



Methods of Selecting Officers

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Officer/Captain selection is important because the dancers that are chosen for the positions will be expected to set an example for the team to follow, be able to assist team members that need help with routines and/or skills, and work with the coach to plan for the season. There are many different ways that this selection can take place as each coach has a different method for choosing who they feel is right for the position. Keep in mind that the coach ultimately should be the one to make the final decision since they are working so closely with the officers throughout the year.

Before holding the audition for officers it is important to have set clear expectations for the officer positions so that the candidates are aware of what exactly the coach is looking for. This can be a list of academic, dance, and/or leadership expectations and will be used by the coach to set the standard for those that are eligible to audition. Many teams require that the officer candidates carry a higher GPA than other team members and also may hold them to a higher standard for school attendance and involvement. There are coaches that also list specific duties that officers will be responsible for so that the candidates can evaluate up front whether or not they are capable of handling the position if chosen. This list of duties can also assist the coach in deciding what method will be best for choosing officers for the team.

Several methods of measuring different qualities befitting an officer are listed below. Many coaches combine a few different scores before making the final selection. Feel free to use different combinations of the assessments based on what you as the coach feel will be the best test to help you figure out who will make a great leader for your team.

Measuring Dance Ability

1. **Team Tryout.** One way to assess an officer candidate's dance ability is to use their score from the team tryout. If officer auditions are the day or week following a tryout this can be an efficient way to have a dance score without holding a separate time to evaluate the officer candidate.
2. **Skills Assessment.** Many teams will have the officer candidates execute skills center floor and across the floor to evaluate their dance technique. This can be done in a separate audition session after school for only the officer candidates, or it can be done in front of the team so that they are able to give the candidates an audience.
3. **Routine Assessment.** This is an excellent way to evaluate the officer candidate's technique and performance level. The routine can be a dance that the team knows or a separate routine that the officer candidates learned. Some teams choose to have their officer candidates audition with a routine that is very advanced, maybe even more difficult than all of the candidates are

ready for. The coaches of the teams that choose to use a very advanced routine typically do so to see how hard the officer candidates are willing to work and to assess their level of perseverance. This routine can also be evaluated either in front of teammates or separately.

Evaluating Choreography

1. **Solo.** Requiring the officer candidate to prepare a solo can be a great way for the coach to assess that candidate's choreographic skill. The solo can be an assigned style or a chosen dance style by the officer candidate. This is especially helpful if officers will be helping with choreography throughout the year.
2. **Sideline Routine.** Another way to evaluate choreography is to have the officer candidates put together a few eight counts that could be used as a sideline or stand routine. Like the solo this could be a style that the coach specifies for each candidate or have the candidate choose the style they would like to put together.

How well Can They Teach and/or Clean?

1. **Breaking down a skill.** To see how well the officer candidates are able to teach, many coaches will have them break down skills and teach them to the team. Usually the coach will make a list of different skills that they know the candidates will need to help teach throughout the season if they are chosen as an officer, and then choose a different skill for each candidate to teach. This can also help you as the coach determine how patient the officer candidate can be so you will know if they are able to work well with some of the beginner dancers on the team.
2. **Teaching their sideline routine.** This is another great way to evaluate the candidate's teaching skill. It will also demonstrate how much attention they pay to detail when teaching, as well as show how they handle specific questions from teammates throughout the learning process.

Getting to Know the Individual

1. **Speech.** Having the officer candidates write a speech about why they want to be an officer and the qualities they feel they possess that are befitting an officer can tell the coach a lot about the individual. Some teams require that the candidates also include goals for the year in their speech along with an inspirational quote as well as what duties they see themselves handling if they are selected.
2. **Interview.** The interview can take place with just the coach or judging panel and is a great way for these people to get to know the candidate better. Have a list of questions prepared and do not be afraid to include specific questions for certain candidates. If there was a situation that arose during the season before they decided to audition for an officer position and you as the coach feel that could cause problems, then ask them about it in the interview. Be as specific as possible so that you truly get to know the officer candidate.
3. **Teacher Evaluations.** Teacher evaluations are a good indication of how the officer candidate behaves when they are not in a team setting. The evaluation should focus on how well the candidate follows the rules, stays on task, whether or not they've handled leadership roles in a group work setting, attitude, and anything else the coach feels is important to know about the candidate.

4. **Team Evaluation.** Many teams have started incorporating a team evaluation into the officer audition process so the coach can really get to know not only what the candidate is like outside of the team, but also what the team thinks of the candidate. These evaluations should be completed by the current members of the team from the season prior to the one the officer candidate is auditioning for. The evaluation is usually a list of characteristics and/or behaviors and the team rates the candidate based on each item. For example, "Candidate does not talk negatively about the team" and the rating could be a 1 to 5 or a 1 to 10 with 1 meaning that the team has heard the candidate say negative things often, to the highest number meaning that the team has never heard the candidate speak negatively about the team.

Voting

1. **Team Vote.** Team votes are often figured into the audition score for an officer candidate. Keep in mind though that this vote should not overshadow what the coach feels is best for the team based on all of the other parts of the audition process. With the team vote it is usually best to ask the team to explain why they are choosing the officer candidates that they picked and also why they didn't choose the others. This can once again give the coach more insight into who an officer candidate really is.
2. **Judge's Vote.** Another vote that can be helpful is to have the judge's vote for who they feel would be best. This is strictly based on their opinion and doesn't have to reflect who they may have given the highest scores to for each individual assessment of the audition. This is a way for the judges to use their instincts and go with their gut.

However a coach decides to choose officers for their team should be done after receiving approval from administration. This is important for a couple of reasons. First of all the administration may be able to give the coach insight into what they think will work best based on their years of experience in education, and secondly if they are aware of the officer audition process and have approved it they will be more likely to support the coach's decision if there is a parent and/or team complaint about the fairness of the process. The administration should also be made aware of which candidates were chosen for leadership positions at the completion of the officer audition. This will further inform the administration just in case there is an objection about which dancers were selected and which ones were not.

Overall the officer selection process should be as specific as the coach feels it needs to be. There are teams that will have an officer tryout last just one day and others that will take a week to get through the process. It is important that the coach takes as much time as they need to make a final decision as the leaders that are chosen will be the coach's assistants throughout the season that follows. If you are a new coach taking over an existing program that has already selected officers, be sure to get as much information about what the officers were told was expected of them so that you can assess if those in fact are your expectations as well. Get to know the officers and what they want from their team experience and their goals for the season to help you as a new coach to get a clear view of the direction of the dance program you have taken over. If these aspirations do not comply with the direction you feel the program should take be sure to discuss your reasons with the officers. If they feel that they are a part of a great change and you have taken the time to bring them on board separate from the team they are more apt to support you as you implement those changes throughout the year.