



2025-2026 Handbook

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www.swbtballet.org

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profile

Southwest Ballet Theatre is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization that provides high quality dance education as well as professional performances to the community at an affordable price. By obtaining grants and the broader community's monetary support, SWBT does not require each participant to pay significant theatre, costume or other fees associated with a production. SWBT offers a seamless transition from the dance studio to the stage. As a pre-professional studio, SWBT will prepare the dancer not only for the professional stage, but also for a well-rounded education in the performing arts.

mission

To enrich, inspire, and uplift lives through classical dance education and performance.

values

One of the unique benefits of participating in SWBT is the community that is gained through this type of group experience. We have always taken very seriously an emphasis on setting good examples of mentorship, generosity, commitment and kindness to others. Parents, please talk to your dancer about these core principles of the group, and clarify their understanding of this commitment, no matter what their age.

communication

The primary way SWBT will communicate to our families is through email. The emails will be sent through our administrative assistant, Erica Lizotte, from admin@swbtballet.org. Please make sure that you are receiving the emails. Sometimes our emails go to spam, so we recommend adding our domain "swbtballet.org" to your safe senders list. All rehearsals, important announcements, etc. will be communicated via email and you will be responsible for the information. Please contact Erica if you have any changes that need to be made to your contact information.

Sydney Walker is our School Director. Any questions regarding tuition, billing, or classes can be directed to her at sydney@swbtballet.org. Questions regarding performances/rehearsals (costumes, makeup, supplies, etc.) can be directed to our Administrative Assistant Erica Lizotte at admin@swbtballet.org.

We will also be communicating through the BAND app. BAND is an outlet for instant communication, file sharing, calendar reminders, and more. The app is easy to download in the Apple App Store or on Google Play. Here is the direct link to our SWBT BAND group: <https://band.us/band/87966493>

You can also scan the QR code below to join our group.



repertoire

At Southwest Ballet Theatre, we take pride in presenting professional performances that are affordable and accessible to the community.

We will be performing *The Nutcracker* December 11-14, 2025, and will strive to continue this holiday tradition each winter.

Our Spring ballet, *Coppélia*, will be performed April 24-26, 2026.

Our Showcase is an opportunity for our dancers to demonstrate what they are learning in their classes. This year the Showcase will take place at the end of our season, tentatively scheduled for May 16, 2026.

code of conduct

In order to promote a safe and nurturing environment at SWBT, the following code of student conduct must be agreed upon between the student and the parent.

1. All dancers will be courteous and respectful to one another, to their teachers and to all school staff. For any dancer whose attitude, discipline or overall conduct is unsatisfactory, the dancer will be talked to and then if needed, the parent will be notified.
2. Dancers will promptly report any injury or illness that occurs while they are at SWBT to the director.
3. Dancers will arrive and leave SWBT with appropriate clothing covering their dance wear. They are not to arrive or leave SWBT in only their dance wear.
4. Dancers will respect that SWBT rents EMCC and the lobby is a public place; and dancers will conduct themselves appropriately, talking quietly and keeping the lobby area clean.
5. Dancers will eat only in designated areas.

bullying policy

Bullying, hazing, and harassment are prohibited. Dancers may not participate in any of these actions. Dancers may not solicit others to participate in/or aid and abet any of these actions. It is not a defense by the perpetrator(s) that the bullying, hazing, or harassment victim consented or acquiesced in the activity. All dancers and staff are responsible for taking reasonable measures to prevent bullying, hazing, and harassment. "Reasonable measures" do not allow or justify the victim to return in-kind. Such in-kind actions on the part of the victim will be considered a violation of SWBT policy. If a dancer is a victim of bullying, hazing, or harassment, the dancer should ask the perpetrators to stop. If the actions do not stop, the dancer should inform a teacher or an administrator. If the dancer does not feel comfortable informing a school representative, they must inform a parent or guardian who will in turn inform the school. The victim must report the bullying, hazing or harassment in order for SWBT to implement an action plan to resolve the situation. Retaliation by the perpetrator(s) in the form of further actions, including organized shunning of the victim, will result in further disciplinary action against the perpetrator(s) up to and including expulsion.

rehearsal etiquette

No matter where you are in the world, rehearsal etiquette is absolute and remains a constant in our art form.

