

What to Expect at A Summer Dance Intensive

You might still be bundling up for the winter or awaiting your spring break, but summer will be here before you know it. For a dancer, summer means time to rest, hang out, and... dive even further into your training at a summer intensive.

If it's your first time thinking about the world of summer dance intensives, it may take a little research to find the right fit, but it's doable! And as far as auditioning and self-tapes go, taking the time to prepare well in advance will always be one of the most beneficial things a young dancer can do.

The Audition

Many summer dance intensives require an audition, but not all of them do. And, just because they don't have an audition doesn't mean the intensive won't be full of high-quality learning experiences.

If the intensive you want to do does have an audition requirement, you'll want to prep your materials early. Video submission requests can range from just 30 seconds of improv to several minutes of specific across-the-floor combinations and different styles of dance. If your audition is in person, you'll still want to prepare early enough to iron out details like travel, and printing a headshot if that is required.

CLI Conservatory dancer with arms outstretched against a black background with green and red light in the foreground

Late winter to early spring is when most summer dance intensives open their applications. Some studios will guide their parents and students through the application process and share which summer dance intensives they think would be most beneficial to young dancers.

Full Days of Dancing

You'll be dancing... A LOT. There's a reason they are called dance "intensives," and it's because these programs really do use all of the time and space available to young dancers in the summer.

Most programs organize their schedules around skill level and age, meaning that different groups within the same intensive might have different schedules. Of course, you'll always be offered a lunch break, and it's important to use it wisely!

Fueling your body throughout a long day of dance is actually one of the most important things a dancer can do at a summer intensive. Let's say the intensive is two weeks long. You could be dancing 5 days a week, in new styles, with new teachers, or even in a group of dancers that are a little more advanced than you're used to. Your body will be using a lot of energy during that time, and you might not even notice it!

Dancer leaning back off center with one leg bent at the CLI Conservatory with dancers in the background of dance studio

Don't wait until you're hungry or thirsty to fuel yourself. Be smart about the kind of food you eat over your lunch break (a heavy lunch full of fried food and sweets is not the best choice, for example), and always opt for healthy options when you have the choice. Be sure to keep different types of healthy snacks easily accessible in your dance bag too. You never know when you'll need the extra energy boost!

Cross Train: New Instructors, New Styles

Cross-training normally refers to working your muscles in a way that isn't dance, such as going to the gym, taking yoga classes, or playing soccer with your friends. However, if you think of cross-training as working with different teachers and training in different styles, then a summer dance intensive is the perfect place to cross-train!

First off, you're bound to have new instructors, even if the dance intensive is close to home. Just hearing a correction phrased differently by a new teacher can make a monumental difference in how you apply it. New instructors might have new advice in a dance class that differs from what you're used to, so always be listening.

You'll also be training in a range of styles, even if the program is specialized. For example, a ballet intensive may have partnering and variations classes, a musical theatre program may offer acting or singing, and a contemporary dance program might offer contact improvisation or choreography classes.

At some dance intensives, you'll be learning from choreographers that are actively working in the industry. They often teach and work at a faster pace than dancers are used to in the average studio class. Don't stress! The point of a summer dance intensive is to learn as much as you can and challenge yourself. Pick up what you can, act as professional as you know how to, and try and let any other worries go. After all, it will be summertime. No one should be that stressed in the summer!

Dancers.... Lots of Them

A summer intensive brings together dancers from all kinds of backgrounds, skill levels, and relationships to dance. Everyone is there for a reason, and a real

community can start to form throughout the intensive, even between dancers who didn't know each other before the program started.

Attending a summer dance intensive with a friend can make the number of new dancers less overwhelming, but flying solo can be a great opportunity to learn more about yourself and make friends you wouldn't have expected otherwise. No matter how you arrive at the program, it's a good idea to introduce yourself to other dancers the first few days. Meeting new people, connecting with like-minded dancers, and even networking are all important parts of a summer dance intensive!

Dancer in blue shirt with hands above and in front of his head in a room full of other dancers at the CLI Conservatory

A great thing about unfamiliar or challenging situations is that supportive friendships and teams often arise naturally. It's important to trust that you'll find your group naturally, even if you don't find them on the first day.

When you're in the studio, there might be more dancers than you're used to. Remember: you're there to train! There shouldn't be any pressure to always stand out or be in the front. You can choose to prioritize your goals. For instance, stand in the front when you want more corrections or to see the choreography better, or you can stand in the back when you want more space to dance or get in the movement in your body.

You might have your sacred spot at the barre and in the center at your home studio, but over the summer, you can take the opportunity to break out of your comfort zone!

A Challenge

Ah, yes. The main reason we try new things or go somewhere new: to challenge ourselves!

You can expect to be pushed out of your comfort zone while you're training at a summer dance intensive. It may be challenging in the techniques you're learning, the number of hours you're dancing a day, or just the fact that you're traveling away from home. But, it all comes with a lot of fun, adventure, and most importantly, growth!

Love a challenge? That's awesome! Now, channel that excitement into preparation and goal-setting. Do you want to work on your pirouettes? Eating healthier? Standing in the front of groups more often? Having an idea of the skills you want to work on will help to make you stand out as an informed and responsible dancer.

Fun!

Above all, summer dance intensives are an exciting place to dance, make new friends, and learn about yourself and the world around you.

Many summer dance intensives end their programs, with a culminating show. The type of show depends on the length of the program, but it's not uncommon to start rehearsals right away since you'll have limited time to put on the show. If you have a show at the intensive you're attending, don't be afraid to invite friends and family, even if you're dancing a style you've never danced before. If anything, you should invite them especially if you're dancing a style you've never danced before. You deserve to celebrate your hard work!

Ballroom teachers Manny and Lory Castro hold up hands with the CLI Conservatory dancers in a dance studio

Summer dance intensives are an essential part of a serious young dancer's training. But, there are some barriers to entry, from the audition process to the financial or logistical complexities of the program. Some intensives offer financial

scholarships, and a program close by may be more affordable than one across the pond.

If that's still not in the cards for you and your schedule, consider building out your own summer dance intensive from CLI's multitude of classes and courses from the nation's top choreographers.

And wait a minute... CLI now offers an in-person summer intensive too! If you've kept up with the CLI Conservatory on Instagram, you've seen a taste of what the intensive has to offer a young dancer. Here's a hint: it's definitely challenging, fun, new, intense, and a vibrant community, waiting for you!