



Irish Dance Overview

FOR STUDENTS AND PARENTS



200 SOUTHERN BLVD.
WYOMING, DE 19934

About Hester Academy

The Hester Academy of Irish Dance opened its doors in September, 2014. Hester Academy is fully certified and registered with An Coimisiun le Rinci Gaelacha and the Irish Dance Teachers Association of North America. We aim to share the love of Irish dance with both Irish and non-Irish students alike in a family-oriented environment where each student creates goals for themselves and learns how to achieve those goals through discipline and hard work.

For More Information Contact Us

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Instagram: [hesteracademyirishdance](https://www.instagram.com/hesteracademyirishdance)



About J.J. Hester

In 2011 J.J. Hester passed the rigorous T.C.R.G. exam to become a fully certified Irish Dance teacher, registered with An Coimisiun Le Rinci Gaelacha, the Irish Dance Commission in Dublin, Ireland. In 2017, J.J. passed the extensive A.D.C.R.G. exam to become a fully certified Irish Dance adjudicator.

Since becoming certified, he has taught students who have won numerous regional, national, and international competitions. He attributes a great deal of his success in Irish Dance to the support he has received from his family and all of his dancing instructors.



J.J. started dancing for the Peter Smith School of Irish Dance in 2001 at age 16. Accolades during his competitive career include: numerous solo and team awards throughout local, regional, national, and world competitions; three-time First Place Mid-Atlantic Regional Oireachtas champion; three-time top five placement at the North American Championships including 2nd place in 2006; 6th at the World Championships of Irish Dance in 2005, making him a world medalist.

In addition to his competitive career, J.J. performed in concert with the Chieftains and Eileen Ivers. In 2005 he was accepted into Riverdance.

Aside from dance, he completed his Bachelor of Science degree with teacher certification at Montclair State University in 2009 and is an elementary Physical Education and Health teacher. While at Montclair State, he met his wife Brittany. J.J. and Brittany have a very musical little dancer of their own.



About Irish Dance

What is Irish Dancing?
Sport. Art. Tradition.

Irish dance refers to a group of traditional dance forms that originate in Ireland, encompassing dancing both solo and in groups, and dancing for social, competitive, and performance purposes.

Irish dancing 'technique' refers to how Irish dancers move, with a focus on technical elements: timing, rhythm, lift, volume, crossing, turn out, toes, extension, posture, and stage presence.

The core of Irish Dance contains both soft shoe dances (the reel, the light-jig, and the slip-jig) as well as hard shoe dances which are percussive (the hornpipe, the treble-jig, and the traditional set dances).

Irish dance is both a competitive and non-competitive sport.

Dance Competitions

There are many competitions all around the world, including Ireland.

The World Irish Dance Championships (known as Oireachtas Rince na Cruinne in Irish) is an annual Irish step dancing competition. Often simply called The Worlds, this competition is highly regarded as the premier event for step dancers, and only the very best dancers in each category qualify to compete.

About Feisanna

Pronounced "fesh". Plural is feisanna, pronounced "fesh-an-na". A Feis is a chance for a dancer to compete against other dancers in their age group and level. It builds their confidence, gives them a chance to showcase what they have learned and is a lot of fun.

There are six competitor levels:

- Beginner
- Advanced Beginner
- Novice
- Prize Winner
- Preliminary
- Champion

Dancers are judged on a variety of different elements including:

- Technique (including foot placement and turn out)
- Style
- Rhythm
- Grace
- Choreography
- Shoes sounds (when wearing hard shoes)
- Carriage (posture)

*Please note: Hester Academy does **not** require dancers to compete. Outside of competition there are other opportunities for a student to dance publicly, many of which fall on and around St. Patrick's Day.*

Feisweb

There are local Feisanna throughout the USA and globally. Additionally, most Irish dance schools sponsor a Feis. Hester Academy hosts Hester Feis annually. There are many Feisanna to choose from.

To look up Feisanna and register, go to Feisweb (<https://feisweb.com/>).

Feisweb will give you a list of upcoming Feis that and when the registration/entry is due (there is always a cut off date). To register a dancer for a feis, you will first sign up for a Feisweb account and add your dancer(s). You can then select any Feis and register for your dancer to compete in the appropriate dance(s) and level. There are typically registration fees. As the feis approaches, you will print your dancer's number card for competition off of Feisweb.

Love 2 Feis (<https://www.love2feis.com>) lists all North American Feisanna for the year.

Irish Dance Levels

Beginner

- Dancer is in their first year of competing who has not taken Irish Dancing lessons from a registered teacher prior to September 1st of the previous year
- Dancer must move into Advanced Beginner the following year.

Advanced Beginner

- Dancer is in their second year of competing
- If a dancer wins a 1st, 2nd or 3rd place in each dance they will advance to the Novice category in that particular dance the next year

Novice

- A dancer who has previously won a 1st, 2nd or 3rd place in Advanced Beginner
- A novice who wins a 1st place will advance to the Prizewinner category in that particular dance

Prizewinner

- A dancer who has previously won a 1st in Novice in a particular dance
- A dancer must place 1st in one light shoe dance; Reel or Slip jig (girls only) one hard shoe dance; Treble Jig or Hornpipe and consistently place 1st, 2nd or 3rd in other dances in Prizewinner to qualify for Preliminary Championship
- The Prize Winner level can also be referred to as “Open Grade”

Preliminary Champion (Preliminary)

- A dancer advances to Preliminary Championship after he/she has won 1st place in both a prizewinner light and hard shoe competition, and consistently placed 1st, 2nd, or 3rd in all other dances
- Preliminary dancers who win 3 first places in a calendar year, must move to Open Championship the following calendar year
- When a third 1st place win is achieved over several calendar years, the dancer must move to Open Championship the following weekend

Open Champion (Champion)

- A dancer moves to Open Championship after winning three 1st places in Preliminary Championship
- This is the highest level in competitive Irish dancing

Irish Dance Shoes

Irish Dance traditionally encompasses two shoe styles: soft shoe and hard shoe (also called light shoe and heavy shoe). Each style is complementary, yet unique.

At Hester Academy, students start off learning soft shoe style dances. As a student progresses in their dancing and begins to learn their hard shoe dances, they advance to hard shoes. Earning hard shoes is often very exciting for dancers.

Hester Academy does not endorse any specific brand of shoe, but you can search used inventory at the studio, order soft and hard shoes from fayeshoes.com or other similar websites, and/or make purchases from vendors at competitions.



Irish Dance Dress

Female dancers wear different dresses at each level: *Beginner* - Hester Academy school dress; *Intermediate* - black dress; *Advanced* - solo dress.

Similar to hard shoes, solo dresses are earned once a dancer reaches a certain level. Solo dresses are works of art. They are beautiful *and* expensive. Dressmakers painstakingly make each dress by hand and *no two dresses are the same*. Many parents opt for second-hand solo dresses until their dancer is done growing.

Male dancers wear black dress pants with suspenders, black knee-high socks, and a dress shirt with a purple tie. Champion-level soloists wear a solo costume that J.J. has approved.



For additional information, class registration,
and/or to answer any questions please visit

hesteracademy.com

or email

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Be sure to follow Hester Academy on Instagram
@ [hesteracademyirishdance](https://www.instagram.com/hesteracademyirishdance).

