THE HOLISTIC GUIDE TO

JOURNALING FOR DANCE STUDENTS

52 PROMPTS TO HELP STUDENTS REFLECT ON THEIR TECHNICAL, SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL, AND ARTISTIC GROWTH THROUGH DANCE.

The Holistic Dance Teacher
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Welcome to The Holistic Guide to Journaling for Dance Students! In this guide, you will find 52 prompts that students can use to journal about their dance training - one for every week of the year! These prompts are designed to help students reflect holistically on their experience in dance. They cover a wide range of topics including dance technique and artistry, health and wellness, leadership and social issues faced by students, the role of dance in their lives outside the studio, their future plans and how dance can support those plans, their habits in and out of the studio and how those habits can support their dance training, and sources of dance inspiration, both past and present. The guide is designed for the more serious with some prior training, but can be adapted for novice and recreational students as well.
There are a number of ways to use to help students develop a healthy reflective practice toward their dance training. One approach would be to provide each student with a print or digital version of the guide, and direct them to answer one question each week, in the order they appear, in a separate notebook or journal. The instructor can also choose to assign certain questions each week. This can help you tailor the students’ journaling experience to your program or studio’s calendar and curriculum, which may make the process more relevant and engaging for students.

The guide begins with 3 extensive questions that help students set goals for the coming dance season. Regular goal check-in questions are offered throughout the year to help students stay focused and accountable.

The remaining questions are arranged in no particular order. They are designed to help students think critically about their dance training, the influence of dance in their lives, the role of dance in their communities and in the world, and the physical, social, emotional, creative, and performance skills that are needed for success in the dance world.

Students should be encouraged to write between one paragraph and two pages in response to each question. Teachers should review their journals periodically and schedule discussion meetings as appropriate to help students further reflect and process what they have written.
1.) Why do you dance?
GUIDING QUESTIONS:
- Why did you start taking dance classes?
- How do you feel when you are dancing?
- How do you feel when you are not dancing?
- What is your favorite part of being a dancer?
- How does dance benefit your physical health?
- How does dance benefit your mental or emotional health?
- How has dance helped you develop skills that you use in other parts of your life?

2.) What are your dance goals for the term? List at least 1 goal in each of the following areas. Some examples are listed for each category, but be sure to reflect on your personal strengths and weaknesses as you create personalized goals for yourself as a dancer:

___ Technique/Movement Skills, such as:
- Increase flexibility in specific area (such as hamstrings)
- Increase range of motion in ankle and improve releve height
- Master a particular skill (double pirouette, wings, split leap)
- Improve understanding and application of proper dance alignment
- Develop core strength and use core muscles consistently while dancing
- Any other technique or movement goal you have for the year

___ Social/Emotional Skills, such as developing more:
- Persistence (working toward goals consistently, even when you experience setbacks)
- Responsibility (being accountable for your actions in and out of the studio)
- Focus (not talking between exercises, concentrating and applying yourself in class)
- Leadership (taking initiative, helping other students, volunteering to serve)
- Empathy (care and consideration for others’ feelings and needs)
- Any other social or emotional goal you have for the year

___ Creative and Performance Skills, such as:
- Improvising fearlessly and using original movement
- Embodying a character or portray emotional qualities when dancing
- Performing consistently in class, not just on stage
- Dancing in unison with others when part of an ensemble
- Reaching through your kinesphere when dancing
- Any other creative or performance goal you have for the year

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3.) What will it take to reach your goals?
GUIDING QUESTIONS:
- What steps will you need to take in the studio during class or rehearsal to accomplish your goals?
- What steps will you need to take outside the studio (at home practice, or during warm-up or cool down before and after class?)
- What can you do to supplement your training to help you reach your goals (read books, watch videos, see live performances, take master classes, attend workshops or conventions)?
- What attitudes or qualities will you need to develop to help you reach your goals?
- What can the instructor do to help you in the process?

4.) Describe a time when you faced a challenge in class or rehearsal. What steps did you take to overcome it? What did you learn from the experience that can help you the next time you face a similar challenge?

5.) What is your favorite style of dance, and why? What technical, creative, or performance aspects of this style are you most drawn to? Briefly research the history of that dance style. How did it originate? Who is one person who helped make this style famous? What is one thing you learned in your research about the style that you didn’t know before?

6.) What is one correction or piece of feedback you received from a teacher that has been the most helpful or meaningful to you? Why did this feedback have such as strong impact?

7.) How do you apply what you learn in the dance studio to your life at home, at school, in your other activities, and with your friends? What specific lessons have you learned in dance that have helped you in these other areas of your life?

8.) Describe a time when you disagreed with your dance teacher. How did you handle this situation? What did you learn from the experience that you can apply to similar situations in the future?

