

Feising 101

The information below was written as a guide for our first-time competitors. Please remember that your teachers are the authority on all matters pertaining to your participation in Irish dance competitions.

Finding a Feis

All registered and approved feiseanna (pronounced “fesh-na”) in North America are found at <https://idtana.org/feiseanna/>

Registering for a Feis:

There are a few different feis registrations companies/websites. Two popular sites are www.feisworx.com and www.quickfeis.com. (For our own McTeggart-run Bluegrass Feis, registrations are through www.feisworx.com.)

When you log onto the site, follow instructions/links to create an account for your family, and add your dancers to your family. See information below about your child’s age level. FeisWorx will only allow you to sign up for dances in your child’s age level. If your child has never competed before, they should sign up for “First Feis” level dances, usually in reel and light jig. Please email the teachers (allison@kyirishdancers.org) if you have any questions about this process.

The first step upon registering for a Feis is to look for your dancer’s age level. The age levels are typically; under 5, under 6, under 7, under 8, under 9, under 10, under 11, under 12, under 13, under 14, under 15, 15 & over and Adult. In all cases the age of the competitor on **January 1st** of the year the competition is held will determine the age group. An adult dancer is one who began dancing over 18 years of age and did not dance as a juvenile.

The second step in registering is to look for your child’s dances. Your dance teacher will tell you which dances are appropriate for which child. Most children will dance soft shoe (reel and jig) for their first competition. They will need to know two steps in that particular dance.

Finally, once you identify the appropriate competition numbers, you can fill out the entry form online or mail it in. Before you register, please make sure to read the Feis rules to see if there are any you don’t understand, or that make you question your selections. It’s generally better to speak to your coach if you have questions, rather than call the Feis sponsor.

Keep Up-to-Date on Upcoming Feis Information

Once you’ve registered for a feis, it’s important to stay up to date on feis information via the feis website or the registration website. Be sure to check things like discounted hotel blocks, venue address, stage assignments, etc.

Understanding the Feis syllabus:

The Feis syllabus is published by the Feis committee, the group sponsoring the competition. Competitions are divided by experience level, age and type of dance. It is up to the entrant, with the aid of the teacher, to select the appropriate competition(s). Registration for a Feis is done online through either FeisWorx or QuickFeis. Registration forms & payments can be mailed also. Usually the deadline for entries is several weeks before the competition, but it's not unusual for dancers to sign up late and pay a late fee.

If you've never been to a Feis before, you'll be a Beginner. (A list of all the levels are: *Beginner, Advanced Beginner, Novice, Prizewinner, Preliminary Championship and Open Championship*.) Note: A competition **must** have **five** dancers *at least* for a dancer's status to change. In other words, even if a dancer places 1st in a competition he or she cannot advance to the next level unless there are at least five dancers.

To advance to the next level the following placing must be obtained; Placing either 1st 2nd or 3rd in Beginner will allow a dancer to move on to Advanced Beginner. Placing 1st 2nd or 3rd in Advanced beginner will allow a dancer to move to Novice. Placing 1st in Novice will allow a dancer to move to Prizewinner. Placing 1st in Prizewinner in both **soft shoe & hard shoe dances** will allow a dancer to advance to Preliminary Championships. In Preliminary championships there are *3 judges* instead of 1 and the scores of the soft shoe & hard shoe dances will be *added together to produce an overall score*. One must win two 1st places to advance to Open Championships. Open Championships is the *greatest status* an Irish dancer can obtain. These dancers compete for Oireachtas, Nationals & World titles.

What to wear:

Girls:

Beginner: White blouse with collar; plain black, above-knee skirt or skort. Or black long-sleeve leotard with black or red plaid skirt. Black bloomers must be worn with a skirt. Poodle socks, ghillies, red hairbow. Hair must be worn back off the face.

Advanced Beginner/Novice: Beginner costume or McTeggart school dress with black bloomers, braided headband, poodle socks, ghillies. Wigs are optional.

