



Scoil Rince Bréifne Ó Ruairc Handbook

Irish American Club of Berkshire County

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Parent Introduction to Irish Dance

Although Berkshire County is home to many people whose heritage includes Ireland, Irish step dancing is not well known here. When Riverdance aired on the Eurovision Song Contest in Dublin, Ireland in the early 1990s, it brought to worldwide attention an aspect of Irish culture that previously had been largely confined to St. Patrick's Day celebrations and cultural events. Since then, the popularity of Irish dance has skyrocketed, particularly in the United States. For those who are new to the world of Irish dance, this brief introduction may help.

In Irish dancing, a step is a sequence of foot movements, leg movements, and jumps, choreographed to fit a certain rhythm. Generally, the sequence is danced through 4 or 8 bars of music for the "right foot" of the step and is repeated through 4 or 8 more bars of music for the "left foot". Steps are choreographed for the various Irish music rhythms: reel, slip jig, single jig, light jig, treble jig, and hornpipe. There are many steps of each dance, varying in level of difficulty. Levels are bunghrad (pronounced BOON-grahd; beginner), ullmhuchan (pronounced OOL-vuh-kahn; intermediate), meanghrad (pronounced MAN-grahd; novice), ardghrad (pronounced ORD-grahd; advanced), and craobhghrad (pronounced CRAVE-grahd; champion). Some steps taught at Scoil Rince Bréifne Ó Ruairc (pronounced SKOAL RIN-ka BREF-nee O RORK) are traditional material created by Ita Cadwell, one of the founding members of Cumann Rince Naisiunta (pronounced CUM-an RIN-ka now-SHUN-ta; CRN). Other steps are created by the instructors, and are unique to Scoil Rince Bréifne Ó Ruairc. Still other steps are known as traditional set dances, which were created by traveling dance masters in Ireland, dating as far back as the 18th century.

There are two kinds of dance shoes worn for Irish step dancing – soft shoes and hard shoes. Reels, slip jigs, single jigs, and light jigs are performed in soft shoes. Treble jigs and hornpipes are the first hard shoe dances taught, first at traditional (fast) speed and later at a slower speed, which allows for more complicated footwork. Experienced dancers will also learn treble reels and set dances, both performed in hard shoes.

Ceili dances are performed in groups that comprise a set number of dancers, and are often named by the number of dancers in the group (e.g., 4-Hand reel, 8-Hand reel).

An Irish dancer's basic skills include (but are not limited to):

- Good timing (meaning the dance movements match the rhythm of the music)
- Pointed toes with arched feet
- Legs crossed, so that it looks like one knee is hiding behind the other
- Legs turned out (including hips, knees, and toes), so that the inside of each anklebone is facing forward, toes outward
- Upright upper body carriage with arms straight at the dancer's sides, chin level, eyes forward, head evenly balanced atop relaxed neck, with shoulders open (down and back)
- Graceful and energetic movement, including high elevation on the toes and snappy legs that kick the dancer's bum when feet move from behind to in front or vice versa

- Well-executed jumps that incorporate all of the above principles, and an overall sense of “lift” throughout a dance
- Confident and pleasant appearance

Some Irish dancers choose to dance in competition, which can be a great way to stay motivated while striving to master steps. A feile (pronounced FAY-luh) or feis (pronounced FESH) are Irish dance competitions offering dance events for multiple skill levels, each further divided by age groups.

Whether a dancer chooses to compete, perform, or dance recreationally, we’re very glad that you’ve decided to join the Scoil Rince Bréifne Ó Ruairc family!

Program Overview

Scoil Rince Bréifne Ó Ruairc is owned by the Irish American Club of Berkshire County. We provide Irish dance instruction in a fun, supportive, and inclusive environment.

Classes

Classes are designed to teach and reinforce traditional steps and proper technique.