9.) What has been the most memorable experience been so far in your dance career? It could be a special performance, a challenge that you’ve overcome, a rewarding rehearsal, or anything dance-related. What made this experience so meaningful?
10.) GOAL CHECK: How are you progressing toward your goals? What successes and challenges have you experienced? What steps have you taken that have helped you make progress toward your goals? Have your goals changed at all? If yes, why?

11.) Do your nutritional choices (what you eat and when you eat it) support a healthy lifestyle and have a positive impact on your dance training? If yes, describe how your eating practices support you as a dancer. If not, consider 2 simple changes you can make and how they might help improve your dancing.

12.) Describe a time when you had to be patient and persistent in your dance training in order to achieve a new skill. What was this process like? What did you learn from the experience?

13.) What role do you see dance playing in your life when you graduate? Will you keep dance a part of your life? Why or why not? How will choose to stay involved in dance or make dance a part of your life, if at all?

14.) What is your favorite dance quote? Why does this quote inspire or speak to you in a special way? How can you use this quote to help you in your dance training?

15.) What is a difficult technical skill or trick you are currently working on in class or rehearsal? Why is this skill or trick important? What steps are you taking to master it?

16.) What is your favorite professional dance piece, ballet, musical, or other production? Who is the choreographer, company, and/or principal performers? What makes this your favorite? What can you learn from this performance and apply to your own dancing?

17.) Imagine that you have to explain what dance is to someone who has never seen dancing or heard about it. How would you describe the phenomenon that is “dance”? What sets dance apart from other forms of movement?

18.) Describe a time when you took a leadership role in your dance studio or program. What skills, attitudes, and habits helped you in this leadership role? What did you learn from the experience that will help you in future leadership opportunities?
19.) What is your favorite thing about performing? What is the biggest challenge you face as a performer? What skills, habits, or attitudes do you develop by performing that help you in your life outside the studio? (If you have not been part of a performance yet, then what is your favorite thing about dancing in class in front of your classmates and teacher? What is the biggest challenge you face dancing in front of others?)

20.) GOAL CHECK: How are you progressing toward your goals? What successes and challenges have you experienced? What steps have you taken that have helped you to make progress toward your goals? Have your goals changed at all? If yes, why?

21.) Describe a specific time when you used a skill, attitude, or habit that you learned in your dance training in your life outside of the studio? What was the skill, attitude, or habit? How did it help you solve a problem, make a difference, achieve a goal, etc.?

22.) What flexibility or strength/conditioning element are you working on right now? Why is this element important? What steps are you taking to improve in this area?

23.) Describe a time when you looked up to an older dance at your school or studio. What did you admire about this person? What did you learn from them that you can apply in your own life as a dancer and outside the studio?

24.) How do you feel when a teacher gives you feedback during class? How do you react to a correction or constructive criticism? How do you react to praise or positive feedback? Does your attitude toward feedback help or hurt your dance training?

25.) Describe a time when you have felt stuck or in a rut with your dance training. What steps did you take to help you get past this phase? What did you learn from the experience that can help you the next time you feel this way?

26.) How can you use dance to make a difference in your school, community, or the world? Create your “dream project” that uses dance to help solve a problem, unite a community, or inspire change.
27.) Describe a time when you took a risk as a dancer, by auditioning for a new show or program, trying a difficult step, attempting a new dance style, in improvisation or creating choreography, etc. Was this risk worthwhile? Why or why not? What skills, habits, or attitudes helped you to take the risk? What did you learn from this experience that you can use in the future?

28.) If you could have dinner with any 3 dancers or choreographers from history (not living today), who would you choose? Why would you choose this group of people? What would you want to talk about?

29.) Do you participate in cross-training to help keep your body and mind strong and fit for dancing? If yes, describe how your cross-training activities support you as a dancer. If not, research 1 cross-training activity, such as yoga, Pilates, or swimming, and describe how it can improve your dancing.

30.) GOAL CHECK: How are your progressing toward your goals? What successes and challenges have you experienced? What steps have you taken that have helped you to make progress toward your goals? Have your goals changed at all? If yes, why?

31.) Describe a time when you were an inspiration to another dancer, or when another dancer looked up to you. What was that experience like? How did you handle the responsibility of being a role model? How do you try to be a role model for others today?

32.) What is an aspect of alignment or posture that you are working on right now in your dance training? Why is this an important area of focus for you? What steps are you taking to improve in this area? What do you think the result will be?