Novice and above: Solo costume with matching bloomers plus headband/tiara. Wigs are required.

Note: Dancers wishing to compete in figure dances at a Feis must wear a McTeggart school dress.

Boys:

Plain black pants, long sleeved white shirt with a collar, black socks, black reel shoes. Tie is optional.

You should not wear your costume in the car, since it will wrinkle! It's fairly easy to change at a Feis. Be careful when you drink or eat so you don't spill anything! You should refrain from showy jewelry (i.e. large earrings, distracting necklaces or bracelets). Bring a few extra safety pins with you, and a piece of thin ribbon to tie your competitor number around your waist (if you forget don't worry, a vendor will probably be selling them). Check that you have all the pieces of your costume together, and that your shoes are in your bag.

When to Arrive:

The syllabus will state when your competition should begin. Beginner competitions may be

first thing, or they may immediately follow figure (group) dancing, which often starts first thing. Competitions run on Irish Time, which means everything is approximate and sometimes *runs late*. However, it is best for Beginner dancers to arrive at least 30 minutes before the Feis begins so that there is enough time to get the competitor number, put the dresses on, tie shoes and get to the stage on time.

What to expect at the Feis:

When you arrive, the first thing you need to do is pick up your competitor packet at the Registration Table. Your packet will include your competitor number which shows your competition number(s) on the reverse. Pick up a stage schedule so you can locate your competition number(s) and identify which stage you will be dancing. On your competitor number make a note next to each competition number which dance it is and on which stage so you know where to go when one dance is over. Note: Many Feiseanna will post the stage assignments and syllabus on their school website before the day of the Feis. It is helpful to review these so that you will know ahead of time what stage your dancer will be on.

How the stages work:

Check out the stages and figure out where and when your competitions are. Each stage is numbered or lettered, and each has a list of the competitions being held at that stage, in the order they will be run. As each competition finishes, the next one on the list will begin. DON'T WORRY if you seem to have a conflict where two competitions might be run at the same time. Because of this tendency to run competitions for the same age/ability group on different stages, officials are used to holding one competition while dancers finish in another. If you have questions about or issues with what is going on, ask the stage manager, one of the volunteers or another parent. NEVER speak to the judges.

How the competitions are run:

Your child will be briefed at class on stage etiquette and what to expect when on stage, but here's what you can expect to see. All dancers are lined up facing the judge. If there are more children than can fit across the stage, they may make a *second line* behind the first. Two children from the same school should NOT stand next to each other. If they dance the same steps any mistake will be noticeable to the judge. The music will start, and at a nod from the judge the first two dancers step forward. In a beginner competition, usually the stage manager will be with them and assist them in starting properly. As soon as they have finished they will bow and the next two dancers begin, and so on down the line. You may certainly clap for your child, but please do not cheer too loud or cause a disturbance for the adjudicators or remaining dancers.

When it's your turn to compete:

Check in at your stage when your competition number is up on the board. Make sure you get there early and check in early so they don't mark you as not there!

Try to look as secure as possible walking onto the stage.

Walk onto the stage with your feet crossed, one in front of the other. This makes you look more confident and makes the judge think you know what you're doing

Stand in line with your feet crossed, your back straight, and your shoulders back. Look like the champion you are!

DON'T TALK IN LINE!!!

When it's your turn to compete, step forward and to your left with your feet crossed one in front of the other. Try to smile. Remember to point your toe on the 7th beat and get up onto your tippy toes on the 8th beat. Then dance your heart out!

Eye contact with the judge is important. This shows confidence on your part

RELAX! Smile and have a good time! Put some serious spirit into your dancing! You're doing something you love so show it!

When you're done, make sure you're facing the judge. Give a nice, deep bow with a great big SMILE and walk back into line with your feet crossed, one in front of the other.

Walk off the stage with your feet crossed also and rigid arms. Never let yourself look sloppy until you're off the stage.

Things to always remember:

Be prepared not to 'place' in your competitions. We all like to win, but sometimes you just don't. Don't assume that you will win or place in your competitions; work hard to prepare for the feis and do your very best on stage. Just being there at the feis is an accomplishment!