- **Leveled Classes**
 - Dancers must be enrolled in at least 1 class at their assigned level.
 - Levels include Lions (beginner), Advanced Lions (advanced beginner), Emeralds (intermediate), and Crowns (advanced).
- **Dara Track**
 - Dancers may add on extra classes in the Dara Track program once they are enrolled in at least one class at their assigned level.
 - The Dara Track program enables dancers to attend class more often than once a week and is offered to dancers at the Advanced Lions, Emeralds, and Crowns levels. Dancers who choose the Dara Track must enroll in at least 2 classes per week.
 - Options for extra classes include additional classes at the dancer's assigned level, Production Class, Feis Prep, Troupe, and Foireann Cavan.
 - Note that dancers who are assigned between 2 levels may take classes at both levels.
 - Dancers joining Troupe and/or Foireann Cavan must do so through the Reverse Audition process.
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 - Why is it called Dara Track?
 - The celtic knot known as the Dara knot, which forms the basis for Scoil Rince Bréifne Ó Ruairc's logo, mimics the roots of an oak tree, symbolizing strength and perseverance. Dancers who have identified goals requiring strength and perseverance, such as those that involve technical progression, performance of intricate dances, or progression through competitive levels, will benefit from choosing the Dara Track.
- **Bréifne Ó Ruairc Troupe**
 - Dancers in the Dara Track program may join the Bréifne Ó Ruairc performance troupe.
 - Joining the performance troupe requires a high level of commitment, as there are class attendance and performance requirements. Details are provided at the Reverse Audition, which is required for all Troupe dancers. A Performance Troupe Agreement must be signed by each dancer and parent upon joining.
- **Foireann Cavan (Competition Team)**
 - Dancers in the Dara Track program may join Foireann Cavan.
 - Joining Foireann Cavan requires a high level of commitment, as there are class attendance and competition requirements. Details are provided at the Reverse

Audition, which is required for all Troupe dancers. A Foireann Cavan Agreement must be signed by each dancer and parent upon joining.

Assessments

Individual assessments are conducted throughout the dance season to support each dancer's progress.

- After each assessment, dancers and their parents will be provided a report that will identify skills dancers should focus on to progress.
- The results of these assessments will help guide class placements and help determine readiness for competition and CRN grade exams.

Home Practice

Practice at home is highly recommended and encouraged. Irish dance is a sport as well as an art form, so repetition of the movements learned in class is essential for progress. While we encourage home practice and recognize its benefits, our main priority is to foster the love of the tradition of Irish dance. Nurturing the love of Irish dance often leads naturally to dancers taking it upon themselves to practice at home as they develop a passion for it.

Scoil Rince Bréifne Ó Ruairc maintains many home practice resources on Google Classroom. The director will provide access to the Scoil Rince Bréifne Ó Ruairc Google Classroom.

Performance and Competition

Opportunities are available to all Scoil Rince Bréifne Ó Ruairc dancers for performance and competition.

- Performances
 - Performances include shows run by Scoil Rince Bréifne Ó Ruairc as well as those initiated by community groups.
 - All Scoil Rince Bréifne Ó Ruairc dancers are eligible to perform at most shows. When signing up for a performance, dancers must ensure they are available for not only the performance itself, but any rehearsal(s) associated with the performance.
 - Performance is encouraged but not required.
 - Dancers who choose to perform must have a costume. Please see [costume information](#).
 - Additional performance opportunities are available for the Bréifne Ó Ruairc Troupe.
- Competitions
 - Scoil Rince Bréifne Ó Ruairc is a member of CRN, an open platform Irish dance organization based in Ireland.
 - Scoil Rince Bréifne Ó Ruairc dancers are eligible to participate in open platform competitions.

- Competition is encouraged but not required.
- Dancers who choose to compete must have a costume. Please see [costume information](#).
- The director of Scoil Rince Bréifne Ó Ruairc will determine readiness for competition and appropriate level.
- The director of Scoil Rince Bréifne Ó Ruairc will keep parents and dancers informed of upcoming competitions and classes designed for competition preparation.
- Additional competition opportunities are available for Foireann Cavan.

Calendar

Class dates, times, and cancellations as well as special events will be posted on our [Google Calendar](#). Key dates include:

- Classes start September 2, 2025
- Fall Meet & Greet September 6, 2025 (no classes)
- Berkshire Feile October 4, 2025 (no classes)
- No classes November 24-29, 2025
- Dress rehearsal for Winter Showcase December 19, 2025
- Winter Showcase December 20, 2025 (no classes)
- No classes December 22-31, 2025
- No classes January 1, 2026
- No classes March 16-19, 2026
- Last day of classes May 20, 2026
- Dress rehearsal for Spring Dinner Dance May 21, 2026
- Spring Dinner Dance May 22, 2026

Tuition and Fees: General Information

There are 4 options for enrollment in dance classes: 1 Weekly Class, 2 Weekly Classes, 3+ Weekly Classes, Tir na nOg, and Adult.