Please observe the following guidelines for all rehearsals at SWBT:

Be prompt. Arrive early for rehearsal and go immediately into the studio, if there is no class, and begin warming up.

Dress appropriately. Dress code for girls includes a leotard, skirt (optional), clean tights pulled down around the feet, ballet slippers, and hair in a bun. Dress code for boys includes black shorts, white t-shirt, white or black socks, and ballet slippers. No warmers, T-shirts, jewelry, or interactive watches.

Focus and pay attention to instructions and corrections. When the rehearsal director is speaking —whether the correction pertains to you or not — they should have your full attention. No talking.

No chewing gum, eating, or drinking.

Cell phones are to be put away and are strictly prohibited to be used in the studio. If a dancer needs to get in touch with a parent, the dancer must do so between classes or rehearsals and only in the lobby. The teacher reserves the right to confiscate cell phones if used against SWBT policy.

All dancers are required to dance full out for every rehearsal unless given express permission from the rehearsal director.

No displays of rude behavior. A good attitude towards learning will help make the work easier. Rolling eyes, temperamental outbursts, or disrespect toward an instructor or other dancers will not be tolerated. Leave correcting and commenting on other students' dancing to the director.

attendance policy

Be prompt for rehearsal, and be ready to dance at the time you are called: shoes on, warmed up and ready to go at all times. Dancers should be prepared to stay for the entire rehearsal in the room with the artistic director/ballet mistress/choreographer unless otherwise directed.

procedure for absences/lateness

Absences

1. If you are sick or there is an emergency call or text 623-250-6366 to inform immediately.
2. If planned absences are expected for rehearsals, write each absence anticipated on your contract prior to the audition. Only 2 are permitted.
3. The artistic director reserves the right to ask the dancer to step down from their role if attendance is not in adherence with SWBT policies.

Lateness

1. If arriving late, please call/text 623-250-6366 so that the director knows out of courtesy—we worry and will call if you do not show up!

2. Please be prompt in picking up your child from rehearsal. If any student is left for more than 15 minutes without a ride, a \$20 fee will be assessed. Our staff would be held responsible to stay with your child to maintain safety as well as to lock up the theatre.

auditions and casting

All dancers are encouraged to participate in called auditions for each production. Dancers should be dressed in pink tights, a solid leotard, hair neatly in a bun, and appropriate dance shoes. No dancer, who has agreed to the contractual requirements, will be cut from the audition and all audition participants will receive a role in the upcoming production.

When a new ballet is being developed the choreographer is given absolute autonomy in choosing which dancers they would like to cast.

The casting list will be emailed and posted in the BAND app within ten days. Dancers are expected to respond to the email/comment in BAND to notify artistic staff that they are aware of their role(s) and the acceptance of such.

If for some reason a dancer cannot participate in the audition due to illness or unforeseen circumstances, then they will be evaluated in class. There are no private auditions scheduled.

A dancer may be cast as an understudy. It is important to learn this role as diligently as the primary dancer. There have been many times in the past that a dancer has sustained an injury or has been unable to fulfill their commitment, so understudies are expected to be at all of these rehearsals as well as rehearsals for their primary roles.

Remember, each role is important, from the smallest role to the principal roles, and the process must be consistent. It is a part of every dancer's development to experience many different types of roles. We expect the dancer to respect any and every role they earn. Dancers should not anticipate casting decisions before the cast list is posted. There are some years that dancers will repeat the same role and this should not be taken as an insult, but as an opportunity to perform the role with more maturity and confidence. Think of the life of a professional who performs the same roles hundreds of times night after night. Repetition is good!

If you attend the audition, it is understood that you are committed to performing in the production prior to casting decisions. Dancers who would consider dropping out of the production if they do not receive a desired part should not attend the audition.

