



## **Picture Scheduling Tips How to Run a Perfect Picture Week**

Each studio does pictures a little differently, and that's totally fine. Find a good fit for your studio and stick with it... however, if you're not making a profit on your class pictures, then maybe it's time to try something new. I hear lots of studio owners say they stopped doing class pictures because the turnout was bad, or that the parents really weren't that into them, so now they offer individuals by sign-up on a weekend. These are things that seem accommodating, but you are really taking your ability to make money and throwing it out the window.

Below are my tips for running a successful picture WEEK- yes week! :)

- Pick a week (a whole week) in the sweet spot of your dance year when costumes are in, but it's not too close to recital. Not only do you need those precious last few weeks for cleaning dances, but ideally, you will be able to get your picture orders back to your parents before recital.
- Schedule class pictures to take place as close to your normal dance schedule as possible. That way, parents really can't say they have a conflict.
- If you can't schedule pictures at the exact class time, always start them later, not earlier than their normal class time. This ensures that if someone forgets about pictures and shows up to class, they may have time to run home and grab their costume and make it back before the end of their group time slot. Parents get really mad if they forget and then miss them.
- Alternate combo classes to give them about 15-30 minutes in between to change. Any longer than that and kids get restless, and less than that and parents get stressed. So at any given point, there are no more than 3 groups in the building at a time. You can see my scheduling structure in the folder.
- Have enough staff handy to keep people calm. Best case scenario would be one person at the front desk to handle all non-picture related questions, one person floating in the dressing room to help answer costume, hair and make up questions, and another in charge of lining kids up. Remember, you don't have regular classes this week, so your payroll can go towards this staff instead. Be sure to pay them their meeting or office rate though, they are not teaching.
- Have a small stash of bobby pins, hairspray, safety pins, etc. The lost and found shoe bin comes in handy too sometimes.

- Our studio offers free alterations for recital costumes and we have someone pinning costumes to keep for alterations. Parents LOVE this! Usually, it's very simple alterations.
- Have FUN in the picture room! Turn on fun music, wear a silly hat, do a little dance... whatever it takes to make your kids actually enjoy the process. With the little ones, I just act like a complete goofball and make lots of jokes. With the older ones, I turn on some jams and click a lot like they're in a high fashion photo shoot. If they totally go for it and ham it up, I just keep clicking. They have so much fun with it.
- You may decide not to take the pictures yourself, which is totally fine. But I encourage you, as the studio owner, to be part of this process. I have been doing this for 18 years, and taking the pictures myself for the past 11. Although I don't teach a single rec class anymore, I still love getting to know my students during picture week. It's a great way to stay connected. They will remember it too. (And, if you're in the room, you don't have to deal with the parents ;))
- Don't sweat the small stuff. You may have a very strict dress code and want hair and make up a certain way for your show, but ultimately, it's the parents who have to like what they see if they are going to buy anything. For pictures, let them have bangs. Let them not wear makeup, or wear way too much makeup. Let them wear the wrong color tights or shoes. Let her wear that ankle bracelet that will make her sob if she has to cut it off. It's not that big of a deal. Keep the kids happy, keep the moms happy, sell lots of pictures. You can enforce the rules all you want at the show. :)
- DO NOT OFFER TO PHOTOSHOP A DANCER IN IF SHE CAN'T MAKE PICTURES!! I have made this mistake. It will cost you so much time and energy and the parents won't be happy anyway. It's really hard to do. The ONLY time I will Photoshop a dancer into a group is if she doesn't have a costume and it's our fault. So, let's say one costume from a class is backordered and doesn't arrive by picture week. In this case we will Photoshop. Otherwise, sorry, it can't be done. I'll upload a video tutorial on how to do this, just in case you have to. It's not fun, but sometimes necessary.
- Offer to take pictures of dancers not doing recital. Sometimes, a parent of a dancer who is not in the show will get a little miffed that they are missing a week of class and they aren't even in the show. Then we tell her that she is also welcome to come take some dance pictures and she is thrilled.
- If anyone can't make their scheduled class picture time, just tell them they can come any time the schedule says we are taking pictures and we'll squeeze her in. Remember, every happy smiling kid equals potential revenue. So the idea is to make it as easy as possible to get every single dancer in front of your camera. Don't offer to Photoshop her into the group shot, but sure, she can take individuals any time that is convenient for them.
- Always offer sibling pictures. Some will come in every single costume together, but most will just pick one. Again, it takes a couple extra minutes and increases the odds of that parent buying pictures... and usually, a third package. One of child one, one of child two and one of the sibling pic.

Good luck, have fun, and HAPPY PICTURE WEEK!