

✨ POSTURE FOR IRISH DANCERS

This program is designed for all dancers, whether posture feels like a strength of yours or something that becomes harder to maintain once you start moving or getting tired.

Good Irish dance posture isn't simply about pulling your shoulders back or trying to stand as straight as possible.

It requires enough mobility, strength and stability to maintain your position while your arms and legs are moving quickly underneath you.

Posture in Irish dance isn't just one position. It shows up in:

how you stand

how you hold your arms

how you lift and move your legs

how you absorb and produce force

and how well you maintain your position as you fatigue

So rather than simply practising "standing up straight," this program works on the different physical qualities that contribute to posture.

Throughout the program, you'll notice:

mobility work for the upper back, shoulders and hips

trunk exercises that challenge you while the arms and legs move

strength work for the upper back, shoulders, glutes and arms

exercises that challenge you to maintain your position against resistance

gradual progressions over the six weeks



What We're Working On

To maintain your posture while dancing, different areas of the body need to work together.

We'll be focusing on:

mobility through the upper back and shoulders

mobility around the hips

strength through the trunk and pelvis

strength and endurance around the shoulder blades and upper back

strength through the glutes and arms

maintaining your position while the arms and legs are moving

These qualities work together to help you maintain your Irish dance posture without feeling like you have to brace, grip or hold yourself rigidly.

👉 The goal is for your posture to become easier to maintain throughout your dancing, including when you start to fatigue.



Program Flow

Mobility

Prepare the upper back, shoulders, spine and hips

Core Activation

Connect the trunk with movement of the arms and legs

Strength

Build strength around the pelvis, trunk, shoulders and arms

Posture Stability

Challenge your ability to maintain your position against resistance

Core Finisher

Gradually increase the challenge over the six weeks



TRACK YOUR PROGRESS

Before beginning the six-week program, complete these two simple assessments.
If possible, video yourself.
Repeat the same assessments at the end of Week 6 so you can compare your starting and finishing points.

SEATED WALL ANGEL

Sit with your back against a wall, with your legs comfortably out in front or crossed.
Begin with your elbows bent in a W / goalpost position.
Slowly slide your arms upward as far as you comfortably can, then return to the starting position.
Record yourself from the side or a slight 45° angle.

Look for:

- Can you keep your upper back and ribcage against the wall?
- Do your ribs lift as your arms move?
- Does your lower back begin to arch?
- Do your shoulders shrug?
- Can your elbows and wrists remain close to the wall without forcing them?
- Does one side move differently from the other?
- Is there any pain or pinching?

The goal isn't to force your arms higher.

You're simply looking at how much shoulder and upper-back movement you can access while maintaining the rest of your position.

DYNAMIC POSTURE MARCH

March continuously for 60 seconds with your arms in your Irish dance position.
Record yourself from the front and, if possible, from the side.

Look for:

- Do your hips begin to hike as the knees lift?
 - Do your arms start drifting away from your body?
 - Do you sink into the supporting hip?
 - Does the supporting knee begin to bend?
 - Do your ribs flare or your lower back arch?
 - Do your shoulders begin to round?
 - Does your chin move forward?
 - Does your trunk sway or rotate?
 - Do you begin to lean backwards?
 - Does one side look different from the other?
 - What changes towards the end of the 60 seconds?
- 👉 Pay particular attention to what happens as you start to fatigue.

Posture may look very different during the first 10 seconds compared with the final 10 seconds.

AFTER 6 WEEKS

Repeat both assessments under the same conditions.

You may notice:

- better movement during the wall angel
- less compensation through the ribs or lower back
- a quieter upper body during the march
- less movement through the hips and trunk
- your arms staying closer to your sides
- better posture towards the end of the 60 seconds

Progress doesn't have to mean looking dramatically different.

Sometimes the biggest improvement is simply that the same position feels easier to maintain.

POSTURE PROGRAM

MOBILITY

Open & Close the Book 5/side

Banded Shoulder Pass-Throughs 8–10 reps

Cat-Cow 6–8 reps

Quadruped Thoracic Rotation / Thread the Needle 5/side

Child's Pose Lat Stretch 20–30 sec/side

Half-Kneeling Hip Flexor → Hamstring Rock Back 6/side

The reps above are a guideline. Move slowly and spend a little more time on an area if needed. Nothing should be forced or painful.

CORE ACTIVATION

Bird Dog 8–10/side

STRENGTH

Complete each section as a superset. Perform 2 rounds, resting approximately 30-45 seconds between rounds.

SUPERSET A

A1. Banded Dead Bug + Lat Engagement 6–8/side

A2. Banded Lat Pulldown 10–12 reps

SUPERSET B

B1. Banded Glute Bridge 10–12 reps

B2. W to Overhead Reach 8–10 reps

SUPERSET C

C1. Banded External Rotation “No Moneys” 12–15 reps

C2. Banded Triceps Pressdown 10–15 reps

C3. Split Squat Iso Hold 20–30 sec/side

POSTURE STABILITY

Plank 30-60 secs

Palloff hold 20-30 secs

✨ HOW TO PROGRESS YOUR POSTURE TRAINING

The key to improving your posture isn't constantly adding new exercises.

It's building enough mobility, strength and stability that you can maintain your position with less effort, then gradually increasing the challenge.

Aim to complete this routine 3–4 times per week.

WEEKS 1–2

Build Position & Awareness

- **Learn the exercises and become familiar with what good positioning feels like.**
- **Use lighter resistance bands**
- **Keep reps and holds as written**
- **Move slowly**
- **Avoid excessive arching through the lower back**
- **Avoid shrugging the shoulders**
- **Keep breathing rather than holding your breath**
- **Learn where you should feel each exercise**

Goal: find a strong position that you can maintain without becoming rigid or tense.