33.) What kind of music inspires you as a dancer? Classical, pop, electronic, R&B, instrumental, etc.? Why do you connect with this musical style? This week, either in class or improvising at home, explore moving to a different style of music and find inspiration in it. Write about your experience.
34.) Do you have a bad habit that has snuck into your dance training? This could include a physical habit, such as sickling your feet, or a mental, social, or emotional habit such as talking between exercises, being late for class, or being too hard on yourself. Describe the habit and how it affects your dancing. How can you work to overcome this habit? How can your teacher help you?

35.) If you could work professionally as a dancer in any company or group, with any artist or choreographer, or in any show or production, what would it be? Why? What can you do in your current dance training to make this goal a reality? What can you do outside of the studio, such as stretching, cross-training, research, etc. to achieve your goal?

36.) Describe a time when two or more of your dance teachers had conflicting advice or opinions about technique, performance, stretching and conditioning, or another dance topic. How did you handle this situation? How did you figure out what was the best solution for you?

37.) What is a physical challenge that you have to overcome as a dancer? For example, some dancers do not have a naturally strong arch, others habitually tip their pelvis, and some lack flexibility in their hamstrings. What has it been like to overcome this challenge? What did you learn in the process of trying to overcome it? How can you continue to work to improve in this area?

38.) Describe a time when you had to be part of an ensemble or team in dance. This could be performing in a large group piece, or competing as a team. What was the best part of that experience? What was the most challenging part? What did you learn from it that you can apply to your life outside the studio?

39.) Do you have a favorite dance book? If yes, describe the book and why it inspires you. If you do not have one, your mission this week is to start reading! Ask your teacher for recommendations, check out your local library, or search for dance titles online. Consider biographies of great dancers or choreographers, stories of famous productions, or inspirational books from your current favorite dancers. Choose a book, describe it, and make a plan to read it over the next few weeks or month!
40.) GOAL CHECK: How are you progressing toward your goals? What successes and challenges have you experienced? What steps have you taken that have helped you to make progress toward your goals? Have your goals changed at all? If yes, why?

41.) Think about your habits during dance class. Do you actively observe and mark combinations along as your instructor demonstrates? Do you listen eagerly to all corrections given - even to other dancers - and try to apply them yourself? Do you reflect on your performance between exercises and think about how you can improve? Do you stand with good posture between exercises, or slouch? Do your habits help your dance training? If not, how can you change your habits to get the most out of each dance class?

42.) Think about your habits before dance class. Do you arrive on time, with your proper dress code? Are you ready to focus and work hard? Do you fuel your body with lots of water and good, nutritious food? Do you take the time to warm-up your body and prepare your mind before class? Do you set a goal for yourself for the class? Do you reflect on what you learned in the last class, thinking about how you can apply corrections this week? Do you review combinations or choreography that you learned? Do your habits help your dance training? If not, how can you change your habits to get the most out of each dance class?

43.) Think about your habits after dance class. Do you take time to thank your teacher, your fellow dancers, any musicians that might accompany the class, and yourself? Do you stretch and cool down properly? Do you fuel your body with lots of water and good, nutritious food? Do you take the time to reflect on what you learned in class? Do you review combinations or choreography that you learned? Do your habits help your dance training? If not, how can you change your habits to get the most out of each dance class?

44.) Describe a time when you faced a disappointment in your dance training. Maybe you did not get a role you had been hoping for, or you did not score as well as you would have liked at competition, or you did not have a successful audition. What did you learn from this experience that you can use to help you be more successful in the future? What did you learn from it that you can apply to your life outside the studio?
45.) If you could meet any dancer or choreographer living today, who would it be? Why would you want to meet them? What would you want to talk about? What are three questions you would ask them?

46.) What is a creative challenge that you are working on right now? For example, improvisation, or embodying a character while you dance. Why is this skill important? What steps are you taking to improve in this area?

47.) Why is rest important for dancers? How do you ensure that you are getting enough rest during the dance season? How do you make sure that you have productive rest during holidays and breaks?

48.) Research a dancer currently working in your favorite style of dance. Where did this dancer study and train? How did they get to become a performer? What choreographers or companies have they worked for? What can you learn from them and apply to your own dancing?

49.) Who is a dancer in your own class that you admire? Why do admire this person? What can you learn from them and apply to your own dancing and life outside the studio?

50.) GOAL CHECK: How are you progressing toward your goals? What successes and challenges have you experienced? What steps have you taken that have helped you to make progress toward your goals? Have your goals changed at all? If yes, why?

51.) Imagine that the mayor of your city or town decided to ban all forms of dancing. Write a letter to the mayor encouraging them to reverse the decision and make dance legal again. In your argument, be sure to express why dance is important to you personally and as well as an important part of art, culture, and society in your opinion.

52.) What are your future plans for advanced dance training, college, or career? How can dance help your succeed in these future goals? What specific skills, habits, or attitudes have your developed through dance that will help you be successful in the future?