1 Weekly Class: Dancers enroll in 1 class. Dancers who choose the 1 Weekly Class option must enroll in the leveled class appropriate for their skill level, determined by the director.

2 Weekly Classes (Dara Track): Dancers enroll in 2 classes. At least 1 of these classes must be the leveled class appropriate for their skill level, determined by the director. The other class may be another leveled class appropriate for their skill level, Production Class, the Bréifne Ó Ruairc Troupe, or Foireann Cavan.

3+ Weekly Classes (Dara Track): Dancers are eligible to enroll in 3 or more classes. At least 1 of these classes must be the leveled class appropriate for their skill level, determined by the director. The other classes may be other leveled classes appropriate for their skill level, Production Class, Feis Prep, the Bréifne Ó Ruairc Troupe, or Foireann Cavan.

Tir na nOg: Dancers enroll in 1 preschool class.

Adult: Dancers enroll in 1 adult class, which includes instruction in solo dancing and ceili dancing, with each style offered every other week on a rotating basis. They may choose to attend every week for exposure to both styles, or every other week to experience one style only. They may also enroll on a drop-in basis, and select and pay for each session they will attend.

For all students except those in the Adult Program, the commitment to class enrollment lasts from September through May. Tuition may be paid in full at the time of registration or families may choose an installment plan, for which 8 equal monthly payments are due, with the first payment due in September and the last payment due in April. The tuition installment amount is the same each month regardless of the number of classes in the month. Tuition will be prorated for students joining after September.

Optional workshops or other special classes may be offered outside of the regular class schedule and may be subject to additional fees.

An annual registration fee of \$20 per student, or \$30 per family for families with more than 1 student, is due in September of each year.

Costume rental fees apply to dancers who choose to perform or compete. They are \$30 for a beginner costume, \$50 for a vest (intermediate-advanced levels), and \$80 for a dress (intermediate-advanced levels). Additional costumes may be required for the Bréifne Ó Ruairc Troupe and Foireann Cavan.

As another option, our all-inclusive pricing packages are designed to help families plan their Irish dance-related spending up front and minimize “surprise” expenses.

Tuition and Fees: Details

Irish Dance Program

Just the Basics Package: The commitment to class enrollment lasts from September 2025 through May 2026. Tuition may be paid in full at the time of registration or families may choose an installment plan, for which 8 equal monthly payments are due, with the first payment due in September and the last payment due in April. The tuition installment amount is the same each month regardless of the number of classes in the month. Tuition will be prorated for dancers joining after September. Automatic payments are the default option for this package, but other arrangements may be made.

1 Weekly Class

\$418 if paid in full at the time of registration, or 8 installments of \$55 each, due on the first day of each month from September through April. Tuition will be prorated for dancers joining after September.

2 Weekly Classes

\$760 if paid in full at the time of registration, or 8 installments of \$100 each, due on the first day of each month from September through April. Tuition will be prorated for dancers joining after September.

3+ Weekly Classes

\$836 if paid in full at the time of registration, or 8 installments of \$110 each, due on the first day of each month from September through April. Tuition will be prorated for dancers joining after September.

Tir na Nog

\$323 if paid in full at the time of registration, or 8 installments of \$42.50 each, due on the first day of each month from September through April. Tuition will be prorated for dancers joining after September.

Annual Registration Fee

Due each year upon enrollment for students who register online. For students who pay by cash or check, the registration fee is due each year by the first day of class in September, or upon enrollment for students registering after September.

Costume Rental Fee

Due upon execution of a costume rental agreement.

Bréifne Ó Ruairc Performers and Everything You Need to Be a Bréifne Packages:

The commitment to enrollment lasts from September 2025 through August 2026. The package price may be paid in full at the time of registration or families may choose an installment plan, for which 8 equal monthly payments are due, with the first payment due in September and the

last payment due in April. The package installment amount is the same each month regardless of the number of classes in the month. The package price will be prorated for dancers joining after September. Automatic payments are required for these packages.

Annual Registration Fee

Included in these packages.

Costume Rental Fee

Included in the Everything You Need to Be a Breifne package. For the Breifne O Ruairc Performers package, the costume rental fee is due upon execution of a costume rental agreement.