WEEKS 3–4

Increase Strength & Endurance

Begin increasing the challenge while maintaining the same quality of movement.

- **Increase band resistance slightly where appropriate**
- **Add 2–3 reps to selected strength exercises**
- **Increase the split squat hold by 5–10 seconds**
- **Slow the lowering portion of your strength exercises**
- **Progress your plank to alternating leg lifts**
- **Progress the Pallof from a static hold to pressing the arms away from the body**

Goal: maintain the same position for longer and against slightly greater resistance.

WEEKS 5–6
Maintain Posture Under Greater Challenge
Now make the exercises more demanding without
losing your position.

- Progress to stronger band resistance where appropriate
- Add a third set to selected exercises if needed
- Increase range of movement where you can maintain good positioning
- Slow the tempo
- Progress your split squat hold
- Progress to the long-lever plank variation
- Progress the Pallof by moving the arms higher / overhead while resisting rotation, come into a staggered stance.
- Continue focusing on maintaining your trunk and shoulder position while the arms and legs move

Goal: make your posture more resilient so it becomes easier to maintain when dancing and when you begin to fatigue.

HOW TO KNOW YOU'RE PROGRESSING
You may notice:

- less unnecessary movement through your upper body
- better ability to keep your ribs and pelvis positioned as your legs move
- less shrugging through the shoulders
- less excessive arching through the lower back
- your arms feel easier to keep long and close to your sides
- your posture changes less when you get tired
- the exercises feel stronger and more stable
- your dancing videos show less movement through your upper body

Remember: progress isn't simply about looking "straighter."
It's about maintaining your position with less effort while the rest of your body moves.

IMPORTANT REMINDERS

Quality over quantity

Don't force yourself into a rigid position

Keep breathing

Progress resistance only when you can maintain good technique

Mobility and strength both matter

Consistency matters more than intensity

Even 3 sessions per week can add up to meaningful progress over time.

EXERCISE GUIDE: WHY THESE EXERCISES MATTER

Each exercise in this program has been chosen to develop one or more of the physical qualities that contribute to maintaining your Irish dance posture while you move.

OPEN & CLOSE THE BOOK

Encourages mobility through the thoracic spine and chest.
Having enough movement through the upper back can make it easier to reach an upright position without borrowing unnecessary movement from elsewhere.

BANDED SHOULDER PASS-THROUGHS

Moves the shoulders through a large range while the trunk remains relatively still.
Useful for developing comfortable overhead shoulder movement without forcing range.

CAT-COW

Moves the spine through flexion and extension.
It also gives you an opportunity to become more aware of how your pelvis, ribcage and spine move together.

QUADRUPED THORACIC ROTATION / THREAD THE NEEDLE

Encourages rotation through the upper back while the lower body remains relatively stable.

CHILD'S POSE LAT STRETCH

Targets the lats and tissues surrounding the shoulder.
This can be useful for dancers who find overhead shoulder movement restricted or compensate by excessively extending through the lower back.

HIP FLEXOR → HAMSTRING ROCK BACK

Improves mobility through the hip flexors and hamstrings.
Helps prepare the hips and legs for movement while working through both the front and back of the hip.

BIRD DOG

Challenges the trunk while the opposite arm and leg move.
This makes it a useful bridge between simple trunk exercise and the demands of dance, where your limbs have to move without creating unnecessary movement through your torso.

BANDED DEAD BUG + LAT ENGAGEMENT

Challenges you to maintain your trunk position while the legs move. Adding tension through the arms also integrates the upper body, rather than treating the abdominal muscles in isolation.

BANDED LAT PULLDOWN

Strengthens the lats and muscles surrounding the shoulder girdle. It also gives you practice moving the arms while maintaining your ribcage and trunk position.

BANDED GLUTE BRIDGE

Strengthens the glutes and posterior hip muscles. The glutes contribute to pelvic and hip stability, providing a strong foundation for movement of the legs.

W → OVERHEAD REACH

Challenges the upper-back and shoulder muscles as the arms move from a W position overhead. Focus on allowing the shoulders to move while avoiding excessive shrugging or arching through the lower back.

BANDED EXTERNAL ROTATION “NO MONEYS”

Strengthens the external rotators of the shoulder and muscles involved in supporting the shoulder blades. Keep the elbows close to the body and avoid forcing the shoulders backwards.

BANDED TRICEPS PRESSDOWN

Strengthens the muscles responsible for extending the elbow. For Irish dancers, this can help build the muscular endurance needed to maintain straight arms throughout a dance.

SPLIT SQUAT ISO HOLD

Builds strength through the legs and hips while asking you to maintain your trunk position. This is particularly useful because Irish dance posture has to be maintained while the legs are producing force, not only while standing still.

PALLOF

Challenges your body to resist being pulled into rotation. The staggered stance also creates a less symmetrical base, making the trunk and hips work together to maintain your position.

PLANK PROGRESSIONS

Build trunk endurance while gradually increasing the demands placed on the body. The progression from a basic plank to leg movement and then a longer-lever position challenges you to maintain your trunk as the exercise becomes more difficult.

THANK YOU!

Thank you so much for taking part in this
6-Week Posture Program.

I hope it gives you a simple, practical way to work on the
mobility, strength and stability that support your
Irish dance posture.

If you have any questions as you work through the program,
please feel free to reach out.

For more programs, classes, workshops and resources like
this one, you can also find us inside the
From Head to Toe Academy.

Keep showing up, stay consistent, and enjoy the process!

With gratitude,
Chloey



From Head to Toe Academy