



Policy Handbook

Last updated: August 25, 2026

Welcome to Spark!

We are SO EXCITED to have you join the community of artists! Whether you are taking dance, music, art, theatre, or Pilates, we hope you feel at home quickly. Spark exists as a space where God's creativity is reflected, aiming to glorify Him in everything we do while pursuing artistic excellence. At Spark, we all desire to develop both our hearts and our skills. We have chosen to keep music and movement choices age-appropriate, respectful, and positively influential on our culture. While all our music may not be "Christian music", it will all be chosen with a purpose.

General Studio Operations

- **Communication:** Email (info@sparkarts.org) is our primary method for class details and updates. We post current news on Facebook/Instagram (@sparkartsandevents), and studio-wide email updates may come via Mailchimp.
- **Phone Policy:** To keep class fees more affordable, we do not employ a full-time receptionist. We are happy to schedule an in-person or phone meeting upon request via email.
- **Building Accessibility:** Our studio is located in a charming 19th-century building in downtown Elmira that features stairs without a ramp or elevator. Please use caution.
- **Parking:** 2-hour parallel street parking is available on Arthur St. All-day parking is located across the street behind Shell. Please cross Arthur St. carefully at the designated crosswalk due to fast traffic.
- **Health & Illness:** Sick individuals (students, parents, or teachers) may not attend studio activities. Standard isolation protocols apply to contagious illnesses (Chickenpox, Measles, Mumps, Tonsillitis, Pink Eye, and Lice). Please notify us if your child contracts a contagious illness.
- **Absences:** If you are sick or planning to be away, please email info@sparkarts.org.

Tuition, Fees & Weather

- **Financial Assistance:** We strive to keep prices affordable while paying instructors fairly and maintaining our facilities and equipment. If class fees present a challenge, Spark families have received financial support through House of Friendship, Woolwich Community Services, Jumpstart and KidSport. Additionally, monthly payment plans can be requested. We are also always open to discussing parent- or student-run fundraisers.
- **Costume Rentals:** To maintain high-quality productions while keeping overall costs and waste lower, costume fees are pooled each year to maintain existing inventory and purchase new costumes.
- **Inclement Weather:** Class cancellations prioritize instructor and family safety and are communicated via email. Decisions to cancel classes are based on several factors, including current and forecasted conditions and whether an instructor feels safe travelling to Spark. While our instructors love teaching and always prefer to avoid cancellations, safety must come first. If a lesson or class is cancelled, the parent contact will receive an email notification. We aim to provide notice as early as possible, especially for families travelling longer distances. However, weather conditions can change unexpectedly, sometimes later in the day. If the weather is questionable, please check your email before coming to class. We recognize that even when a lesson or class is running, some families may not feel comfortable travelling. We fully respect that

decision. If you choose to stay home, please email us to let us know you will not be attending. Cancelled group classes are not rescheduled or refunded. Makeup options for private music lessons depend on teacher/studio availability.

General Expectations & Community Culture

- **Why There are Expectations:** We want students to be able to use their art as an expression of worship and also as a form of communication that powerfully influences the culture around them. Each expectation in this document serves a specific purpose that will contribute to their training in this area. We believe it is important to communicate our expectations and the reasons behind them. Please feel free to email us any questions you may have at info@sparkarts.org.
- **Levels & Ages:** We believe in pushing students to their own next level, understanding that the learning process should be enjoyable, challenging, and inspiring. People of all ages and backgrounds are welcome to train and develop. Art is for a lifetime; our students don't finish their journey at 18 (in fact, we regularly offer adult classes!).
- **Class Placement & Safety:** We train dancers in healthy technique to keep their bodies safe for long-term participation. While most group classes are not labelled by skill level, students may be moved to another class if it is a better fit.
- **Exams & Competitions:** Spark intentionally chooses not to participate in competitive events or exams, keeping our focus on art as worship, blessing our community, and personal growth. We want to focus on the health of your child's body through good technique and the health of their mind through encouragement, kindness and wisdom.
- **Environment:** All instructors, students, and families deserve a safe, kind, respectful, and supportive environment.
- **Collaborative Production:** While smaller performance and ministry opportunities may occur throughout the year for different groups of students, all Spark students participate in a collaborative production in May. It is a blessing to have the opportunity to collaborate across art forms, ages, and levels. Having dancers, art, live music and acting increases our skill and heart and helps us tell a story with Jesus at the centre.
- **Parent Support:** Parent involvement with sets, props, backstage assistance, and sewing helps keep studio costs lower. We ask parents to honour teacher placement decisions and to respect Spark's values and the way we choose to implement them. We ask families involved at Spark to encourage students to support and cheer each other on, showing respect to classmates and instructors verbally, physically, and emotionally.

Discipline-Specific Addendums

Music Lesson Addendum

- **Schedule & Tuition:** Private lessons run September to June across 5 sessions (7 lesson weeks + 1 makeup week per session). Session fees are due one week prior to each session start date via e-transfer (info@sparkarts.org).
- **Instruments & Practice:** Students must own/rent their instrument (or a home piano/keyboard for practice) and purchase required books. Regular home practice is expected.

