



How can I be sure my child is ready for your ballet classes?

While 3 years-old and potty trained are our objective benchmarks for accepting children into our classes, there are several more subjective achievements that children do not necessarily attain on the precise date of their 3rd birthday. While we find that most children who have recently celebrated turning 3 years-old do well in our classes, some need a little more time to make sure they have reached the following expectations physically, behaviorally, and emotionally.

Physically, children need to have the body awareness to consciously isolate their different body parts (knees, fingers, toes). Our classes also expect that children can control their movement and positions long enough to sit reasonably still during our 5 minute story-reading portion of the class, and to stay on their mat while we do our circle exercises (10-15 minutes). Successful potty-training gives us a good idea of whether this physical control has been gained, but sometimes even rock star underpants-wearers need a little more time to make sure they can keep their bodies where they want them. A young 3 year-old can typically gallop with their dominant foot leading and can typically hop on two feet. If your child is not yet able to hop on two feet then we would suggest waiting.

Behaviorally, children in our 3-4 year old classes should be able to follow a 2-part direction (i.e. “tip toe to the wall, and then sit down criss-cross applesauce”) when they begin our classes, as we work toward 3 and 4-part directions as we progress. In general, we expect that our students can follow the simple and kind directions that are given to the class as a whole...not perfectly, but at least 80% of the time without a personal reminder. Each students’ ability to follow the flow of our class (which is completely consistent from week to week) is very important for the class to run smoothly, and without negatively affecting the other children’s experience in the class. Learning to follow simple, logical rules and directions is something we work on as a class, but we prefer that students begin our classes with the readiness to work on these skills.

Emotionally, children need to be able to separate from their caregiver without so much trouble that it worries the rest of the children or takes a lot of the teachers’ time and focus away from teaching the rest of the class. We will work with families on making these transitions comfortable for everyone, but in the event that a child’s crying in class is frightening the other children or overwhelming the focus of the class, we may need to give that child more time to feel comfortable by waiting another semester before they begin class. We never want ballet class to be a negative or scary experience for a small child, so if waiting for a little more separation confidence is what’s needed, we feel it’s well worth the wait!

In general, Storybook Ballet is structured to gently teach and use these school-readiness skills, allowing the children to fully engage and enjoy their ballet classes. As we work with our young 3’s and 4’s, we introduce, reinforce, and encourage consistent awareness of these skills and enjoy watching young dancers quickly improve from one class to the next. A child who experiences a rocky first class may only need another week or two to adjust so they can go with the flow of the class. However, if after 3 weeks of class, we don’t see progress being made in one or more of these areas, we may recommend withdrawing (we will credit the tuition for the remaining classes) and waiting for the next semester to try again.