



How to get that perfect shot:

I have studied and analyzed my picture orders for the past ten years and I'm actually pretty surprised at what the ordering trends are. It basically comes down to 50/50. Half of the parents out there prefer a traditional dance pose and the other half want something more modern and fun. I think the former must like the timelessness of traditional poses, they are pretty nostalgic, especially if the mom danced growing up. The latter is probably just looking for pictures that really makes their child look good. Or, better yet, if parents are buying more than one, they will often buy a package of each.

The biggest point you need to take away from this section is that the first step in you making money on these pictures is actually taking good pictures. You are now fully invested in making sure that every kid smiles and points their toes and doesn't slouch. Most of the photographers I had before I started doing it myself would just click and say "next". I was shocked at how many kids they would let through without even getting a good smile. Like they didn't care at all if the parents liked them. **YOU SHOULD CARE!** Every dancer who you can get a real smile out of, potentially increases your profit. Take the extra 5 seconds to make them laugh, it will be worth it!

- Before you step back to start shooting, fix hair, tutu, laces, belt, straps, and fringe. Also make a note of any bandaid, scrape, or fake tattoo. It's easier to conceal these things in the actual posing than trying to Photoshop it later. If you absolutely have to Photoshop, it's fine, but you'll save a lot of time if you can hide these things at this point.
- I shoot for a minimum of 8 pictures of each child in each costume. If I know a child is only in one class, I will take a few extra of them, so they have 10-15 to choose from. Especially the babies- take tons of pictures of the babies. Not only will you probably need to, because they are not as coordinated, but also because their parents are suckers for cute pictures.
- Always click two pictures of each pose (minimum), then 2 each of 2 close up angles. Typically, if a dancer is cooperative and smiles nicely, 8 really isn't even necessary, but more precautionary. It's always possible that one of the two could be out of focus. If you have a dancer that is a little less comfortable, you may end up taking up to 20. That's okay. Clicks are free... you're not paying for film. Keep shooting until you have at least one good one. The irony is, parents of awkward kids who get one good picture are more likely to buy than parents of adorable kids who are perfect in every picture. Those parents have millions of pictures.

- For the two posed pictures, keep your focus wide. You want to have a lot of room all the way around your subject for cropping later. Here's why this is important (I learned this the hard way)



- For close up portrait pictures, slightly angle your subject on a diagonal so it doesn't look like a mug shot. But don't do it too much, or they look a little too wonky.



- For close up landscape pictures, slightly off center your subject for visual interest. But not too much or parents will ask for you to recenter them.

