



McConnell School of Irish Dance

Competitive Irish Dance Guide

There are several major competitive Irish Dance organizations world-wide who offer either Open or Closed Platform Irish dance competitions. Open platform competitions are open for any dancer, from any school to participate. Closed platform competitions are limited to only open to those who belong to a particular organization.

Why Compete?

- Competitions help motivate students to set individual goals and improve their technique.
- Competitive Irish dancers have the opportunity to travel and meet other Irish dancers from around the world.
- Improving technical skills in dance takes a great deal of self-discipline, patience, focus, hard work and commitment.
- Dancers who are dedicated to competing and advancing through the levels through hard work will become better technical dancers and learn valuable life skills.

In 2014, McConnell School of Irish Dance registered with the Irish dance organization Cumann Rince Náisiúnta (CRN). McConnell School of Dance competitive dancers have the opportunity to compete in the CRN Regional, National (USA), and World competitions (held in Ireland every year). McConnell School of Dance competitive dancers may also compete in Open Platform competitions held by any other Irish dance organizations.

Why CRN?

Having been an independent Irish Dance school for over 80 years, the decision to affiliate with an Irish dance organizations was one we approached with a great deal of thought. CRN is the organization which best aligns with the principals our school was founded upon and operate their competitions based on a system of fairness and integrity with in their judging system.

What is CRN?

Cumann Rince Náisiúnta (koo-mun, rin-ka, now-shun-tuh)

CRN was established in 1982 in Dublin, Ireland by the late Ita Cadwell. CRN is the only organization whose competitions successfully operate with the Open Platform, where any dancer from any teacher, from any part of the world or any organisation can compete. CRN believes in honesty, justice and fairness in competitions. CRN's motto is: **“Do not do to others what you would not like done to you”**. CRN's founder Ita Cadwell used the following phrase: **“The honest road is the right and just road to take, but it is also a very hard and difficult road to take.**

CRN is widely known as a traditional dance organization and it has successfully maintained the integrity of traditional dances, while actively encouraging the development of new and innovative work. Great thought was put into considering the developmental levels of students and their capacity to execute work in solo dances.

Five (5) grades/levels of dance were established. In an ongoing effort to honour tradition and continually protect the developmental process of dancers a grading system is in operation in all 5 levels and grades. This system ensures that appropriate technique is being taught at each level.

CRN is committed to protecting the integrity and purity of the Irish Dance tradition. CRN is very proud of the standard of dance education among its members. This standard was achieved through establishing a compulsory and rigorous teacher-training course and requires two to three years of supervised training in Ireland (non-Irish resident students usually complete this curriculum in three to five years). CRN Adjudicators must complete an additional two years of supervised study, taught by recognized trainers with Cumann Rince Náisiúnta. Additionally, the Instructor Examining Panel are also required to pursue continuing education.

For more information on CRN, please visit their websites

CRN - www.crn.ie CRN USA - www.crn-usa.org

Find them on Facebook

CRN FACEBOOK www.facebook.com/CRNCumannRinceNaisiunta CRN USA FACEBOOK www.facebook.com/CRNUSA

GENERAL INFORMATION

In CRN a competition with 1 – 2 adjudicators is called a Feile (pronounced FAY-luh).

- Feis (pronounced “Fesh”) is another general term used for Irish dance competitions, but not used as much with CRN.

COMPETITION AGE

A Dancers Competition age is what she/he is on September 1 of that competition year.

- The Competition year runs from September 1-August 31.
- Age as of September 1, 2014 is used for September 2014-August 31, 2015

COMPETITION AGE GROUPS

Age groups used at major competitions (Regionals, North American Open, Irish Open, Qualifying Round)

- BUN GRAD - Under 7.8.9.10.11.12.14.18 and over 18
- ULLMHUCHAN - Under 7.9.11.13.15.18 and over 18
- MEAN GRAD - Under 7.9.11.13.15.17.19 and over 19
- ARD GRAD - Under 9.11.13.15.17.19.21 and over 21
- CROABH GRAD - Under 9.11.13.15.17.19.21 and over 21

School Feiles use these age groups as a guide and will combine age groups depending on entries.

