



## ***Before You Choreograph***

*By: Angela Koehler*

*Angela is a two-time Missouri State Dance Team Champion from St. Dominic High School. She went on to coach the team for three years, leading them to the state championship title again in 2009. She was a dancer for the Lindenwood University Lion Line Dance Team where she won the UDA College National Open Hip Hop title in 2008 and 2009. She has been a UDA instructor for 6 years and is currently an award-winning choreographer for various college and high school dance teams throughout the Midwest.*

Before choreographing a routine, your first step is to decide what the routine is for. Maybe it is a routine for a game performance or maybe it is a competition routine. You might also want to identify where the routine will be performed and what kind of surface you will be performing on. These factors create the foundation for your routine in which every routine will differ. For example, a routine for a football halftime performance may not have the same technical elements as a competition routine in a gymnasium.

Another question to consider is “who is my main audience?” Some performances may have a younger or an older crowd, so choosing music that correlates with age is another important factor to consider before choreographing. If your team was performing at a local nursing home, you might consider using a more classic piece of music rather than a new hit song. In addition, think about what style of dance you should perform for your audience. Choose a style and music that best relates to them for better crowd appeal.

Some routines may take longer to teach than others. When choreographing, take into account how much time you have to teach the routine. This can help you determine the length for your dance. If you have only a few practices to teach and perfect a routine for a performance, maybe incorporate only a few formation changes and keep the movement simple or less intricate. Consider adding technical skills in which your team has already mastered. Choose a style that your team picks up quickly and that they are most comfortable learning.

Will all of your dancers be participating? Be sure to set choreography based on the number of dancers that will be performing the routine. For instance, you may decide not to incorporate partner-work if you have an odd number to work with. Different visuals and group work all depend on the number of performers you have.

When choreographing a competition routine, it is important to know the rules and regulations before attending the competition. These rules may vary amongst different competitions. Stay informed of time limits, illegal moves, and other details regarding the category or style of your routine. If a sample score sheet is available, take into consideration the different areas of the choreography section that are scored. Some examples may include difficulty, creativity, musicality, formations and transitions. You should add choreography that would help obtain the highest score possible in each of these areas.

Last, but not least, your routine should be fun! Create a routine that is enjoyable to choreograph, teach, learn, and perform!