

All About Highland Exams



What Are They?

Highland dancing follows a syllabus - similar to Ballet or Tap dance. There are different programs you can follow, but here at Celtic Ceilidh we teach the SDTA (Scottish Dance Teachers' Alliance) Highland syllabus. Within the syllabus there are different types of exams and levels, starting with the basic movements they learn at a young age, and progressing up to full dances and teachers exams eventually, if that's what the dancers wishes to do. You will also hear the exams referred to as 'medal tests'.

The SDTA sends an examiner from Scotland which the dancers do their test for, and that examiner will complete a feedback sheet for each dancer with their results. They will receive this sheet with their result at their next Highland class following the exam. A few months later, they'll also receive a certificate and medal – all the way from Scotland! - recognizing the successful completion of the exam. Exams are done twice a year, typically in November and February or early March. The dates are scheduled by Scotland, and released to us approximately a month before. Exams do usually fall on a weekday, and dancers may have to miss some school to participate.

Although participation is not required, most of our students do their exams as it allows them to see their progression and have something to work towards, and also gives them the experience of dancing for and receiving feedback from a professional. Even at a young age we encourage dancers to participate in exams, so they can become familiar with the experience. We would never enter a dancer in exams if their instructor felt that they were not ready.

Dancers are grouped with a few fellow dancers at the same level so they are not alone during the exam. The exam itself will take anywhere from 5 to 20 minutes, depending on the exam type and level.

There are four different types of dance exams - Highland, National, Irish Jig, and Sailor's Hornpipe, as well as theory exams. Theory is an oral exam that tests the knowledge of positions, movements and steps. All dancers start with the 'Highland' stream. Typically, we do National + Sailor's Hornpipe exams in November, and Highland + Theory + Irish Jig exams in February. Younger just starting exams will do 'Highland' exams for both sessions.

Preparing for Highland Exams

Once Scotland has sent us our exam dates, we email out a schedule with the exam your dancer is eligible for, and the fee to complete that exam. Fees range from \$18 to \$60 per exam depending on the level. Often, dancers are eligible to do more than one exam in a session. If your dancer is not able to participate in an exam session for any reason, you must notify the office so that we can finalize the schedule.

It is very important that dancers attend their classes regularly in order to learn the requirements of their exams. They should also spend some time at home practicing to feel prepared.

Before exams, you'll also want to check that your dancer has all the required pieces to their outfit (and that they still fit!). See 'Types & Levels' on the next page for the outfit required for each exam.

*See next page for what to know on exam day, and
the different types and levels of exams*



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On Exam Day

In addition to having the required outfit, there are a few other rules to be aware of for the exam to ensure the day goes smoothly!

- Dancers are not permitted to wear jewelry, makeup or nail polish.
- Female dancers must have hair up in a tight, smooth bun – the bun should be at the ‘point’ of their head, so it *is* visible from the front.
- Dancers must be at the studio *ready to dance* (costume on, hair done) **a half hour prior to their scheduled time.**

Although we do our best with scheduling, times of the exams do vary with each candidate. As a result, exams may run ahead or behind. As long as dancers arrive a half-hour early, they will not miss their exam.

Types & Levels of Exams

Type	Levels	Outfit
Highland	Dance Stars 1, 2, 3, 4 & 5 - Age 3 to 6 Preparatory Preliminary Fling Preliminary Sword Pre-Bronze Fling Pre-Bronze Sword Bronze Pre-Silver Silver Pre-Gold Gold Scottish Award 1 to 5 (SA1 – SA5)	Class Wear (Black Bodysuit & White Knee High Socks) – Dance Stars, Preparatory & Preliminary Kilt Outfit – Pre-Bronze & Up
National	Pre-Bronze Lilt Pre-Bronze Flora Bronze Silver Gold Scottish Award 1 to 5 (SA1 – SA5)	White Dress Outfit with Plaid OR Aboyne Outfit
Sailor’s Hornpipe	Bronze Silver Gold Scottish Award 1 & 2 (SA1, SA2)	Sailors Hornpipe Outfit & Hat
Irish Jig	Bronze Silver Gold Scottish Award 1 & 2 (SA1, SA2)	Irish Jig Outfit & Jig Shoes
Theory	Primary - Under 9 Years Grades 1 to 6	Kilt Outfit