SWBT is committed to providing its audience with the highest caliber productions. Although a dancer may feel they are deserving of a more prominent role, the panel of judges or choreographer ultimately determines the cast that will best represent the company. It is never in the best interest of any dancer to cast them in a role they are not capable of performing well.

contract

All dancers and parents will be expected to sign and return the SWBT contract (Appendices A-D) by the audition date. The contract is written in good faith between SWBT and the membership party(ies).

The contract briefly restates policies in this handbook having to do with attendance, grade point average, and participation in company events. The contract serves to reiterate to the dancer the serious level of commitment expected on their part. This is also to give the dancers a “real life” professional experience.

fees

Participation in each SWBT production has an associated membership fee. Membership fees are as follows:

Nutcracker Fee: \$120 (Levels 1-7), \$85 (Primaries A through C and Pre-primary for 4s)

Spring Production Fee: \$120 (Levels 1-7), \$85 (Primaries B and C)

Showcase: NO FEE

A contract must be signed for every season as well as the fee(s) paid. This fee does not cover the cost of our instructors running the show. The monthly class tuition will still be charged. This fee covers broader theater fees such as the venue, costumes, choreographer, etc.

The Nutcracker fee is to be paid along with the return of a signed contract. The Spring Production fee is to be paid by the audition day in January.

This fee covers only a small percentage of the costs incurred for these productions. We rely on fundraising and contributions to offset the balance of production costs.

costumes

All costumes are the property of SWBT or rented by SWBT from another dance company. Each costume is worth between \$50-\$750.

Please follow the below policies for wearing/handling costumes:

1. No eating: There is no eating or drinking while wearing any of the costumes.
2. No sitting: Absolutely no sitting on the floor/chair in your costume
3. Do not take home: No costumes may be taken home unless otherwise stated.
4. Do not alter: If you need an alteration or have a problem with your costume, please notify the costume mistress right away. You may not alter the costume yourself!
5. Return all parts: All parts of your costume must be returned at the end of each rehearsal and performance to the costume rack. Dancers who are missing parts of their costume will be charged the cost of the lost article.
6. Sharing Costumes: The expectation is that each dancer is responsible for their own costumes in the theater. You will most likely be sharing your costume with other cast members, make sure the next dancer has all of its parts and placed in the appropriate location.
7. Tights and Shoes: Each dancer is responsible for providing their tights, shoes, and leotard. Tights must be clean and without any stains, holes, or runs. Shoes must also be clean and neatly sewn.

technical week “tech week”

Parents, it is important to understand the nature of technical rehearsals. For levels Pre Primary-Level 2, specific pick-up times will be given. For Levels 3-7, there is no exact time to give you when your dancer will begin or end. If rehearsals are from 5-9 pm we expect them to stay the entire time. We do our best to stay as close to the schedule as possible, but there are always unforeseen circumstances in live theater. The dancing is only a portion of the whole production. Please be patient with changes and delays.

Dancers must remain at all rehearsals until the ballet mistress, artistic director or artistic advisor excuses them.

It is highly recommended that the dancers receive their homework for tech week in advance. Time management with these productions and school is crucial. Dancers should use Friday and Sunday to get ahead each week.

Young dancers should speak to the older dancers about their own strategies to stay on top of their workload. Part of each dancer's contract is to keep a GPA that is within their potential, and that has been agreed upon with the parents. SWBT will not be responsible for failed academics.

Pack enough food for an after-school snack and dinner. Please be aware that due to the amount of activity, dancers need more calories than the average person. Dancers should eat a balanced diet high in complex carbs and protein.

Parents, we appreciate all of your concerns, but technical week is not the time to address concerns regarding your child. It is important to speak to the right person concerning any problems prior to tech week.

backstage polices (technical week and days of production)

“Call” is when the dancer has been asked to be in the theater. This gives the dancer enough time to prepare; getting make up, costumes, warm ups, etc. ready before their warm-up/rehearsal/performance start. Please be aware of this time and come as close to the call time as possible. It will help reduce stress and anxiety for your dancer.

“Places:” All dancers must remain in their designated dressing area until they are called to their “places”; the time for them to be backstage to perform. If you leave the area, you will most likely miss your dance or be late which affects everyone. Be aware and be ready.

