



# CAREER TRANSITION

**For Professional Dancers entering  
Retirement, De-selection or Career Change**

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## Moving on well: a clear guide to career transitions

A career transition isn't one dramatic leap: it's a series of steps. Changes like retiring, moving roles, or starting a new career affect how you see yourself, your routines, relationships, and finances. People cope best when they start early, get support, and take small, steady actions.



Ballet careers start young, peak early, and can end quickly. Casting and contracts often sit with a small leadership group, which can dent your sense of control. The body is your instrument and your "CV" at the same time; injury or de-selection can feel personal. Many dancers report identity loss when "dancer" is their whole self. The good news: those who broaden roles, plan a year out, pair with a recent retiree as mentor, and line up a next step tend to glide rather than crash. Dedicated transition organisations and alumni networks also help—emotionally, practically, and sometimes financially

What we know: people who transition well usually:  
Plan (ideally 12–24 months).  
Line up the next step (a job, course, or project).  
Use support (mentor, peers, family, a named contact).  
Keep learning (short courses, recognised qualifications).

### Practical Advice for Pre-planning

Pick a leaving window. Circle a season; it can shift later.

Test roles. Assist teaching, try a choreography lab, shadow arts admin, do a micro-credential.  
Portfolio basics - CV, 150-word bio/coverletter, show reel/teaching clip + two references; refresh each term.

Two chats a month. Speak with recently retired dancers in roles you're curious about; ask how they started and what they'd do differently.

Plan A/B/C. A = ideal next step (e.g., PGDE, MA Choreography); B = decent alternative; C = safe back-up you could start tomorrow.

Mini milestones (example):

- Month 1: leaving window chosen; CV updated; 2 chats booked.
- Month 3: portfolio refreshed; shadowed in an area of interest.
- Month 6: applications drafted; mentor confirmed.
- Month 9–12: next role/course start date pencilled in.

### Financial preparation & support

Build a 6–12 month budget. List rent, bills, food, travel, training, healthcare, and typical income. Useful tools like

🔗 [Excel templates](#) or 🔗 [Free downloadable pdf](#).

Create a bridge. Aim for a 3-month cushion or secure part-time teaching/coaching to steady cash-flow.

Paperwork basics. Invoicing, tax/NI, receipts, and (if self-employed) a simple spreadsheet.

Price your time. Know your day rate/hourly teaching rate and what's included.

Look for help. Transition funds, small grants, union schemes, scholarships, alumni bursaries; ask about Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) to shorten courses (and could reduce fees).

### Social & emotional support

Build a small team:

A mentor ideally a recent retiree on your chosen pathway.

A peer buddy for informal check-ins.

A named company contact e.g. HR/management/company psychologist

One well-being contact (GP/counsellor).

If helpful, keep 2–3 classes per week for continuity Schedule two “future career” blocks per week e.g. networking, studying or researching what's next.

Set check-ins. Two short calls per month—don't wait for crisis.

Watch your sleep and social contact. If your mood or sleep dips for 2+ weeks, speak to your GP/counsellor.

### Identity work (broadening who you are)

Add a second label. “Dancer-teacher”, “dancer-student”, “artist-entrepreneur”.

Translate your strengths. Discipline, feedback use, precision, teamwork, creativity → CV bullets and interview examples.

Collect small wins. A micro-credential, a teaching block, a short choreographic project.

Tell your story. A 150-word bio that links your dance strengths to the next step; practise saying it out loud.

### Acceptance & denial

De-selection can sting you may feel shock, anger, “this can't be happening”—all normal.

Name it. “I've been de-selected; I feel [x].” Write it, tell one trusted person.

Regain control. List what's controllable (applications, meetings, portfolio, training) vs. not (casting decisions).

Act on the controllables first. Use Plan A/B/C. Start the step you can take this week (send an email, book a call, cut a show reel clip).

Rough patch doesn't mean failure. Many dancers cycle through grief, acceptance, renegotiation, and reconstruction.

### Teach dance / movement

You can gain teaching certificates or diplomas through routes such as RAD or ISTD, or qualify to teach Pilates or yoga. If you want to teach in schools, consider a BA/BEd ( undergraduate course in teaching) /PGDE (postgraduate in teaching, 1year ***INTENSIVE*** course—these usually require a degree and classroom placements. Short add-ons in safeguarding, ASN/SEN and child development strengthen your profile

### Creative careers

Study options include BA/MA/MFA programmes in choreography, performance making, directing or arts management. You can also build skills quickly with short courses in lighting, stage management, dramaturgy, producing and grant writing.

### Health, rehab & wellbeing

Practical pathways include HNC/HND/BSc courses in sports therapy, strength and conditioning, or sport and exercise science. For registered roles like physiotherapy or occupational therapy, look at BSc/MSc programmes and check the science prerequisites early. Certificates such as personal training, Pilates rehabilitation and dance science modules can bridge you into this area.

### Education & psychology

You can start with certificates or postgraduate modules in coaching and mentoring, counselling skills or education studies. If you're aiming for professional or academic careers, longer BSc/MSc routes are available—requirements vary, so ask providers in advance.

### Business & self-employment

Short courses in small-business basics, tax, digital marketing, branding, social media and simple web design help you set up and promote your work.

### Quick upskilling (flexible)

Micro-credentials or CPD courses (often 6–12 weeks online) let you add targeted skills fast. Part-time and distance options make it easy to stack credits while you teach or freelance.

