

FIRST TIME CHAMPIONSHIP AND OIREACHTAS GUIDE



Congratulations on reaching the Championship level! Although you are now at the second highest level of competing, you are going to feel a little like a brand new feis dancer again.

After spending the last few years becoming a pro the many rules and workings of a feis at the grade level (Beginner-Prizewinner), you now have a completely different set of rules to learn as a newly graduated Championship dancer.

To get started, here are the main differences you will notice.

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN DANCING AT GRADE LEVEL AND CHAMPIONSHIP LEVEL

Less Dances

At a regular feis, instead of dancing all 7 solo dances and having each dance judged individually, each dancer only dances three times and is given a final score and placing based on all three rounds:

Round 1 - Hard Shoe Round (Either Hornpipe or Treble Jig)

Round 2- Soft Shoe Round (Either Reel or Slip Jig – Boys always dance reel)

Round 3- Set Dance – During which the dancer performs onstage alone.

Note: Some competitions may reverse the order of Round 1 and 2.

Longer Dances

In addition to only focusing on three dances, each dancer must perform on stage for a longer period of time than they did in Prizewinner. Here are the required dance lengths:

- Reel – 48 bars (three steps)
- Slip Jig – 40 bars (two and a half steps)
- Treble Jig – 48 bars (three steps)
- Hornpipe – 40 bars (two and a half steps)
- Set Dance (non-traditional) – Differing lengths. Performed to tune of choice at speed of choice.

Which Dances will I Do?

For regular competitions, the dancer and their teacher decide which dances they will perform for each round. Although most times, the dances that will be required for the next major competition are used since that is what the dancer is working towards

At the Oireachtas, the soft and heavy dances are predetermined by the dancer's age. The final syllabus is released in the fall by the Western Canadian Irish Dance Teachers Association (WCIDTA) and can be found on their website at: www.wcidta.com Your teacher will also inform you of the dances you will be performing.

As a rule, Slip Jig and Treble Jig are paired together and Reel and Hornpipe are paired together. The exceptions to this rule are Boys, who always dance reel for their light round, and dancers under the age of 10, who always dance Reel, Treble Jig and a Traditional Set.

For Nationals and the Oireachtas, dancers may dance any set but for Worlds, dancers must perform a set with opposing timing to their heavy round. For example, if you are dancing Treble Jig, you must dance a Hornpipe timed Set.

The Set Dance

Now instead of dancing a Traditional Set, Championship dancers are required to perform a Set Dance. So instead of dancing steps that are common to all Irish dancers, Championship dancers get a dance that is unique to their school and oftentimes, unique to the dancer.

This dance is performed alone onstage without any other competitors to bump into— yet another difference but, a refreshing one!

What is a set dance?

A set dance is danced to a specific tune with a set number of bars. The dances are named for the name of tune they are danced to.

The set dances vary from the regular dances (Reel, Light Jig etc) in that each section of these tunes are various lengths. The other dances all contain just 8 bars per section (16 bars per step) but the Traditional Sets and Set dances can have up to 24!

What is the difference between Set dances and Traditional Set dances?

Set dances are performed by Championship dancers only (dancers in Prelim and Open).

As well, the speeds of Traditional Set dances are predetermined but the speed of a set dance is chosen by the teacher depending on choreography, a dancer's skill level and timing of the tune. For example, The Three Sea Captains (in 6/8 time) is usually danced from a speed of 69 to as fast as 72.

Another big difference is that the Traditional Sets use choreographies that have been passed down from generation, having been created by the "Dance Masters" of the 1600's. Whereas the set dances



are Choreographed by the dancer's teacher to suit the level, style and strengths of each particular dancer. The higher level the dancer, the more unique their set dance will be.

Of the 38 set dances used today in Commission competitions, only 7 of them are traditional sets: St. Patrick's day, The Blackbird, Job of Journeywork, Garden of Daisies, King of the Fairies, Jockey to the Fair and Three Sea Captains.

And, just in case your weren't confused already, some of the Traditional Set tunes are also used at a slower speed as set dances such as the King of The Fairies and the Job of Journeywork.

