



The Client Assessment Tool



An Objective Tool for Assessing a Challenging Client

Instructions:

Review the behaviors below. If you can document multiple instances of a client (parent or student) engaging in these behaviors, it is a **strong indicator that the relationship is causing systemic harm** to your studio. This objective data supports the difficult decision that a "Necessary Ending" may be required for the health of your community and staff.

Category 1: Undermining Studio Culture & Authority

- ☐ **LOBBY POISONING:** Publicly questions or complains about placements, choreography, or teachers in the lobby or to other parents.
- ☐ **ROGUE PARENT GROUPS:** Attempts to organize other parents to form a complaint block against a policy, teacher, or decision.
- ☐ **GOSSIP & SLANDER:** Spreads rumors or speaking negatively about other students, families, or staff members.

Category 2: Disrespecting Boundaries & Policies

- ☐ **BOUNDARY VIOLATIONS:** Repeatedly contacts you or instructors outside of stated office hours or via personal/social media channels after being asked not to.
- ☐ **POLICY DISREGARD:** Consistently argues about or demands exceptions to written policies they have already agreed to (e.g., late fees, attendance, refund policies).
- ☐ **VERBAL AGGRESSION:** Yells at, demeans, or uses aggressive language with you or your staff.

Category 3: Creating a Negative Experience for Others

- ☐ **UNRESOLVED BULLYING:** Their child engages in bullying behavior that does not resolve after intervention, or the parent defends the bullying behavior.
- ☐ **VICARIOUS DEFIANCE:** Encourages their child to be disrespectful, disregard teacher corrections, or view other dancers as "the competition" in a hostile way.
- ☐ **PERVASIVE NEGATIVITY:** Their presence consistently brings a palpable sense of tension, anxiety, or drama to the studio environment.

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Managing Dancer Conflicts: Age-Appropriate Responses



AGES 3-8



COMMON ISSUES

Taking turns, sharing space, hurt feelings

IMMEDIATE RESPONSE

- Acknowledge feelings first
- Use simple, concrete language
- Redirect to positive behavior

KEY STRATEGY

"I see you're upset. Let's find a way to dance together." OR "You both want to be first - let's take turns and cheer for each other!"

Focus on teaching rather than consequences

AGES 9-12



COMMON ISSUES

Exclusion, comparison, friendship drama

IMMEDIATE RESPONSE

- Address the behavior, not personality
- Set clear expectations
- Give both sides a voice

KEY STRATEGY

"This behavior stops now. Let's problem-solve together." OR "I care about both of you, and this isn't how we treat our dance family."

Teach empathy and perspective-taking

AGES 12-18

COMMON ISSUES

Cliques, gossip, competition stress

IMMEDIATE RESPONSE

- Be direct but respectful
- Focus on studio values
- Empower them to solve it

KEY STRATEGY

"This affects our whole team. How can we fix this?" OR "I believe in your ability to work this out - let's talk about what our studio stands for."

Treat as emerging adults, hold accountable |

The Three-Step De-escalation Formula: Every effective conflict resolution follows this simple pattern:

- 1 VALIDATE** - Show you've heard them and acknowledge their feelings without necessarily agreeing with their demands
- 2 STATE THE REALITY/BOUNDARY** - Clearly explain your policy, limitation, or perspective without being defensive
- 3 PIVOT TO A SOLUTION** - Redirect the conversation toward what IS possible or what you CAN do together

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The Staff Empowerment Checklist

Your boundaries are only as **strong** as your team's **ability** to uphold them. A **united** front creates a system of **integrity**.

Use this checklist to ensure your team feels confident and prepared.



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- ☐ **Comprehensive Training:**
Does staff training cover scripts for common situations, conflict responses, and documentation expectations?
 - ☐ **Clear Roles:**
Does everyone know their specific responsibilities? (e.g., front desk handles logistics, teachers manage the classroom, the director handles major parent concerns)
 - ☐ **Real Time Updates:**
Does staff know exactly how and when to loop you in on issues?
 - ☐ **Simple Documentation:**
Are your incident report templates easy to access and use?
 - ☐ **Regular Check-Ins:**
Do you hold quick debriefs after challenging situations to learn and improve?
 - ☐ **Clear Boundries:**
Does staff understand what they can decide independently versus what requires your approval?
 - ☐ **Unified Support:**
Does every team member know, without a doubt, that you have their back when they follow protocol?
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When your team is synced, three things happen:

1. Problems don't escalate—they get handled early.
Small behaviors get addressed consistently, preventing bigger issues later.
2. Staff no longer freeze or guess what to say.
They rely on rehearsed language, not emotional reactions.
3. You stop being the only one who can solve problems, getting your time and energy back.

Handling the Hallway Ambush



While the guide above helps inside the classroom, another challenge often happens right outside the door. The "Hallway Ambush" occurs when a parent confronts a teacher with a concern in a public space— a situation where the teacher cannot and should not solve the problem.

Why This Redirect Strategy Matters

This isn't about avoiding parents; it's about connecting them to the right person. When staff try to answer administrative or sensitive questions, it often leads to miscommunication, incorrect information, or promises that can't be kept. Training your staff with these scripts ensures concerns are handled correctly by the director.

The Ready-to-Use Redirects

The goal is simple: acknowledge the concern, then immediately redirect. Training your staff with these scripts makes the process feel confident and natural, not awkward.

Script 1:

"Thank you for trusting me with this. These kinds of decisions are handled by [Director's Name] to ensure everything is clear. I'll make sure they know you have a question, and they can give you their full attention."

Script 2:

"That's a really important question. To make sure you get the best and most accurate answer, please connect with [Director's Name]. They oversee all of our studio policies and will be able to help."

It is normal for parents to push back with, "It's just a quick question." Staff should be trained to calmly and kindly hold the boundary, reinforcing that they are following the studio's process to help, not hinder.