- For dancers who want to progress through the levels, competing at a school feile is beneficial. In order for a dancers to advance levels with a 1st place win, there must be 7 dancers competing. Schools feiles will often combine age groups which allows dancers an additional opportunity for advancement.

Examples of What Under and Over means:

- Under 10 Age Group: means Age 9 and under as of Sept. 1st of that competition year.
- Over 18 Age Group: means Age 18 and over as of Sept. 1st of that competition year.

SOLO COMPETITION LEVELS

1. BUN GRAD (Boon Grahd)
2. ULLMHUCHNAN GRAD (Oowl-Voo-Kahn Grahd)
3. MEAN GRAD (Mahn Grahd)
4. ARD GRAD (Ord Grahd)
5. CROABH GRAD (Crave Grahd)

Bun Grad Dances

1. Reel (softshoe)
2. Slip Jig (softshoe)
3. Single Jig (softshoe)
4. Light Jig (softshoe)

Ullmhúchán, Mean Grad, Ard Grad, Craobh Grad Dances

1. Reel (softshoe)
2. Slip Jig (softshoe)
3. Single Jig (softshoe)
4. Heavy Jig (hardshoe)
5. Hornpipe (hardshoe)

What Grade (Level) does a dancer compete?

Any dancer new to competing is encouraged to register for Bun Grad and/or Ullmhuchan Grad. In some cases older or more advanced dancers may be permitted to start competing at the Mean Grad level, even if they have never competed before. This decision will be based on their age, skill level, technique their overall goals.

There is no CRN rule regarding the minimum or maximum number of dances a dancer can compete at a single competition.

Dancers may compete in different levels at the same competition (Bun Grad Reel & Ullmhúchán Reel)

Dancers can compete in any Bun Grad, Ullmhúchán, Mean Grad, Ard Grad dance until they win a 1st place.

Once a dancer receives a 1st place, it affects their competitive status and the dances they can compete at the next competition:

- **Winning a 1st place in a Bun Grad Dance:**
 - The Dancer must compete a higher level in that dance at the next competition. They can no longer compete that dance in Bun Grad.
- **Winning a 1st place in an Ullmhúchán Dance:**
 - The Dancer must compete a higher level in that dance at the next competition. They can no longer compete that dance in Bun Grad or in Ullmhúchán.
- **Winning a 1st place in a Mean Grad Dance:**
 - The Dancer must compete a higher level in that dance at the next competition. They can no longer compete that dance in Mean Grad, Ullmhúchán, or in Bun Grad.
- **Winning a 1st place in an Ard Grad Dance:**
 - The Dancer can no longer compete that dance in Ard Grad, Mean Grad, Ullmhúchán, or in Bun Grad. They remain in Ard Grad in that dance. They do not move up to Craobh Grad in that dance until they become an Open Champion.

In Bun Grad, Ullmhúchán, and Mean Grad, whenever the number of competitors is less than seven, the winner will not be placed out of that level unless they received a 90+ score from the adjudicator. If the winner receives a 90+ score, it will be announced during the presentation of the awards indicating a “moves up”.

‘QUALIFYING’ TO COMPETE IN AN “AWARD” COMPETITION

The “Award” is a way to recognize the best dancers of each level. Dancers must qualify to compete in an Award Competition.

Qualifying to compete in the Award Competition:

1. Dancers who receive 1st, 2nd or 3rd Place in a Dance at the CRN Qualifying Rounds Competition will qualify to compete in the Award Competition at the North American Open and Irish Open.
2. Dancers who place in the top 25% at Regionals during the first day of competition will qualify to compete in the Award Competition at Regionals.
3. Dancers can compete at Nationals to qualify for the Award competition that will be held at the end of Nationals.

“Qualifying” means you will get to compete the following dances and the scores will be combine for the results:

Bun Grad

- Reel & Slip Jig

Ullmhúchán

- Reel & Hornpipe

Mean Grad

- Reel & Heavy Jig

Ard Grad

- Reel & Contemporary Set Dance in Jig time

Dancers can only compete one level in the Award Competition. If they qualify for more than one Level, they need to choose which one they want to compete in.