More Judges

In championships, each dancer will perform for a panel of three judges instead of just one. This is done to help balance out scores that may differ greatly from the other judges.

Advancing to Open

A dancer advances from Preliminary to Open by winning two Preliminary Championships. Which means that a dancer now has to achieve first overall across all three dances instead of just one dance.

Longer practice time

Now instead of being required to dance 60 minutes per day (6 hours per week), Championship dancers should be dancing closer to 1 ½ hours per day OR 9 hours per week.

*Remember to have a look at the practice page online for useful hints and tips.

Amount of dancers onstage at a time is pre-determined

Hardshoe Round: 3 at a time on the stage

Softshoe Round: 3 at a time for ages up to 14 and 2 at a time for ages 15 and older

Round 3 – One dancer at a time

Ability to Dance at the Oireachtas and Nationals

Dancers in Preliminary Championships and Open Championships may dance at the Oireachtas.

Dancers in Open may attend Nationals (North American's) whereas Preliminary dancers have the option to qualify to dance at Nationals by attending the Oireachtas. (more on that later)

OIREACHTAS GUIDE

What is an Oireachtas?

Oireachtas (pronounced "o-rock-tus") is the Irish word for "gathering". In the Irish dance world, Oireachtas refers to an Irish dance competition that qualifies dancers to compete at the World Irish Dance Championship competition (Oireachtas Rince na Cruinne) or for Nationals (North American's).

Dancers must compete in the Oireachtas of his or her geographical region. There are seven competition regions in North America: New England, Eastern (Mid-Atlantic), Mid-America (Midwest), Southern, Western United States, Eastern Canada, and Western Canada

Our Oireachtas region is Western Canada (BC, Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba.) and it is held each November with Worlds being held in April and Nationals in July of each following year.

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN A FEIS AT CHAMPIONSHIP LEVEL AND AN OIREACHTAS

All Levels are Mixed

There is no separation between Preliminary and Open Championship. It's all mixed together. So you never know if the dancer next to you is in Prizewinner, Preliminary, or Open Championship. You could even be competing against a previous World qualifier.

Even MORE Judges!

The Oireachtas will be judged in one of two ways. Either each round is judged by a different panel of three judges (so start-to-finish, nine adjudicators) or a set panel of five judges, that judge all three rounds. Just as a side note, World Championships uses 7 judges per round!



You will only perform your Set Dance if you Recall

At a regular Feis, all dancers dance all three rounds. At the Oireachtas, only the dancers that are "recalled" get to dance their third round (Set dance)

What is a Recall?

What happens is this: the scores for the first two rounds (light and heavy round) are tallied up and the dancers with the highest scores are announced. Those dancers then perform their Set dances. The Oireachtas recalls 50% of the competition for round three, North Americans recalls 50%, and Worlds recalls 30%.

Once the dancers complete their final round after recalling, the final placings (results) are announced during a large ceremony held at the end of the day.

QUALIFYING FOR WORLDS OR NATIONALS AT THE OIREACHTAS

Qualifying for worlds (For Open dancers only)

This part is a little confusing so, if you don't want to memorize this, the dancers that have qualified for worlds will be announced during the results ceremonies. Please note that dancers cannot qualify for the World Championship until they reach the U10 age group.

For those of you that are interested, here are the details:

In a single year age group, 5 dancers are qualified for the first 20 dancers, then one more is qualified for every 10 dancers there are beyond the first 20. In double or more year age groups, 7 dancers are qualified for the first 20, then one more for every 10 dancers after that. In addition, any World medal holder is automatically re-qualified for the World Championship the following year, so the age group receives one additional qualifying spot for every medal holder. As well, the Senior Mens and Senior Ladies competitions qualify an additional 2 dancers for Worlds as there are less dancers entered in those age groups at worlds.

Qualifying for Nationals at the Oireachtas (Prelim Dancers)

As mentioned before, all dancers currently competing at the Open Championship level are automatically qualified for North Americans (Nationals).