Traditional Irish Music Program

The commitment to enrollment lasts from September 2025 through May 2026. Families may pay in full at the time of registration or choose an installment option, for which 8 equal monthly payments are due, with the first payment due in September 2025 and the last payment due in April 2026. Automatic payments are optional. The tuition installment amount is the same each month regardless of the number of classes in the month. Tuition will be prorated for students joining after September.

All Packages and Programs

Automatic payments are the default option, but other arrangements may be made. Each payment is due on the first day of each month. There is a 10-day grace period for all payments, after which late fees will be due. Payments that are received 11 days late or later are subject to a \$15 late fee. Returned checks and denied credit card payments are subject to a \$25 fee.

Tuition, fees, and package payments are not refundable and nontransferable. In the case of an installment plan, if a student wishes to withdraw from classes, they must do so in writing prior to the next installment due date, otherwise billing will continue, regardless of the student's attendance. Students enrolled in the Breifne O Ruairc Performers or Everything You Need to Be a Breifne packages must return costumes, shoes, and Breifne O Ruairc jacket/other Malley item obtained through the package upon withdrawal from classes.

Any credits will be applied to the payment due on the next billing date.

Optional workshops or other special classes may be offered outside of the regular class schedule and may be subject to additional fees.

Late Fees

There is a 10-day grace period for all tuition and fee payments, after which late fees will be due. Payments that are received 11 days late or later are subject to a \$15 late fee. Returned checks and denied credit card payments are subject to a \$25 fee.

Discounts

Families with more than 1 dancer enrolled will receive a 10% discount on tuition for the dancer with the lowest tuition.

Refunds

Tuition and fees are not refundable and nontransferable. In the case of an installment plan, if a dancer wishes to withdraw from classes, they must do so in writing prior to the next installment due date, otherwise billing will continue, regardless of the dancer's attendance.

Credits

Any credits will be applied to tuition for the next billing date.

At any time, scheduled on-premises classes may need to be canceled and instead held virtually. Scoil Rince Bréifne Ó Ruairc will give as much notice as possible in these cases. Payments will remain the same.

No credits are given for missed classes or weather-related cancellations. Makeup options are available for most classes.

Payment Methods

Automatic payments are the default option for tuition installment plans and are required for the Breifne O Ruairc Performers and Everything You Need to Be a Breifne packages. Other arrangements may be made for Just the Basics Packages. For all other fees, payment through the Scoil Rince Bréifne Ó Ruairc web site, check, or cash is accepted.

Attendance, Makeups, and Cancellations

Scoil Rince Bréifne Ó Ruairc may need to cancel classes from time to time. Makeup options are available for most classes.

Saturday classes may be cancelled on performance or competition days.

Scoil Rince Bréifne Ó Ruairc will make every effort to communicate any class or performance cancellation as soon as possible via multiple methods of communication. Families should be on the lookout for an email or text message when weather is questionable.

Dancers with symptoms of illness should not attend class in person.

If a dancer is absent from class, they may make up the class within 1 month by attending another class at the same or a similar level after checking with the director before arriving at a class they do not usually attend. Missed classes affect personal progress and class progress. Missed classes before performance and competition events may prevent dancers from participating.

Please consult the season calendar for planned cancellations.

Dancers should arrive at class on time and prepared to dance with shoes on and tied securely. Some classes begin with a 15-minute independent warm-up period. Dancers should follow the instructions provided for this warm-up period.

Punctuality at performances and competitions is expected.

Dress Code

Class Dress Code

The class dress code has been established to prepare dancers to learn in comfort and safety.

Dancers may not wear street clothes in class. Scoil Rince Bréifne Ó Ruairc apparel available for purchase complies with the dress code, but is not mandatory.