- **Attendance & Makeups:** One lesson per 7-week session may be made up during week 8 ONLY for illness or family emergency, provided notice is given. Unexcused or additional absences are forfeited.
- **Withdrawals:** Requires notice before the 4th lesson of the current session to avoid billing for the following session. If considering a withdrawal, it is always best to speak with your instructor and email Spark (info@sparkarts.org) as soon as possible to develop a plan.
- **Fragrance Alert (Miss Catherine's students):** Due to severe environmental sensitivities, please refrain from wearing perfumes, body sprays, or scented lotions.

Dance Addendum

- **Schedule & Tuition:** Classes run full year from September to May (divided into 4 sessions, with an 8th week per session reserved for makeup/rehearsals). Registration deposits are non-refundable, with remaining payments due August 1 and December 1. Students are committed for the full year after the 3rd week of September. Our important dates for the current year are kept up to date at sparkarts.org/register. Full-year classes provide students with the opportunity to focus more heavily on technique in the first half of the year, with a growing emphasis on choreography in the latter half.
- **Class Cancellations** due to instructor illness will be rescheduled to the makeup week as the studio schedule allows.
- **Dress Code:** Uniforms prevent comparison, promote focus, and allow instructors to observe alignment to prevent injury.
 - **Girls:** Sleeveless black bodysuit; pink tights and pink leather slippers (ballet); black jazz shoes and black Spark sweatpants (jazz); black tap shoes and black Spark sweatpants (tap); bare feet (acro). Hair must be in a secure bun. No jewelry allowed.
 - **Boys:** Plain black T-shirt and black Spark sweatpants. Black ballet slippers, jazz shoes, or tap shoes, based on discipline.
 - Leg warmers and other warm-up clothing can be worn if coming early to stretch, but should be removed before the beginning of class without being asked by the teacher.
 - **For those looking for a place to purchase dance attire that complies with the list below, Spark students have shared they've had a positive experience with FreeStyle Dancewear in Guelph and Kitchener. Freestyle has our dress code on file. We have also partnered with Inspirations Dancewear Canada to launch a [Spark online store](#) where you can buy your attire and have it shipped directly to your house. Note, online orders can take some time depending on inventory availability. Spark sweatpants can be ordered [here](#).*
- **Classroom Rules:** Water bottles only inside the studio; all bags stay in the waiting area. Arriving 15+ minutes late or having an injury may require you to sit out and complete an in-class written assignment to ensure safety and learning continuity.
- **Parent Support & Dance Books:** Important updates and take-home practice sheets will be sent home in your student's dance book. Please check this book frequently, pray for your child's growth, and invite them to share what they are learning and communicating through their art.

Ballet Etiquette

- **Be ready!** Dancing works your muscles and requires your brain to be alert and your emotions to be controlled. By showing up at least 15 minutes early to stretch, reflecting

on what you have learned, and preparing your heart to express art through movement, you will feel much more prepared for class. If you are late for class, please wait until the music stops to enter. If you have missed too much of the warm-up, you may be asked to sit and watch the class, as the warm-up is essential for injury prevention.

- **Dress appropriately:** The dress code is in place to ensure your teacher can see your body to give you all the corrections needed without distractions, ensuring you get the best training for your body. No bra straps should be seen, and modesty should be considered. Please leave extra shirts, leg warmers or warm-up clothing in the waiting area.
- **Secure your hair neatly back!** When your hair is appropriate for the class you are taking, it shows your teacher you are ready to learn faster turns and bigger jumps. Ponytail for tap and jazz. Tight, high Balanchine ballet bun for ballet, so we can lie down for some technique.
- **Please no chewing gum, food or drink.** Chewing gum can be a choking hazard. You may bring your water bottle into class, but please wait until your teacher gives you a water break.
- **Give your complete attention to your teacher!** It is important not to talk in dance class. The fastest way to improve as a dancer is to try to apply every correction (even if it's not directed at you). This requires your mind to be fully present. Talking while someone else is dancing is distracting and impolite. Please be respectful and never correct a classmate.
- **Be a good teammate:** "The importance of rehearsal is to learn everyone else's part, your own preparation is your welcoming gift to your class". Art at Spark is a team activity that requires a safe and encouraging environment for learning and creating. The respect and honour we show in and out of class will strongly affect the quality of team dynamics and ministry opportunities. Please take time to practice at home, encourage one another and pray for your teammates and your shows. Gossiping or speaking negatively of another classmate or teacher is incredibly harmful to the safe learning environment and effective ministry of your team.
- **Let your body language show you enjoy dance!** Even when tired, try not to yawn or lean on the barre and never sit during dance class, as it is not good for your muscles to cool down. If your teacher is working with another student, use that time to quietly practice. Never compare yourself to anyone in the room; a dancer's job is to work hard throughout the class to apply corrections and reach their next level.
- **Finish every combination!** Never give up! We all make mistakes. It's important in dance class that you keep on trying and hold that ending pose with confidence because you did your best.
- **Accept corrections with grace and a smile!** It is sometimes hard to receive corrections, but the more corrections we receive, the faster we improve. Your goal is to get to your next level as a dancer. This happens by applying corrections. Let your face show you are grateful, and then show your teacher you heard the corrections by trying to apply them right away. Trust your teacher and your director! They are invested in you and your team getting to your next level in skill and heart!
- **Practice as if performing for an audience!** Letting real joy and peace bubble out of you is more powerful and effective at reaching an audience than just smiling. Take time before class to reflect on that joy and let it flow through you during class. Practicing this every week will make it easier on show days.
- **Pray** God will use your art, your teachers, your teammates and your show to reflect His love through your heart and skill.