Award Competitions are held at

1. Regionals
2. North American Open
3. Irish Open

Outcomes of placing in an Award Competition:

1. Bungrad

- A Dancer who wins 1st place in the Bungrad Award will no longer be able to compete any Bungrad Dances. Their competitive status is officially Ullmhúchán in all dances

2. Ullmhúchán

- A Dancer who wins 1st place in the Ullmhúchán Award will no longer be able to compete any Bungrad or Ullmhúchán Dances. Their competitive status is officially Mean grad in all dances

3. Mean grad

- A Dancer who wins 1st place in the Mean Grad Award will no longer be able to compete any Bun Grad, Ullmhuchan, or Mean Grad Dances. Their competitive status is officially Ard Grad in all dances.
Dancers who win 1st in the Mean Grad Award at the Irish Open or North American Open Qualify for the World Open.

4. Ard Grad

- A Dancer who wins 1st place in the Ard Grad Award (with 7 or more competitors) will be considered an Open Champion (Craobh Grad) dancer from that day forward They will not compete in Ard Grad in all dances.
Dancers who win 1st, 2nd, 3rd, or 4th place in the Ard Grad Award at the Irish Open or North American Open Qualify for the World Open.

HOW TO BECOME AN “OPEN CHAMPION” (CRAOBH GRAD)

• WIN 1ST PLACE IN A CHAMPIONSHIP

- To compete in a Championship at Regionals or the North American Open, a dancer’s competitive status must be: have received 1st place in Three Dances in Mean Grad and Ard Grad and 1st place in the other two Dances in Ullmhuchan.
- To compete in a Championship at the Irish Open or Worlds, a dancer’s competitive status must be: have received 1st place in all 5 Dances in either Mean Grad or Ard Grad.

- **OR WIN 1ST PLACE IN THE ARD GRAD AWARD** at Regionals, North American Open or Irish Open (must qualify to compete in this, see “Award” section of packet for more information)

AT WHAT COMPETITIONS CAN I BECOME AN OPEN CHAMPION?

1. REGIONALS (AWARD AND CHAMPIONSHIP)

- a. DATE IS ALWAYS COLUMBUS WEEKEND IN OCTOBER

2. NORTH AMERICAN OPEN CHAMPIONSHIPS (AWARD AND CHAMPIONSHIP)

- a. DATE IS ALWAYS PRESIDENTS DAY WEEKEND IN FEBRUARY

3. IRISH OPEN CHAMPIONSHIPS (AWARD AND CHAMPIONSHIP)

- a. LOCATION: DUBLIN, IRELAND
- b. LOCATION IS ALWAYS IN IRELAND
- c. DATE: USUALLY LAST WEEKEND IN APRIL OR FIRST WEEKEND IN MAY

4. WORLD OPEN CHAMPIONSHIPS (CHAMPIONSHIP)

- a. DATE: BANK HOLIDAY IN JUNE

**WHAT DANCES ARE IN THE ARD GRAD AWARD?
AT REGIONALS, NORTH AMERICAN OPEN, IRISH OPEN**

REEL

SOFTSHOE DANCE WITH
CONTEMPORARY STEPS:

THE STANDARD OF THESE STEPS
SHOULD BE A MINIMUM OF ARD
GRAD. DANCERS AT THIS LEVEL
SOMETIMES HAVE CUSTOM STEPS
TO SHOW OFF THEIR STRENGTHS
AS A DANCERS AS WELL AS
INCORPORATE NEW,
CONTEMPORARY MOVEMENTS.
THE STEPS MUST BE OF THE
HIGHEST QUALITY. TRAINING WITH
CHOREOGRAPHERS AND
ATTENDING PRIVATE LESSONS ARE
VERY IMPORTANT AT THIS LEVEL
TO BE COMPETITIVE.

