



Effective Ways to Clean a Routine

By: Kathryn Guion

Kathryn Guion is a native of Knoxville, Tennessee and a current Middle Tennessee State University student. She is a Speech and Theatre major and the captain of the MTSU Lightning Dance Team. Kathryn is in her fourth year working for Universal Dance Association.

After the choreography is complete, there is still so much work to be done before a routine can be performed. Even the best teams require many hours of cleaning to help the routine look its best. For a coach, it can be extremely overwhelming to know where to start cleaning, especially if there is a limited amount of time to complete it before the performance date.

Before you tackle the entire routine, there are a few elements to consider. First, consider the purpose of this routine. Is it going to be performed at a pep rally, or is this a competition routine? The answer to this will dictate how specific you need to be while cleaning. Next, consider the time you have to clean the routine before the first performance. The smaller amount of time you have, the more efficient you must be with that time while cleaning. Finally, consider the style of the routine. For Pom and High Kick routines, the level of cleaning is a HUGE part of making the routine performable. While cleaning Jazz and Hip Hop routines is extremely important also, too much cleaning can take away the style of the routine.

Once you have considered all of these elements of the routine, the real work begins. Here are a few specific tips to help cleaning all styles and levels of routines:

- Go through the routine count by count, stopping at each motion to clarify positioning.
- Be sure to clarify angles of the arms, hands, torso, head, and legs.
- Count slowly between motions to make sure each dancer is moving from one position to another the same way.
- Once you have cleaned a very small section, go back and drill. And drill. And then, drill some more. It is essential that each dancer be able to perform a section from muscle memory before you move on so you do not have to spend time re-cleaning.
- Be sure to clean all of the technical elements, too. Clarify body angles, proper execution, and drill for synchronization.
- This sequence can seem very tedious and slow-moving, but it is imperative to the cleaning process.
- If you are pressed for time, skim the entire routine and clean the parts that need the most work. Many of the corrections you make while doing this will carry over and improve other sections. Then, if you have more time, go back and do a more detailed cleaning.

Cleaning a routine well is hard work and requires a lot of focus from the coach and the dancers. Once it is complete, however, it is very easy for everyone, including parents and the audience, to see the effects of this work.