- **Shirt:** Shirts may be long-sleeved, short-sleeved, or sleeveless and must fit the dancer. Long sleeves should not cover the hands. Technical fabric is recommended instead of cotton for the dancer's comfort.
- **Bottoms:** Dancers may wear leggings, shorts, or a skirt/skort. Knees and ankles must be visible so the instructor may provide feedback on technique. Technical fabric is recommended instead of cotton for the dancer's comfort. Denim is not allowed. If a dancer chooses to wear a skirt, dance shorts are recommended to be worn underneath.
- **Hair:** Hair must be neatly and securely tied back with a hair tie or headband if it's long enough to fall into the face.
- **Footwear:**
 - Proper, well-fitting Irish dance shoes must be worn. These include ghillies, hard shoes, and reel shoes (with or without heels).
 - Beginners in the Lions and Tir na nOg classes may wear ballet slippers or jazz shoes until they are ready to purchase Irish dance shoes.
 - Shoes must be tied properly and securely prior to the beginning of class.
 - A [video](#) is available to learn how to tie ghillies.
 - Elastics may be used to cover the laces to help keep them secure.
 - Dance sneakers are only acceptable in cases of medical necessity or longer classes, such as workshops.

Scoil Rince Bréifne Ó Ruairc

Dress Code

Shoes

- Ghillies, reel shoes, or hard shoes
- Snug fit
- Laces tied securely
- Dance sneakers allowed ONLY for medical necessity or workshops



Top

- Short sleeves, long sleeves, or sleeveless
- Not too loose
- Sleeves shouldn't cover hands



Hair

- Neat and out of face



Bottom

- Leggings, shorts, or skirt
- Knees and ankles visible



Performance and Competition Dress Code

For performances and competitions, dancers must wear the costume specified for the event.

Costume options include:

- School skirt, belt, and bow (beginner- and advanced beginner-level dancers)
 - Worn with long-sleeved black leotard, black dance shorts, and white poodle socks or opaque black stage tights
- School belt and bow tie (beginner- and advanced beginner-level dancers)
 - Worn with long-sleeved black, collared shirt, black pants, and black socks that cover the ankle
- School dress and crown (intermediate- and advanced-level dancers)
 - Worn with black dance shorts and white poodle socks or opaque black stage tights
- School vest and tie (intermediate- and advanced-level dancers)
 - Worn with long-sleeved black, collared shirt, black pants, and black socks that cover the ankle
- Solo dress, vest, or waistcoat
 - Advanced-level dancers are eligible to purchase a solo costume.
 - These costumes must be approved by Jennie before purchase.
 - For competitions, solo dresses may not be worn in the bunghrad or ullmhuchan levels, nor for team dances.
- Hair must be secured neatly out of the face.
- Proper, well-fitting Irish dance shoes must be worn. Dance sneakers may never be worn in competition.

Conduct

- Scoil Rince Bréifne Ó Ruairc strives to create a fun, supportive, and inclusive environment for learning Irish dance. Dancers should show respect and courtesy for the teachers, their fellow dancers, and themselves. Behavior that falls outside of these ideals will be addressed by the director.
- A dancer's primary focus during class time should be on dancing. Socializing is fun and an important part of the overall dance experience, but it should be left for time outside of class.
- Dancers should bring a water bottle, notebook, and both pairs of shoes into the dance area, and leave all other items (cell phones, food, etc.) in the Bag Drop area.
- Gum and food are not allowed in the dance area. Shoes must be clean and water bottles must have a lid. Please clean up water bottles, personal items, and trash after each class.
- Bathroom breaks during class should be limited to emergencies only. Visiting the bathroom before class begins should become part of every dancer's routine.
- Scoil Rince Bréifne Ó Ruairc typically participates in many shows and competitions during the year. In order to maintain a reputation of excellence in our school, we require that dancers behave appropriately at these events, particularly while in costume or in Scoil Rince Bréifne Ó Ruairc attire.
- Dancers and parents are responsible for checking emails frequently for important information.

Releases, Consent Forms, and Privacy Policies

Liability Release

Parents/guardians must sign a liability release upon enrollment.

Consent Forms

From time to time, photos and videos may be taken during classes, performances, competitions, or other events. Parents/guardians must provide consent for sharing of these photos and videos in marketing materials and on the internet, including the Scoil Rince Bréifne Ó Ruairc web site and social media channels. Parents/guardians may elect to withhold this consent, however they should understand that this may limit a dancer's placement in performance pieces, as it is desirable to have the ability to share photos and videos of these dances.

Privacy Policies

Choreography and any reference materials made available to dancers and their families are the property of Scoil Rince Bréifne Ó Ruairc and may not be shared with anyone not currently enrolled in the school.

Contact information for dancers and their families is private and may not be shared with anyone not enrolled in the school without their permission.

Dancers enroll in 1 preschool class.