

DSOA COSTUME GUIDE

Dance costumes... where do you start? How do you find the right costume at the right price and also be able to make a profit? Don't worry, I have been there. Trying to keep your customer happy by providing the cheapest possible price but they are expecting a high-end quality tutu. You can find these costume gems if you are willing to put in a lot of research and negotiations with multiple companies then you might be able to get the price you want. Not to mention the hours upon hours that go into looking for the perfect costume that goes unpaid and usually unnoticed.

Sound familiar? - I've been there. It's tough. But don't worry, I have done the hard work for you.

In this costume guide, I will give you some tip and tricks that have made a successful costume business. There are options, contacts and suggestions for you to implement into your studio to start making a profit for your hard work.

The best places to source your costumes at the best prices:

See recommended suppliers on final page of this guide.

Facebook groups

There are so many buy, sell, swap Facebook groups. Type in 'dance costumes' click Group tab. Join a few different groups. Try to find some that are not local to you for more variety.

Offshore manufacturing

It can seem so daunting to get into this space, however, from my experience you will save so much money. You can remain in control of every detail or you can hand the whole thing over to an agent. Plus, if you choose to go on a costume buying trip, you get a bit of a working holiday too! Here are my recommendations for buying costumes overseas (note: recommendations are based on my personal experiences with companies sourcing in China, Bali, Bangkok and Fiji. I have not put some suggestions here as I either have not used them or have had a bad experience).

OPTION A

Buy direct from manufacturing websites.

- DHgate
- Aliexpress

TIPS:

- Ensure you use PayPal or a credit card with insurance to have cover for any altercations with your order.
- Be sure to have very clear instructions with your order.
- Try to have a supplier agreement in place prior to paying any money. This will show you know what you are doing.
- Ask for spec sheets for their product (measurements). Ensure you have everything in writing, including how many of each size you have ordered. If they do not have an order form for you to fill out, create your own.
- Usually you will need to pay a 50% deposit before they start making your order. Always request a

photo of a sample of your product - not the photo that they advertised the product with (usually this isn't their photo).

- Ask for a photo prior to sending the package.
- Ensure you have the correct tracking number of the parcel. Go to the shipping company site and type in the consignment number.

OPTION B

Trade Tours

Buying trips are suited to businesses wanting to purchase smaller quantities or share shipping with another business. A guided tour allows you to buy fabrics at the largest wholesale markets and seeing first-hand where your costumes are being manufactured. An agent will then organise the shipping if required to get your purchases home.

Guided tours go to: China, Bali, Thailand, Fiji. South Korea is said to have some of the best stretch fabrics so also worth a look although I have not experienced this yet.

If you are confident in travelling by yourself, plan a visit to the Canton Fair (recently renamed the China Import and Export Fair), which is now one of the biggest trade events on the international trading calendar.

<http://www.cantonfair.net/>

OPTION C

Using an Agent

If you are wanting to take the stress out of importing from overseas, there are agents that provide this for you. Always ensure you read the terms and conditions thoroughly and have a meeting with them in person or online to ensure it is the right fit for your business.

A couple of options you will be able to use your agent for include:

a) Sourcing manufacturers

Usually you will be required to supply a sample of quality for your costume or uniform. From there, your agent

will recommend a list of legitimate factories that are bidding for your business.

After you receive the list of factories and their contact details, you can take over the organisation and communication with the factory or you can choose to progress to the full package, where the agent will organise the orders for you.

b) Get the full package

Have a company do the full process for you. They take all the responsibility for the order.

An agent can organise:

1. Samples to be sent to you before production begins.
2. Buying at the best price. Most agents have an international account.
3. Ordering to your specifications and communicating with the factory on your behalf.
4. Quality Control to ensure your goods are perfect before they leave the factory.
5. Taxes and Shipping. Sometimes, agents will be able to package your order with another business so you save on shipping costs (either air freight or usually shipping container).
6. You end up with finished product at your door. If the product is not exactly as you requested, the agent should take full responsibility and have the factory make the order again at no extra cost to you.

