



VOL. 02 · STUDIO EDITION

CONTENT CREATION GUIDE

Photography & Video on a Phone for Studios

Premium studio content using only the phone in your pocket. Lighting, framing, sound, consent and a shot list that earns its keep.

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WELCOME

Hello, and thanks for downloading.

This is the guide for studio owners who want their content to look like an editorial, not an afterthought, without buying a single piece of expensive kit.

A modern phone has a better camera than most studios will ever need. The reason your content does not look the way you want it to is rarely the camera. It is the light, the angle, the distance, the moment, and whether you remembered to record sound properly. Six small decisions, each worth more than any lens you could buy.

By the time you reach the back cover you will have a repeatable process for capturing, organising and using studio content. Photos for the website, vertical clips for Instagram and TikTok, and the kind of warm portraits that make parents enrol on the spot.

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

Read it in one sitting before your next shoot, or work through it chapter by chapter with your team. The shot list and consent templates at the back are designed to be printed and used. Tick the checklists as you go.

WHO THIS IS FOR

- Studio owners who post their own content
- Teachers or assistants who run the studio's social channels
- Anyone tired of paying for shoots that never quite capture the studio they know
- Marketing leads inside larger dance organisations who want a usable in-house workflow

CONTENTS

What's inside.

PART ONE · THE FUNDAMENTALS

01	The five rules of good phone content	05
02	Knowing your phone (settings that matter)	06
03	Lighting: where to stand, when to shoot	07
04	Composition and framing	08

PART TWO · CAPTURING THE DANCE

05	Capturing movement	10
06	Sound for video	11
07	Portraits and posed shots	12
08	The shot list approach	13

PART THREE · PROCESS & WORKFLOW

09	Consent and safeguarding	15
10	Editing on the phone	16
11	Organising your library	17
12	The annual content plan	18
13	Shot-list template (worksheet)	19
14	Sample consent form (worksheet)	20
15	Your 30-day content sprint	21

PART ONE

The Fundamentals

Before the shot list, the editing app, or the posting schedule. The handful of things that separate phone content that works from phone content that wastes the morning.

The five rules of good phone content.

Memorise these. The rest of this guide is just five rules in more detail.

01 Light first, camera second

A studio that looks dim to your eye looks half-asleep to a camera. Find the light before you find the angle. Almost every fix in this guide starts here.

02 Get closer than feels natural

Phones have small sensors. Distance flattens everything. Move two paces in. Then one more. Then crop tighter in the edit.

03 Hold the phone level, hold it still

A small tripod (under £15) buys you better content than a £400 lens upgrade. If you are handheld, lock your elbows to your ribs.

04 Record sound on purpose

Phone microphones pick up everything. The studio hum, the dad on the phone, the door slamming. The single biggest upgrade most studios can make is a clip-on microphone.

05 Shoot more than you need

Shoot three times as much as you think you will use. Editing is selection. You cannot pick from one take.

MINDSET SHIFT

Stop thinking of phone content as the cheap option. Think of it as the responsive option. The teachers and students live on their phones. The content you capture with one will feel native to the place it ends up.

Knowing your phone.

The five settings that quietly decide whether your footage is usable. None of them are buried; most studios just never look.

FIVE SETTINGS WORTH KNOWING

01 Resolution and frame rate

Set video to 4K at 30fps for general use, and 1080p at 60fps when you want slow-motion in the edit. Higher numbers, more flexibility.

02 Grid lines on

Settings > Camera > Grid (iPhone). The thirds grid makes good framing automatic. Turn it on once, leave it on.

03 Focus and exposure lock

Tap and hold on your subject until you see AE/AF LOCK. Stops the camera hunting mid-take, which ruins more clips than any other single issue.

04 HDR settings

On iPhone, leave HDR on for stills. For video destined for Instagram or TikTok, turn off Dolby Vision HDR (Settings > Camera > Record Video) so colours look correct after upload.

05 Storage and cloud sync

Run out of space at the worst possible moment. Keep at least 20GB free before a shoot. Set iCloud or Google Photos to back up automatically on the studio Wi-Fi.

Android equivalents exist for everything above. Settings names vary by manufacturer. Search the model number plus the setting name if you cannot find it.

