

Ballet Clothing

Every form of dance has its own style of clothing. Whether you enjoy jazz, polka, waltzes, swing or modern dance styles, there is likely a special style of clothing to suit the dance. Ballet is no exception to the rule.

Ballet certainly has its own style of clothing, but it is different from the costumes worn by past generations of dancers. In the early years of ballet the dancers wore fancy and heavy costumes, with skirts that often flowed right down to the floor. The purpose of these long skirts was to hide the stumbling steps of the less-skilled dancers. Modern day dancers have confident control over their delicate steps, and do not feel the need to hide their steps from the audience.

It could be that today's ballet dancers are simply more skilled. A major factor in the increase in skilled dancers may be the rise in the number of ballet techniques. There are more than one hundred different dance steps and techniques taught at modern ballet dance academies. In addition, the children learning to dance ballet are encouraged to share and develop their hidden talents. As confidence is an important element in ballet training, these children would not be encouraged to "hide" their mistakes under oversized garments as they may have in earlier years.

As dancers became more skilled, the standard for ballet clothing also started to change. Today's modern ballet dancers prefer to wear costumes that are shorter than ever before. The skirts worn by contemporary dancers are typically above-the-knee styles. These dancers possess exemplary skill, and do not feel compelled to hide their steps beneath longer skirts. Instead, they invite the audience to watch their movements and steps. Longer skirts would also interfere with their movements, making it nearly impossible to perform many of the ballet moves popular in contemporary dance.

In the earliest days of ballet dance, the performers wore long skirts that cascaded all the way to the floor. Then, in the early 1700s, a forward-thinking dancer by the name of Marie Camargo cut her ballet skirt to above her ankles. Although barely noticeable by today's standards, this change caused a whole new era in ballet clothing. As more complicated ballet steps and techniques became popular, the skirt lengths became shorter and shorter. Eventually, the commonly accepted length of ballet clothing was cut above the knees.

As the length of ballet clothing has progressed (or, rather, regressed), styles and designs have also changed. Experts of contemporary dance believe that the best ballet clothing is simple and lightweight. It must show all of the lines of the dancer's body, without interfering with the intricate steps and techniques of the performers.

Ballet clothing, like the dance itself, has greatly evolved throughout the years. Today's dancers believe that "less is more". Less skirt length allows more movement and, as a result, a better performance.