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Creating Dance Reels: Fundamentals/ Introduction & Video Editing

EMERGING
DANCE
ARTISTS

Handout

1. What is a dance reel? And why do I need it?

1.1. Definition

A dance reel is a dancer's visual resume. It is a short video of a dancer's most impressive body of work, ideally displaying the dancer's versatility in a wide range of roles and expressing the dancer's personality. It showcases the dancer's talent, skills, artistry, unique style, strengths, experience, and professional work history.

1.2. Relevance

- The purpose of a dance reel is to **highlight your skills** in a short, accessible, and shareable video format to help you with networking, visibility, and business building.
- You can use it to supplement an audition, as an audition or in any situation that you need to showcase your work in a **quick** and **easy** way.
- It is a great way to **catalogue your work**.
- It is a **self-promotion** tool that you can use to create more visibility for yourself. In that sense a dance reel is an advertisement for your dance career. And like any advertisement it should be clear in its intention and execution.

2. How do I make a professional quality dance reel?

2.1. Clip Selection

- Pick only your **BEST most relevant work** that showcases you as a person, dancer and performer and shows your range most efficiently in a **VARIETY of styles and settings** (choreography, performances, concept videos, improvisation videos etc.).
- **Organize** all those clips in a folder and **trim down** each clip to only its best, most relevant section.
- Choose solos, or the clips where **YOU** are in the centre, or very easily visible (neat background, distance between you and the other dancers and in simple costumes or costumes that make you stand out).
- You are the primary focus of the video.
- Make sure your **footage** is **stable** (not shaky), **in focus** (not blurry), the **lighting is good** and not grainy and shot from a relatively close distance.
- Pick **HIGH QUALITY** clips. Try not to go for anything less than HD quality (720p).
- Pick clips that are **up-to-date** and showcase your **PERSONALITY** and **UNIQUENESS** as a dancer.



- Choose clips that show your individuality. Casting directors might look for dancers, but they're really looking for personalities, people they can work with, confident, energetic, versatile, and professional.
- In case you have one genre or one **niche style** you like to showcase, make sure you find a variety of clips that will exemplify your diversity within that genre.
- Plan out how you want your **footage** to be **arranged** in your visual resume.
- Optional: shoot **extra footage**

Tips for shooting **EXTRA FOOTAGE** for your dance reel:

- Location: not distracting, reflecting your personality
- Time: early morning and afternoon
- Aspect Ratio: 16:9 (horizontal)
- Framing & Angle: tripod wide shot (safety), add camera movement (best by a cinematographer familiar with dance) and close-ups.
- Use a HD/Full HD or 4K Camera Example Cameras: Sony Alpha 7s II, Sony Alpha 7s III, Panasonic GH5, Panasonic Lumix S1H, Canon 5D II, Canon 5D III
- Lens: wide angle
- Outfit: dance suited, relate to what you're showing
- Get your personality across

Tips for making a dance reel for a specific **AUDITION**:

- Make **research** about the project, about what the director's or company's preferences are, about their previous work and requirements.
- Fulfil the exact requirements. Only choose **up-to-date relevant clips** that fit this specific job – dance style, type of energy, character, technical skills, tricks etc.)
- If you don't have footage that showcases the job requirements, **film it yourself**.
- **Dance theatre companies** and **dance companies** often want to see industry-oriented showreels including you in a range of performance contexts, showing a variety of movement and performance registers and studio footage of improvisation.
- Don't send them purely technical footage, like ballet or contemporary exercises. Show your lyric quality, dynamic movements and partnering.
- In contrast to commercial auditions, dance companies often like you to keep it basic: a single camera angle in a studio, you in rehearsal cloth and plain lighting and scene-based editing (20-45 sec clips), to see your pure dance artistry. Every 20-45sec make a change in dynamic. The directors will skip through your reel and want to see your versatility.
- You can introduce yourself briefly in the beginning of the video.
- Make the viewer curious about you, make the viewer want to see you dance in person.
- Make sure your video is no longer than 4-5min. Optimum would be around 2min.



2.2. Editing

Dramaturgical Structure:

- **moment based vs. scene based:** 5-15 sec clip, 20-45 sec clips. Generic dance reels are moment based.
- Keep it **simple, short, and clear.**
- Length: 1-2 min
- Create a **dramaturgy** that captures the viewers' attention: Start out with your strongest clips; it's easy to lose people's attention within seconds and finishing with a memorable clip.
- Make sure that the **very first clip of your reel** is of just you. Best would be to use a high-quality close-up of you in good lighting that can function as a moving image headshot. This way if you want to use a clip of you dancing in a group later in your reel, we can pick you out in a crowd.
- Put a clear and simple **title card** in the beginning (your full name and genre of the video (i.e. dance reel or choreography reel)).
- A reel is fast paced. So, **each clip should be max. 15 seconds.** This way you will be able to showcase as many dance styles as possible and keep a viewer's attention. (For scene-based editing min. 20 sec, depending on requirements.)
- **Don't use special effects**, odd camera angles or weird fancy transitions.
- **Highlight your strengths and proud moments** whilst hiding everything else.
- **Export** the reel in 1920x1080 (16:9) for Vimeo and YouTube and 1080x1080 (1:1) or 1080x1920 (9:16) for Instagram.

Free or Low-Cost Editing Programmes (Examples):

- DaVinci Resolve: <https://www.blackmagicdesign.com/de/products/davinciresolve/>
- Adobe Premiere Pro CC: <https://www.adobe.com/de/products/premiere.html>
- iMovie: <https://www.apple.com/imovie/>
- Splice: <https://spliceapp.com/>
- Quick: <https://gopro.com/en/us/shop/quik-app-video-photo-editor>
- FilmoramaGo: <https://filmora.wondershare.com/filmorago-video-editing-app/>

Music

- Pick **one song** to play to unify the reel and to avoid distraction by the music. And mute the original footage.
- Pick a **versatile track** that will work with all your clips. A perfect choice would be a song that fits well with the rhythm of the video and reflects your personality and dancing style.
- Genre? For commercial work, look for catchy, upbeat music. The song can be quirky or smooth to reflect your style but avoid anything that will be outdated quickly. For company work, you can go with more artistic or instrumental tracks. Check that all footage flows nicely with the music before making a final decision. In general experiment with different genres and styles until you find your approach and the one that works the best.
- Avoid copyright issues by using **royalty-free music.**



Royalty Free Music Sites (Examples):

- Premium Beat: <https://www.premiumbeat.com/>
- YouTube Studio Audio Library (access only with own user account)
- Purple Planet: <https://www.purple-planet.com/>
- Ben Sound: <https://www.bensound.com/>
- Free Music Archive: <https://freemusicarchive.org>

Text

- You can **add captions** to your video that add **context** in each clip (i.e. name of the production or the style of dancing).
- Make sure the captions are easily legible and do not distract the viewer. Be mindful of timing (don't distract the viewer from watching you dance).

Contact Information

- At the end of your video, include a brief slide with your basic **contact information**: full name, email address, website, and social media account so that the viewer can easily reach out to you.

Valuable to Note:

- **Safe the editing project**, so you can constantly re-edit and **update** it to continue building out your portfolio.
- **Have different types of reels for different types of jobs** with varying focus depending on context.

2.3. Upload and Share

Dance Reel Hosting Sites:

- Vimeo: <https://vimeo.com/>
- YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/>
- Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com>
- Tik Tok: <https://www.tiktok.com/explore>
- Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com>