Lighting: where to stand, when to shoot.

Good light is free. Most studio content fails because the photographer stood with their back to the window instead of their face to it.



THE THREE LIGHTING SITUATIONS

Window light

The best light you have. Stand so the window is in front of or beside your subject, not behind them.

Overhead lights

Functional, often unflattering. Soften with diffusion or add a cheap ring light for portraits.

Stage lighting

High contrast and hard for phones. Expose for faces, accept blown-out backgrounds, shoot more frames.

QUICK LIGHTING WINS

- Open every blind in the studio before you start
- Position the subject so their face catches soft, indirect daylight
- Do not mix window light with warm overhead bulbs in the same frame
- A £25 LED ring light is the cheapest dramatic upgrade in studio content

Composition and framing.

Composition is where you point the camera. Get this right and a phone clip looks like a magazine. Get it wrong and a £3,000 camera looks amateur.

FOUR FRAMINGS EVERY STUDIO NEEDS

The wide

The whole class, the whole studio, the whole moment. Shows the scale of what you do. Shoot from a corner, low angle, including the ceiling and the floor.

The medium

Two or three students mid-movement, from the knees up. The workhorse shot. Most of your social content will be variations of this.

The close-up

Hands, feet, a face mid-laugh, the bun being fixed. Specific. Tactile. The shots that make parents feel something.

The detail

Pointe shoe ribbons, the studio sign, chalk dust in light, programme notes on a chair. The connective tissue of a content set.

FRAMING PRINCIPLES

- **Rule of thirds.** Put faces and key action on the grid lines, not dead centre.
- **Eye-line space.** Leave room in front of where someone is looking or moving.
- **Cut at joints is unkind.** Avoid cropping people at the knees, wrists or ankles. Crop mid-thigh or above the elbow.
- **Vertical for social, horizontal for website.** Plan to shoot both for every important moment.
- **Negative space.** Less stuff in frame, more impact. The bin in the corner does not need to be in the photo.

PART TWO

Capturing the Dance

Movement is the hard bit. The sequence of small choices that turn the energy of a real class into content that feels alive on a screen.

Capturing movement.

The thing every other guide gets wrong. Most action shots blur because the photographer's shutter is too slow, not because the dancer was too fast.

FIVE TECHNIQUES THAT WORK ON A PHONE

01 Burst mode for jumps and turns

Hold the shutter button. Phones will fire 10 to 20 frames a second. Pick the one where the leg is fully extended, the chin is up, the eyes are open.

02 Slow-mo for the technical moments

240fps slow-motion is built into every modern phone. Use it for pirouettes, leaps, fouettés. Three seconds real-time becomes twelve seconds of poetry.

03 Pan with the dancer

Move the phone smoothly in the same direction the dancer is moving. Keeps them sharp while the background blurs. Practise on a few takes.

04 Anticipate the peak

Every movement has a peak. Press the shutter half a beat before it. Phones have a small lag. Compensate for it.

05 Lock focus first

Tap and hold to lock focus on the spot the dancer will arrive at. Stops the camera hunting mid-jump.

FROM THE STUDIO FLOOR

The best dance content is almost never the move itself. It is the breath before, or the held shape after. Train yourself to keep recording past the moment you would normally stop.

Sound for video.

Bad audio kills good video. Viewers will forgive a soft image. They will scroll past muffled sound in three seconds flat.

THE THREE SOUND SITUATIONS

Music-driven clips

The studio music carries the clip. Record clean from your phone's built-in mic, then add the original track properly in editing if you have rights to it.

Talking head

An owner, a teacher or a parent on camera. A £20 wired lavalier clip-on microphone makes phone audio sound professional instantly.

Ambient classroom

The teacher counting, the shoes on the floor, the laughter. Phone built-in is fine. Just stand close to the action.

THE KIT THAT EARNS ITS KEEP

- **A wired lavalier microphone with adapter.** £15 to £30. Plug into the phone's USB-C or Lightning port. Game-changing for spoken content.
- **A small foam windshield.** Cuts wind noise outdoors. Costs almost nothing.
- **A copyright-cleared music library.** Epidemic Sound, Artlist, or Storyblocks. Stops your reach being throttled for using the wrong track.