Dance for the love of it. Always tell yourself "Even if I don't place, I'll still have fun." You don't have to get first place to be the best dancer. Dance for the love and joy of dancing. If you enjoy competing and would like to achieve competitive success, listen closely in class and practice what your teachers ask you to practice. If you work hard and are dedicated, you will be successful!

Try to relax and have a good time while you're competing. Your McTeggart family is cheering you on when you compete! Breathe deep, focus, and smile. Have fun!

How to get results:

Go to the Results board and look up your competition number. For all competitions below Championship level, results are posted in a *designated area*. It usually takes at least half an hour before results are posted, and can take a good deal longer. Winners are listed by competitor number so make sure you have your number handy. If you've won something, you should go to the Awards Room. You will need your competitor number so they can verify the right person is picking up your medal. Most beginner prizes are medals, not trophies. It is also usually where you can go to get your marks (competition scores), usually for a small fee. Sometimes marks are not available the same day and will be e-mailed to you.

****Be sure to let your teachers know how you did! Call or text us; we'd love to celebrate with you/your child no matter the results. DO take pictures throughout the day and send them to Ms. Allison - allison@kyirishdancers.org.**

Other useful information:

There are usually vendors at dance competitions selling dance shoes, poodle socks, apparel, Celtic jewelry and many items.

As stated in the Feis syllabus, absolutely NO VIDEOTAPING OF DANCING COMPETITIONS IS ALLOWED. Each coach's Irish dance steps are considered proprietary material. There is a possibility that those parents or friends caught videotaping will be asked to leave and that competitor disqualified.

Each Feis has a "camping area" that allows dancers and their families to put their gear. It is easiest for families to bring camping chairs or a blanket to sit on. Chairs at the stages are not to be used for storing dresses and gear. They are only to be used by those watching the dancing at that stage.

Large coolers are not allowed at Feiseanna. However, it is acceptable to bring a small, soft-sided cooler with drinks and snacks. Concessions are almost always available and are encouraged to be used for food items.

Helpful Links:

To register and a listing of Feiseanna:

idtana.org
www.efeis.com
www.feisworx.com
www.quickfeis.com

Shoes:

www.rutherfordshoes.com
www.fayshoes.com
www.antoniopacelli.com

Wigs:

www.celticcurls.net
www.4irishdancers.com
www.cameliarose.com

Used Solo Dresses:

www.getthatdress.com
www.feisdresses.com
www.usedsolodresses.com
www.secondchancedresses.com
www.dance-again.com

New Solo Dresses:

www.doiredressdesigns.com

www.elevationdesigns.com

www.gavindoherty.co.uk

www.sioparince.com

Irish Dance Accessories:

www.irishdancediva.com

www.keillys.com

www.zuca.com

www.kelsocover.com

Checklist of what to bring to a Feis

Don't forget these items at home!

- ☐ Dress with cape (Or skirt and white blouse)
- ☐ Pants/Shirt/Socks for Boys
- ☐ Hard/Soft Shoes
- ☐ Poodle Socks
- ☐ Kick Pants
- ☐ Headband/Tiara
- ☐ Water
- ☐ A Healthy Snack

Optional: (most of these items can be purchased at a Feis)

- ☐ Safety Pins
- ☐ A bag or container for your wig
- ☐ Dress Bag
- ☐ Extra pair of Poodle Socks
- ☐ Sock Glue
- ☐ Hair Spray
- ☐ Hairbrush/Comb
- ☐ Hair Pins
- ☐ Makeup
- ☐ Duct Tape/Scissors
- ☐ Money (for parking, admission, programs & food)
- ☐ Blister Protection/Band Aides
- ☐ Aspirin, Ice pack
- ☐ Pen, Paper and Hi-liter for stage assignment sheets
- ☐ Shoe shine kit
- ☐ Camera/batteries
- ☐ Holder for card number or ribbon for around the waist