If you dance at the Preliminary Championship level, you have to qualify for North Americans at the Oireachtas.

For each age category, the rule is that the top 10 plus 25% of the total entrants qualify for North Americans.

Note that a recall does not guarantee that a Preliminary dancer has qualified for Nationals due to the fact that 50% of the competition is recalled but only the top 10 plus 25% go to North Americans.

For example, if there are 80 dancers entered in a competition, then the top 50% of the competition would be recalled (40 dancers) and only the top 30 dancers would qualify to go to North American's (Top 10 + 25% of total entrants (20) = Top 30). Which means that 10 of the dancers that had recalled would not have qualified to go to North American's.

There is one exception for Preliminary dancers. Under 8 and Under 9 dancers will be entered at the discretion of their teacher.

Qualifying teams for worlds

While the majority of the competitions in the Oireachtas are solo events, schools can also bring teams to compete in eight-hand dance, four-hand dance, figure choreography, and dance drama competitions. Competition at the Oireachtas is sufficient to qualify the team to compete at the World Championships.

Adults may compete in the Oireachtas in Adult Ceili events, there are no solo adult competitions at this level. Additionally, adult ceili teams cannot qualify for the World Championships, though they may compete at the North American Nationals. Adult, in Irish Dance terms, is someone who started Irish dancing over the age of 18, or a former dancer who has taken more than 5 years off, with no Irish dance competitions or formal training during that time.

IRISH DANCE CHAMPIONSHIP ADJUDICATION AND MARKING

In case you are interested, here is what happens behind the scenes at a feis with the dancer's scores.

In the grade levels at competitions, Beginner - Prizewinner, each dancer is given a mark out of 100 by his or her adjudicator. Each adjudicator has a slightly different "scale." For example, for one judge, 85 might be the highest score they give out, whereas another judge might be more generous and give their top dancer a 95. The highest mark wins, second highest is awarded second and so on.

But in Championship and Oireachtas competitions, a dancer is graded by three adjudicators and their championship result is based on all three dances. If you have three judges and they each give each dancer a score out of 100 based on a personal scale, it becomes a mathematical nightmare backstage to add and average every judge's score for each round.

To make tabulating easier, each judge's marks (raw scores) are converted into corresponding "Irish Points" using a chart created for commission competitions. The Irish Points are vaguely logarithmic, in that 1st place = 100 points, 2nd place = 75, 3rd place = 65 etc, until 50th place = 1. This gives higher marks by single judges more weight than average marks by more judges. In other words, if a dancer gets a first place from one judge somewhere, it will increase their overall placing in the competition by a surprising amount. Conversely, this gives dancers that get a first place from two judges a higher lead than a dancer that was only placed first by one of the judges.

For example, in a 3 judge competition it is almost impossible to **Not** get first with 2 judges agreeing that 1st place is warranted, since with 200 Irish points, the 3rd judge would need to place a dance 7th or

worse to overcome the 25 point bonus between 1st and 2nd. This scoring method helps ensure that a single bad adjudicator does not unfairly ruin the results. At a standard 3 judge Feis competition, a unanimous 1st place score is 300 (100 from each judge). At Regional Oireachtas competitions, there are 5 judges who rate all three dance programs, creating the possibility of a perfect score of 500. At the World Championships (Oireachtas Rince na Cruinne), there are 7 judges, which means that 700 would be perfect if all 7 judges agree that one dancer performed the best.

Here is the Irish Point chart:

1st 100	11th 41	21st 30	31st 20	41st 10
2nd 75	12th 39	22nd 29	32nd 19	42nd 9
3rd 65	13th 38	23rd 28	33rd 18	43rd 8
4th 60	14th 37	24th 27	34th 17	44th 7
5th 56	15th 36	25th 26	35th 16	45th 6
6th 53	16th 35	26th 25	36th 15	46th 5
7th 50	17th 34	27th 24	37th 14	47th 4
8th 47	18th 33	28th 23	38th 13	48th 3
9th 45	19th 32	29th 22	39th 12	49th 2
10th 43	20th 31	30th 21	40th 11	50th 1