**CONTEMPORARY SET DANCE
(IN HEAVY JIG RHYTHM)**

HARDSHOE DANCE WITH
CONTEMPORARY STEPS:

THESE STEPS ARE
CHOREOGRAPHED TO
ACCOMPANY SPECIFIC IRISH SET
DANCE TUNES.

**WHAT DANCES ARE IN A CHAMPIONSHIP?
AT REGIONALS, NORTH AMERICAN OPEN, IRISH OPEN, WORLD OPEN**

REEL (OR SLIP JIG IS SOMETIMES A SECONDARY OPTION)

SOFTSHOE DANCE WITH CONTEMPORARY STEPS:

THE STANDARD OF THESE STEPS SHOULD BE A MINIMUM OF ARD GRAD. DANCERS AT THIS LEVEL SOMETIMES HAVE CUSTOM STEPS TO SHOW OFF THEIR STRENGTHS AS A DANCERS AS WELL AS INCORPORATE NEW, CONTEMPORARY MOVEMENTS. THE STEPS USED IN THIS MUST BE OF THE HIGHEST QUALITY. TRAINING CHOREOGRAPHERS AND ATTENDING PRIVATE LESSONS ARE VERY IMPORTANT AT THIS LEVEL TO BE COMPETITIVE.

TRADITIONAL SET DANCE

HARDSHOE DANCE WITH TRADITIONAL STEPS:

DANCERS COMPETE ONE OF THE FOLLOW TRADITIONAL SET DANCES (IN HARDSHOE) DEPENDANT ON THEIR COMPETITIVE AGE:

ST. PATRICK'S DAY U/13
HUMOURS OF BANDON U/15
JOB OF JOURNEYWORK U/17
BLACKBIRD U/19
WHITE BLANKET U/21
GARDEN OF DAISIES O/21

**CONTEMPORARY SET DANCE
(IN HEAVY JIG RHYTHM)**

HARDSHOE DANCE WITH CONTEMPORARY STEPS:

THESE STEPS ARE CHOREOGRAPHED TO ACCOMPANY SPECIFIC IRISH SET DANCE TUNES. FOR THE NORTH AMERICANS, A JIG RHYTHM TUNE MUST BE USED.

CRN USA CALENDAR OF EVENTS 2015

- February 14, 15, &16, 2015 -
 - North American Open Irish Dance Championships
 - The Renaissance Hotel, Las Vegas, Nevada
- February 15, 2015 -
 - World Qualifying Round
 - The Renaissance Hotel, Las Vegas, Nevada
- March 28, 2015 -
 - Feile la Naomh Pádraig
 - The Clarion Hotel & Conference Center, New Cumberland, Pennsylvania
- April 25, 2015 -
 - Rince Nua Feile
 - Minneapolis Airport Marriott, Minneapolis, Minnesota
- June 6, 2015 -
 - 11th Annual McGinley School Feis
 - The Holiday Inn Harrisburg East, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania
- July 19, 2015 -
 - CRN Feile
 - Holiday Inn, Dublin , California
- August 8, 2015 -
 - McCulloch Feile
 - Clarion Hotel, Hudson, Ohio
- September 6, 2015 -
 - Irish Open & North American Qualifier
 - TBC, Santa Fe, New Mexico
- October 10 & 11, 2015 -
 - USA Regional Championships
 - Atlanta Airport Hilton, Atlanta, Georgia
- November 7, 2015 -
 - CRN Feile Minnesota
 - TBC, Maple Grove, Minnesota

- December 5, 2015 -
 - 9th Annual Feile Rince Ri
 - Commodore Barry Irish Center, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

CUMANN RINCE NÁISIÚNTA MAJOR CHAMPIONSHIPS 2015

- February 14, 15, &16, 2015 -
 - North American Open Irish Dance Championships
 - The Renaissance Hotel, Las Vegas, Nevada
- May 1, 2, 3, & 4, 2015 -
 - Irish Open Championships
 - Citywest Hotel & Conference Center, Saggart, Co. Dublin, Ireland
- June 26, 27, & 28, 2015 -
 - World Open Championships
 - TF Royal Theatre, Castlebar, Co. Mayo