Be mindful of deadline for applying for course and the starts dates, ensure you build this into your 12-24month plan. Also check the fees for courses and UCAS application have a fee.

## Education options - your next steps

Some useful links to help you research courses for your next steps

 [undergraduate teaching course](#)

 [postgraduate sports therapy](#)

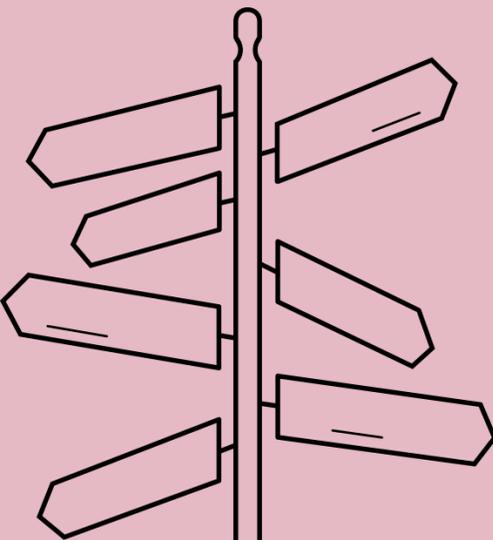
 [ISTD Teaching Options](#)

 [postgraduate teaching course](#)

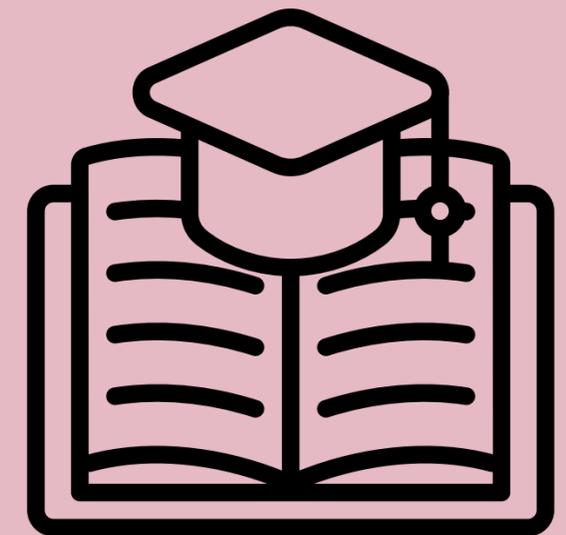
 [RAD teaching options](#)

 [UCAS information](#)

 [Master of Arts Dance and Choreography](#)



Career transition



Professional Dance

A digital CV is a great way of showcasing your craft and your broader skills—not just listing them. In one link, you can curate videos of performances and choreography, short teaching clips, rehearsal notes, press/reviews, certificates (RAD/ISTD, safeguarding), and even social posts that demonstrate communication and outreach.

Employers can watch, read, and click through evidence of transferable skills like teamwork, leadership (rehearsal directing), creativity, project management (tour or showcase you organised), and digital literacy (campaign posts) in context.

It's also easy to share as a URL or QR code on your paper CV and applications, and you can tailor separate collections for teaching, choreography, or arts management roles without redesigning everything. In short, you can turn your experiences into a living, interactive portfolio that helps see the person behind the paper

Some useful links to help you build or CV



Traditional CV Builder



Digital CV Portfolio



[Click here to view an example of a digital CV](#)



# What a "Good" v "Bad" transition looks like

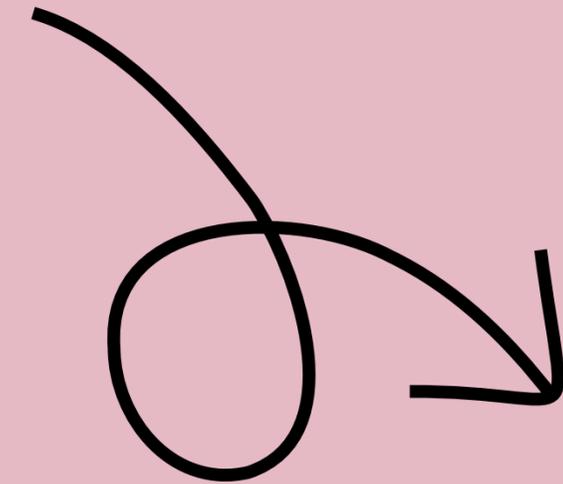
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## Good Transition check list

- You've picked a leaving window and have a 12-month plan.
- Two informational chats this month with recent retirees.
- A mentor checks in monthly.
- Routine: 2-3 classes/week (if helpful) + 2 future-career blocks.
- You can name your transferable skills and they're on your CV/portfolio.
- A next step is lined up before your last show.

## What you want to avoid

- Waiting on casting/contract news with no Plan B/C.
- Avoiding money talk; no idea of monthly costs.
- Mood crashes when you're not in class; drifting from networks.
- "I'm just a dancer" thinking; can't picture another role.
- You haven't told anyone you trust that you're considering leaving



**Small, steady actions beat last-minute panic. Start early, widen who you are, build adaptable skills, and put a simple support team around you. Whether you move into teaching, choreography, study, arts management, health, or another field entirely, you're not starting from zero —you're bringing discipline, creativity, feedback skills, and performance under pressure. That's not the end of a story; it's a very strong beginning**



Hope this resource was helpful