

# 10 Tips

## For better and more beautiful dancing

by *Dorte Evelyn*



[www.ishtardance.co.uk](http://www.ishtardance.co.uk)



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**1. Listen to the Music:** I know this sounds obvious, but a lot of dancers actually don't *really* listen. Get to know the music you're dancing to as was it your favourite poem, whether it's for a stage performance or something more casual. Know it by heart and then listen to it again as if it was totally new to you. You'll discover beats, phrases, little elements that you may not have noticed initially.

**2. Listen to your Heart:** Once you know the music, listen to your heart and the emotions that the music stirs in you. Is it happy, jolly, fun, sad, introvert, reflective? Then use that mood when you're dancing. (More on this in my Performance Perfect course).

**3. Know your Technique:** Again, this sounds obvious, but even advanced dancers can forget their technique in their desire to give a performance. Think of the different moves as your vocabulary. You don't need them all to string a sentence together, but as a singer who tweaks their lyrics or the way they sing them, little tweaks to your moves, can make a big difference and keep it interesting whilst still simple for you to remember and easy for your audience to follow.

**4. And Breathe:** I tell my students this all the time, because every now and again, we all forget to... Breathe! It prevents tension from building up in your body, and will also help you with concentration and performance. Think of dancing as a moving meditation, being able to breathe smoothly throughout is as essential to dancers as it is to singers.

**5. Check your Posture:** You may have danced for many years and think you have your posture nailed, but even professional dancers can develop bad postural habits. Always start your warm up and dancing with a posture check. I still do it before going on stage! It can make all the difference to the quality of your movement.

**6. Treat your Feet with Love:** They are your essential partner throughout life – not just for dancing. Wear shoes that allow your feet to move correctly both when dancing and in everyday life. If you dance bare foot, then make sure that the floor is safe to do so. Many dancers, especially when performing, have cut their feet, slipped on spillages or twisted their ankles on uneven surfaces. If you have to worry about your feet, you can't dance to your full ability.

**7. Fuel your Body:** Whether you're heading to class or a performance, always make sure to stay hydrated. I'm a great believer in pure water, even the odd energy drink if you're really working hard. But the best hydrator and nutrient replenisher is milk! Fizzy drinks aren't great as they're likely to give you a massive sugar rush, which is followed by a nasty sugar low. They can also bloat your stomach and make certain moves feel uncomfortable.



**8. Eat Well and Dance Better:** Dancers don't need to look a certain way to dance beautifully. On the contrary, dancing is probably the best overall body workout, which will allow you to work with your body, both in its natural shape and using its current strength. Make sure to give your body the fuel it needs to do what you ask it to. Eat what you love in moderations, and never go crazy and eat a heavy meal just before or after an intense dance session. Bananas are the one super food that all dancers should have in their bag because they're packed with nutrients, dietary fibres and natural sugars. (check out my blog for more information on a Dancers Diet).

**9. Warm Up and then Stretch:** People often think they don't need to warm up, either because they've danced for so many years, or because it's 'just dancing'. But a warm up should never be skipped as it helps to prepare your muscles to move better and can prevent you from getting injured. Once you're warm and feel nice and supple, don't forget to give yourself a gentle stretch. Know what works for you and never rush it. That way you can really allow your body to move freely. A post dance stretch can also prevent you feeling any stiffness afterwards.

**10. Finally, Keep Learning:** As a dancer you never stop exploring moves, combinations or choreographies. Because your body is constantly changing, moves can be rediscovered and reinvented all the time. We may gain or lose weight, but our strength also varies due to injuries, flexibility issues etc. Exploring the music, history and culture behind the dance can also totally change the way you execute the moves. You can find many great resources online, and there are also academic courses and workshops that can help develop you and your dancing. Finding a good teacher, coach or mentor that can bring out the best in you is also essential, and will keep you inspired to continue dancing and learning, even on those days when nothing feels right. And yes, most dancers have been there.

Whichever of these points, if not all, you take on board, don't forget why you dance. It should always be fun and make you feel great. So keep exploring and enjoy! Happy dancing.

*Darte Evelyn*

Move better, feel better, be better

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