“Company warm up:” All dancers in Level 3-7 must participate in company warm-up prior to rehearsal and/or performances.

“We are guests:” We are guests in the EMCC theater and studio. We must respect the space and those who work behind the scenes yet are integral participants in our productions. Dancers may not run, yell, eat, or vandalize the theater space. Dancers may not disrespect/talk back to those who are laboring backstage to make our productions a success. The artistic director or president of the SWBT board reserves the right to dismiss any dancer from the production if these policies are violated.

“Quiet voices only” when backstage. Noise travels right into the audience and they can hear the backstage commotion. Only speak if it is absolutely necessary.

“Stay in your dressing room” Dancers levels preprimary-level 2 must be supervised at all times. It is suggested that dancers bring homework, headsets, or a book for downtime.

supporting SWBT

SWBT is non-profit organization. Word of mouth is our best advertisement. It has played a large role in helping both the school and the company grow. Ticket sales are a very large portion of our income, so please help fill-up productions by inviting friends, family, and neighbors. The more tickets sold the more funding we have for the theater, lighting designer, technical crew, costumes, and contracted professional dancers. Please see if your company provides matching gifts.

Please help us continue to grow by spreading the word about our beautiful productions; your guests will not be disappointed. We promise!

outreach events

We stage outreach events in the community and dancers are expected to participate when asked. As volunteers, we depend on you to make SWBT present in the community. Our mission is to affect the lives of our community through this beautiful art. If you have ideas for reaching our community, please discuss with the board President, Laura Weisensee, at president@board.swbtballet.org.

financial sustenance

SWBT is always looking for avenues to support its productions. Any parents or friends who work for larger companies that may be interested in funding scholarships, productions or donations please contact Elizabeth Seufert, Treasurer/Operations Director at elizabeth@swbtballet.org. If you have other ideas, please send them as well!

appendix A

Dancer Contract

As an **SWBT Dancer**:

1. I agree to **read and follow the guidelines** set within the Southwest Ballet Theatre Handbook with my parent (if under 18) so that we are all cognizant of the responsibilities and requirements of Company participation.

Initials _____

2. I agree to **attend the minimum amount of ballet technique class hours weekly** according to my level and as appropriate to my contract. (*Preprimary through Level 1 – AT LEAST one ballet class per week; Levels 2-7 – AT LEAST two ballet classes per week.*)

If from another studio, I must show proof of taking a minimum amount of classes per week signed by the artistic director and must enroll in one technique class per week at SWBT.

Initials _____

3. I agree to **attend all rehearsals called**, on time warm and prepared to dance. I agree to **not miss more than two rehearsals for each production**. I agree to notify in writing all known obligations that will prohibit me from attending rehearsals. If I am sick I will call or text 623-250-6366 before rehearsal starts. **Failure to notify in advance will result in a \$25 fine.**

Initials _____

4. I agree **to maintain my grades at school** at the level agreed with my family.

Initials _____

5. I agree to **attend and/or participate** in all company group activities in regards to **fundraising, outreach, and other company group functions**.

Initials _____

6. I agree to maintain appropriate conduct on and off the premises of Southwest Ballet Theatre.

Initials _____

7. I agree to **accept all** casting decisions.

Initials _____

8. I will maintain proper etiquette for class and rehearsal.

Initials _____

9. I will not use drugs or alcohol.

Initials _____

10. I understand **that no cell phones or media are permitted in the studio** during rehearsals or class. If used, cell phones will be confiscated until the end of rehearsal.

Initials _____

This contract is written in good faith between the dancer and Southwest Ballet Theatre. By signing this contract, you are agreeing to uphold all the policies stated in the Southwest Ballet Theatre Handbook as well as the list of agreements above. The policies stated in this contract are binding and any individual who is not abiding this agreement will be immediately excused from Southwest Ballet Theatre.

I agree to the terms of this contract and I have read and understand SWBT's Handbook.

