENTRY QUALIFICATIONS** Training at a stage school, dance academy, or ballet school is essential. A degree in dance and choreography may help.



**LIFESTYLE** Working hours can be long and dancers may have to rehearse and tour a lot. Keeping fit is crucial because the job is physically demanding.



**LOCATION** Dancers work in film and TV studios, as well as in opera, theaters, nightclubs, hotels, festivals, and on cruise ships. They may have to travel.



**THE REALITIES** Gigs may be irregular. Self-confidence to continue pursuing your goals is important when facing rejections at auditions.