

The Backstage Etiquette Rules All Dancers Need To Know

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Written By Caitlin Sloan



You've been rehearsing for months and you are ready to rock the stage! But did you know there's a whole set of rules you should be aware of before you even cross the threshold of the wings?

How you conduct yourself backstage matters just as much as how you perform on stage. A dance performance is like an iceberg. The audience only sees the tippy top - but underneath there are so many moving parts that go into making a great show come to life.

As a performer, you play a vital role in ensuring everything goes according to plan. Before you head to the theatre, make sure you know your backstage etiquette!

Be on time for your call

Your call time is the time you need to be at the theatre. Many of the theatres I've danced in are in populated downtown areas where traffic and parking

can be tricky. Give yourself extra time to allow for anything unexpected! When putting on a performance, there are SO MANY moving parts and schedules to consider - one person being late can throw off the entire schedule. Plan ahead to ensure you are ready to go at call time.

Stay nourished during long show days

Doing a two show day? It is ESSENTIAL to remain nourished by eating and drinking during those long days and nights in the theatre. Just be sure not to eat or drink anything that could potentially stain while wearing your costume! Pack water and non-messy snacks to grab when you need a pick-me-up, and save any of the big meals for when you have time to change into your warm-ups and head to the green room.

Remain quiet backstage

Even if you are in your dressing room, noise can easily carry to the stage. You also risk missing your entrance if you can't hear the music from the stage. If you know you will have a lot of downtime in between pieces it's a good idea to bring something to do such as homework or a book to read. Some of my fondest memories from my years dancing are from the memories made backstage - have fun while still focusing on the task at hand!

Listen and respond quickly to any instruction

The theatre is a magical place - and it takes a lot of heavy props and special effects to bring that magic to life. When directions are being given, it's not just so the show can run smoothly - it's also for your safety! When you get a call from the stage manager, repeat back the call so they know you heard correctly. For instance, if the stage manager says "Five minutes until the top of the show!" repeat back to them "Thank you five!".

If you can see the audience, they can see you!

Stay back away from the wings (the curtains on the side of the stage) until it's time for your entrance. When it is time to enter, get into character before you hit the stage and continue dancing all the way to the wall when you exit. For many audience members, coming to the theatre is an escape. Nothing breaks the spell for the audience quite like seeing a dancer turn back into a "pedestrian" as soon as they think they're out of sight. Commit to your character until you are absolutely sure you are out of the audience's sight line.

Bring extra layers

Theatres can be chilly - bring extra clothes to keep your muscles warm during downtime to help avoid injury. If you're wearing pointe shoes, the dust and grime of the theatre can make them super slippery. Wear Crocs or slides over them backstage so you don't track anything on your shoes. Just make sure to take them off before you go on stage!

And there you have it - 6 rules you need to know to make a great impression before you even hit the stage!

Good Luck on your next performance, dancer! I'm rooting for you!