
Peer Practica Step-by-Step Guide

This guide is for dancers or teachers who want to organize a practice group in their area. It outlines the exact procedures to follow to create, structure, and manage the group on an ongoing basis.

This resource originated in the Coach's Corner blog article: [Get Sustainable Dance Growth: How to Organize a Successful Peer Practica](#)



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How to Organize a Peer Practica

1. Decide your target demographic: Regional? Skill Level? Competitors? Geographic proximity? Ambition level? Learning style/temperament? Immunity only? Couples only?
 - a. It's ok to have more than 1 group. Group of 8-16 is ideal.
 - b. It's ok to have a waiting list to encourage balanced numbers.

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2. Use social media to poll for interest in your social dance group. Declare your intentions in order to avoid ruffling the feathers of local teachers.
 3. Select the timing carefully - as soon as possible following a workshop weekend would be ideal, but if there are not many WCS activities that could potentially conflict, start anytime.
 4. Hunt for suitable venues
 - a. Search online: Community centres, churches, legions, solo studios, yoga studios, art galleries, fitness centres, etc.
 - b. Requirements: Smooth floors (shoe socks might be necessary)
 - c. Optional: mirrors, A/C, built in stereo, chairs
 - d. Time: ~2 hours
 - e. Don't overlap other WCS activities
 5. Create a secret FB group for each practice group, inviting members who indicated their interest.
 6. Poll members to determine their weekly availability
 - a. The group might decide to practice weekly or bi-weekly.
 - b. Make RSVP mandatory to ensure commitment and role balance. Consider capping the number of participants.
 7. Consider if possible hiring coaches to kick off the first meeting
 8. Promote the practica: generate enthusiasm, poll the group for topics/themes. Ask participants to bring their own tips/challenges/questions/resources on the theme to share with the group
 9. Create expectations agreement (see below) for group members to sign when they register
 10. Book venue & announce event
 11. Collect signatures and payments at the door
 12. Pay the coach
 13. Take video recaps (or delegate this) and post to the FB group.
 14. Schedule next practice session (without coach)
 - a. Decide on next Practica Leader if necessary
 - b. Poll group to confirm attendance
 - c. Book venue

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15. Next practice session:
 - a. Collect payment for venue rental
 - b. Read out loud coach's instructions
 - c. Arrange for portable stereo if necessary
 - d. Choose from the Activities Menu below
 - e. Decide if the group needs/wants more time on this theme, and/or which theme to address next time
 16. Schedule next session with coach
 17. Repeat #7-17 ongoing.

Practice Activities Menu

1. Start and end with a **Jam circle** as a warm-up/wrap-up
2. Layout the **shape of the session** at the start: this can be written on a whiteboard or just stated verbally.
3. **Watch videos:** invite participants to bring video examples for inspiration or critique. Don't watch mindlessly. Before playing each video, plan on what you will be watching for. Pause and discuss and replay as necessary.
4. **Partner Feedback Exchange:** Get feedback from each partner, one topic at a time. Use this article as a guide: [How to Request, Give, and Receive Feedback](#)
5. **Group Critique:** spotlight dance in front of group, then the group offers up to 1-3 positive comments and 1-3 constructive comments
6. **Small Pod Brainstorms:** Pose a challenge, then split into pods to discuss and present to the group. For example, "Find 3 ways to exit this position gracefully"

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7. **Drill Brainstorm:** Pick a topic and everyone contributes their known drills to practice it.
Pick a few cards from the [Deck of Drills](#)
 8. **Pattern Breakdown:** bring a video of a pattern you covet and figure out together how to break it down
 9. **Pattern Show & Tell:** bring a newly learned pattern and teach it to others
 10. **Musical Interpretation Brainstorm:** Play a song, discuss the musical features, create a strategy for dancing to it.
 11. **Film-yourself-and-review:** This is to be done quickly - dance for one song, then spend no more than 1-2 songs discussing with your partner what went wrong/felt good/was confusing, etc.
 12. Make a **group game plan** for the upcoming dance party. This could be private, but make sure you don't alienate other dancers at the party.
 13. **Group field trip** to dance-bomb a nightclub
 14. **Brainstorm a wish-list** for leaders and for followers. Use a chart or whiteboard and write down suggestions from the leaders what they wish for from the followers in general. Then repeat for the followers.
 15. Consider having an occasional un-structured practice time

Expectations & Agreements

Consider having each participant sign an agreement outlining your expectations in order to join the group, or agree to this list upon joining the Practica Facebook group you create.

As the Practica Director:

- Practica Director acts only as facilitator, not teacher
- Consider bringing goodies to share
- Prompt others to comment or ask questions

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- Make sure everyone feels valued and included
 - Collect fees and pay for venue and/or coaches.

As the Participants:

- Abide by immunity requirements/expectations
- No sticking to one partner
- Avoid talking the whole session - the goal is to get moving
- Avoid a bitch-session: if a complaint is offered, focus ASAP on finding a solution instead of harping on it
- Listen empathetically and ask for consent before offering suggestions
- Suggest ideas - don't just passively listen
- Ask questions for clarification - don't jump to conclusions or leave the practice frustrated.
- Follow the Feedback Rules: See "[How to give/request/receive Feedback](#)" article
- Avoid interrupting, practice good listening skills.
- No judging/criticizing others' comments or questions
- Be patient - not everyone will "get it" at the same pace.
- Don't just mooch free advice from advanced dancers
- Respect the "Practica Director". Consider rotating this role.
- Bring homework from your own lessons
- Bring your contribution requested for the theme (video example, song example, drill, etc)