Dancer Date

Parent (if Dancer is under 19 years of age) Date

appendix B

Parent Agreement:

1. I agree to commit to a minimum of four hours per production of volunteer service to the company.

Initials _____

2. I am aware of my child's commitment and responsibility to the company, class and rehearsal, and I am fully prepared to support my child's commitment with attire, event participation, and transportation as needed to class and rehearsal as well as all other needs.

Initials _____

3. I am aware that a \$20 charge will be made if a staff/faculty member is left supervising a dancer due to late pick-up.

Initials _____

This contract is written in good faith between the parent and Southwest Ballet Theatre. By signing this contract you agree to uphold all the policies stated in the Southwest Ballet Theatre Handbook as well as the list of agreements above. The policies stated in this contract are binding and any individual who is not abiding this agreement will be immediately excused from Southwest Ballet Theatre.

I agree to the terms of this contract and I have read and understand SWBT's Handbook.

Parent

Date

appendix C

Parent Volunteer Sign-Up

Southwest Ballet Theatre is dependent upon parent volunteers. This load is not burdensome if every parental-unit commits to 4 hours per production. There are many ways to help, even from your home.

In addition to volunteering for four hours per production, each parental unit will be responsible for participating in any fundraiser we might hold. As a non-profit entity, we depend on donations and grants in order to afford such costly productions.

These volunteer hours are non-negotiable. The staff will be keeping track of each family's participation. If these criteria are not met, the student will be dismissed from the SWBT performing company.

We are required to conduct background checks for some of our volunteer positions. They will be noted below by “**BCR**” and the relevant family member will need to complete Appendix D.

As part of your contractual agreement, please understand that your involvement as a parent volunteer is crucial to the vitality of Southwest Ballet Theatre.

Please initial where you think you will be able to volunteer for each category below:

The Nutcracker

_____ Costume Fitting-**BCR** (Helping fit costumes on costume fitting day. Please indicate if you have sewing skills)

_____ Costume alterations (Altering existing costumes)

_____ SugarPlum Shoppe (Pricing, decorating, and manning table during performances)

_____ Ticket Counter (Selling tickets at door and assisting with will-call tickets)

_____ Backstage hands- **BCR** (Helping pull props off stage, getting dancers ready with cues, keeping dancers quiet, helping with quick changes)

_____ Dressing Room- **BCR** (Helping dancers in dressing rooms get dressed, make up applied, and assisting with quick changes, escorting dancers through hallways)

_____ Ushers (Greeting patrons and handing out programs at event)

_____ Clean up (Put away costumes and props the Monday morning after the last show)

Confidential Volunteer Background Check Authorization

Print Name: _____
(First) (Middle) (Last)

Former Names(s) and Dates Used: _____

Current Address Since: _____
(Mo/Yr) (Street) (City) (Zip/State)

Previous Address From: _____
(Mo/Yr) (Street) (City) (Zip/State)

Previous Address From: _____
(Mo/Yr) (Street) (City) (Zip/State)

DOB: _____ Telephone Number: _____

Driver's License Number/State: _____

Please answer the following questions. If you reply "yes" to either question you may give additional information on the back of this page.

Has the applicant ever been convicted of any crime? _____

Has the applicant ever been involved in any lawsuit, claim, or criminal charge involving sexual abuse, sexual molestation, or sexual misconduct? _____

The information contained in this application is correct to the best of my knowledge. I hereby authorize Southwest Ballet Theatre and its designated agents and representatives to conduct a review of my background for volunteer purposes. I understand that the scope of the background check may include but is not limited to the following areas: civil and criminal history records from any criminal justice agency in any or all federal, state, county jurisdictions; driving records and any other public records.

I further authorize any individual, company, firm, corporation, or public agency to divulge any and all information, verbal or written, pertaining to me, to or its agents. I further authorize the complete release of any records or data pertaining to me which the individual, company, firm, corporation, or public agency may have, to include information or data received from other sources. Southwest Ballet Theatre and its designated agents and representatives shall maintain all information received from this authorization in a confidential manner in order to protect the applicant's personal information, including, but not limited to, addresses and dates of birth.

Signature: _____ Date: _____