Most social platforms now auto-mute or limit reach on videos using popular copyrighted music. If you want a clip to travel, use licensed or platform-provided tracks.

Portraits and posed shots.

The shots that build trust. Teachers, principals, head students and the warm group portrait that parents linger on.

WHAT MAKES A PHONE PORTRAIT WORK

01 Window light, side-on

Subject's face turned slightly towards the window. Phone two paces back. Eye level with the subject, not above them, not below.

02 Use Portrait mode sparingly

Great on iPhone and Pixel. Disastrous on hair, tutus, hoop earrings (it loses edges). Take a normal version too.

03 Direct without directing

Ask the subject to look at something specific. The door. Their dance partner. Their own hands. Forced smiles never work; specific attention always does.

04 Three frames per pose

One looking at camera. One looking away. One mid-laugh after you make a joke. The middle one is usually the keeper.

05 Crop tight, leave room above

From the chest up. A little space above the head, more space on the side they are looking towards.

GROUP SHOTS WITHOUT THE CHAOS

- Tallest at the back, shortest at the front, with diagonals not straight rows
- Everyone at slightly different head heights (have some sit, some stand)
- Shoot at least 12 frames; someone always blinks
- One serious, one with the prompt "on three, look at each other and laugh"
- Step back further than you think, then crop in tight

The shot list approach.

The single habit that separates studios with great content from studios with a phone full of nearly-good clips. Plan the shoot before you start.

WHY A SHOT LIST WORKS

- You stop missing the obvious shots (the studio sign, the door, the kettle in reception)
- You stop shooting eight versions of the same thing
- You leave with content for next month, not just next week
- Your team can help capture even when you are not free
- Editing afterwards becomes a 20-minute job, not a 3-hour archaeology dig

WHAT EVERY SHOT LIST SHOULD INCLUDE

The big four framings

A wide, a medium, a close-up and a detail for every class or moment you cover.

Specific moments

Not "action" but "Y3 Ballet first arabesque". Specificity makes the shoot ten times faster.

Vertical and horizontal

Mark each shot V (Instagram, TikTok), H (website) or both. Saves reshoots.

Consent confirmed

Tick alongside every named student that their consent is on file for that use.

RULE OF THUMB

One hour with a shot list captures more usable content than a whole morning without one. The worksheet on page 19 is the template we use ourselves.

PART THREE

Process & Workflow

What happens before, between and after the shoot. The boring half nobody publishes a guide about. The half that separates a studio with a content library from a studio with a phone full of forgotten photos.

Consent and safeguarding.

Not optional. Get this right, and you can publish freely. Get it wrong, and one phone call from a parent can pull your whole content library offline.

THE NON-NEGOTIABLES

- Written consent from a parent or guardian for every student under 18
- Separate consent for website, social media, and external use (press, ads). Some parents are happy with one, not all.
- An annual refresh. Consent is not a 2019 form in a drawer.
- An easy way for parents to withdraw consent, in writing, at any time
- Children's faces never published alongside their full name unless explicitly consented

COMMON-SENSE SAFEGUARDING

01 Check the background

No registers, postcodes or timetables in shot. No mirror reflections that reveal more than intended.

02 Be cautious with location

Do not pair a recognisable child with your published weekly schedule. The combination is the risk.

03 Older students get a say

Even with parental consent, ask the student, especially teenagers. Build the habit.

04 Keep a refusal list

A simple sheet of no-photo students, accessible to every teacher. Re-check before any external use.

The sample form on page 20 is a starting point, not legal advice. UK studios should review the ICO's guidance on processing children's data under UK GDPR.

Editing on the phone.

The apps that get out of your way. Avoid anything with thirty tabs of filters; you do not need them.

APPS WORTH INSTALLING

Photos (built-in)

Crop, exposure, contrast, warmth, sharpness. 80% of edits should never leave this app.

Snapseed (free)

When you need more control. The Selective tool and the Healing brush are excellent for tidying distracting backgrounds.

CapCut (free)

The industry standard for short-form video. Captions, trims, simple transitions, music sync. Designed for vertical.

Lightroom Mobile

If you want a consistent look across your content. Save one preset, apply it to every photo. Free tier is enough.

A 90-SECOND PHOTO EDIT

01 Crop and straighten

Straighten the horizon. Crop to a stronger composition using the rule of thirds.

02 Adjust exposure and contrast

Bring up shadows so faces are clear. Reduce highlights if windows are blown out. Add a touch of contrast.

03 Warm the white balance

Most studio shots benefit from +5 to +10 in warmth. Skin tones lift instantly.

04 Sharpen, gently

A small amount of sharpening, not enough to look gritty. Done.

Organising your library.

A photo you cannot find is a photo you do not have. The system below takes ten minutes to set up and saves you hours every term.

THE FOLDER STRUCTURE THAT WORKS

- **Year > Term > Event/Class.** One year, three or four terms, then specific shoots inside.
- **Naming convention.** 2026-03-15_Y3-Ballet_Showcase-Rehearsal. Dates first, hyphens, no spaces.
- **A "Hero shots" folder per term.** Your top 30 images. The library you reach for when you need something fast.
- **A "No consent" folder.** Keep these separate so they never end up published by mistake.

CLOUD STORAGE THAT PAYS OFF

Google Drive or Dropbox

Shared with your team. The teachers can drop in their own captures. One central library, accessible from anywhere.

iCloud Photo Library or Google Photos

Automatic backup of every photo and video you take, with search. Useful as a safety net even if it is not your primary library.

END-OF-TERM RITUAL

On the last Friday of every term, spend 20 minutes choosing your 20 best images. Move them into the Hero folder for that term. Future-you will thank present-you constantly.

The annual content plan.

Most studios capture content reactively, in a panic, the week of enrolment. The studios with consistent presence shoot deliberately, on a rhythm.

THE DANCE STUDIO'S CONTENT YEAR

01 September (back to studio)

The shoot of the year. New term, fresh uniforms, full classes. Plan an hour per class group in week two or three.

02 October to December

Show preparations, exam season, costume fittings, dress rehearsals. Storytelling content; behind-the-scenes is gold.

03 January (enrolment push)

Trial-friendly content. Tasters, beginner moments, parent testimonials. Reuse the September library if needed.

04 February to April

Exam results, festival entries, technique close-ups. Quieter on shows, busier on craft.

05 May to July (show season)

Performance content. Backstage. Curtain calls. Bouquets. The emotional payoff of the year.

06 August (rest and reset)

Summer school content if you run one. Plan the September shoot. Audit the library and clear consent forms.

A MONTHLY MINIMUM

- Two short vertical clips for Instagram or TikTok
- Six new still images for the website and Google Business Profile
- One "teacher of the month" or "student of the month" portrait
- One ambient classroom moment (no faces required) for variety

Shot-list template.

Print this. Fill it in the day before. Hand a copy to whoever helps you shoot.

DATE

CLASS OR EVENT

MUST-GET SHOTS

WIDE · THE STUDIO

WIDE · THE CLASS

MEDIUM · GROUP ACTION

MEDIUM · TEACHER IN FLOW

CLOSE-UP · FACES

DETAIL · THE SMALL THINGS

CONSENT CONFIRMED FOR

Sample consent form.

A starting point. Adapt to your studio and have it reviewed by anyone qualified to do so for your jurisdiction.

PHOTOGRAPHY & VIDEO CONSENT

I, the parent or guardian of the child named below, give consent for [Studio Name] to capture and use photographs and video featuring my child for the purposes ticked below. I understand consent can be withdrawn in writing at any time.

Child's name: _____

Parent/Guardian name: _____

Date: _____

I consent to my child's image being used for:

- The studio website
- The studio's own social media channels
- Local press and printed marketing
- Paid online advertising

Signed: _____

This is a sample, not legal advice. UK studios should review their wording against the ICO's guidance on processing children's data under UK GDPR.

Your 30-day content sprint.

The simplest way to build a content habit. Pick a focus for each of the next four weeks. Stick this above your desk.

Week 1 SETUP	Kit, consent, shot list <hr/> <hr/>
Week 2 SHOOT	The big capture day <hr/> <hr/>
Week 3 EDIT	Library, edits, publish <hr/> <hr/>
Week 4 REVIEW	What worked, what next <hr/> <hr/>

SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE...

In 30 days I will know this worked because:



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