How to manage the costuming in your studio so that you actually turn a profit

To make considerable profit you must think like a retailer and price your merchandise, uniforms and costumes with a consistent formula. You are offering a service and a lot of time goes into selecting costumes and uniforms so you must be reimbursed for this. Not to mention covering the cost of the actual item.

The easiest way is to have a table:

COST (WHAT YOU PAID INCL. GST)	SHIPPING	COST OF SALES (THE VARIABLE COST TO SELL EACH PRODUCT)	IDEAL PROFIT	TOTAL PER ITEM
	=SUM(TOTAL SHIPPING COST / NUMBER OF COSTUMES) THIS FORMULA WILL GIVE YOU THE PER COSTUME SHIPPING COST			

Hiring costumes & uniforms

- Offer a hiring system for performance costumes.
- Hire uniforms for exam students using your display / sample stock.

The students pay:

- \$ deposit (around \$50-\$70) to be returned upon full inspection of the costume. If any part of the costume is damaged or lost (including head piece or accessories) the cost of repair or replacement is taken from the deposit.
- Hire the costume at 50% of the purchase price (around \$40 - \$60)
- Cost should be covered by the second year with profit showing in the third year.
- It is much easier to make profit on uniforms or low cost costume items as the price point is low to start. Use this to your advantage. Remember, the higher the price, the better the quality is assumed by the customer.

Stock

Having stock is tricky. Obviously, buying bulk increases your savings but you don't want to be stuck with the stock unable to move it and lose money. Your pricing should reflect the risk involved in buying and holding stock.

A customer will always think that a product is inferior in quality if it is priced too cheap. If your local dance shop is selling leotards for \$50 then this is your price guide. Costumes are similar. Do your research. It may seem expensive to you but you know what the initial cost is. Make the most of buying product out-of-season or annual sales.

A great resource for pricing is the following website:

<https://www.business.qld.gov.au/running-business/marketing-sales/marketing-promotion/pricing/calculators>

Our best-kept secrets when it comes to buying, hiring and selling

The biggest piece of advice I can give studio owners is to be organised. Like retailers follow the seasons and purchase stock well ahead of the release dates, so to do studios need to understand the savings that can be made by planning your purchases.

Without a timeline, you will buy costumes at the last minute and spend top dollar. You may even miss out on stock from a supplier because you left it too late.

Here is a suggested timeline for a recital:

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN
TERM 1 BEGINS	DISPLAY COSTUMES FROM LAST YEAR. HAVE CONCERT DVD PLAYING	COSTUME DEPOSITS PAID & CONTRACTS SIGNED BY END TERM 1	TEACHERS TO HAVE MUSIC SELECTED. COSTUME DESIGNS SELECTED. SAMPLES ORDERED.	TRY SAMPLE SIZING ON STUDENTS. FINALISE ORDER PAY DEPOSIT.	LATE ORDERS = 25% LATE FEE + INCREASED SHIPPING COST FOR URGENT DELIVERY
JUL	AUG	SEPT	OCT	NOV	DEC
LATE ORDERS > 25% LATE FEE ORDERS CLOSED. SHIP ORDERS. COLLECT REMAINDER OF COSTUME PAYMENTS.	SHIP ORDERS. CHECK ALL COSTUMES. PAY REMAINDER OF ORDER. SEND ANY BACK IF REQUIRED.	LATE ORDERS ARRIVE VIA AIR FREIGHT. FAULTY ORDERS DELIVERED. PACKAGE COSTUMES. FINALISE OUTSTANDING INVOICES. NO PAY. NO COSTUME. (INCLUDING FEES)	COSTUME PICK UP. MUST BE ON THE COLLECTION LIST. <i>IF NAME IS NOT ON LIST, SEE RECEPTION IMMEDIATELY TO FINALISE ALL FEE AND COSTUME PAYMENTS.</i> PHOTO WEEK. RECITAL.	CLEAN & STORE HIRED COSTUMES.	DREAM ABOUT NEXT YEARS' CONCERT THEME :)

Double Up on Design

Using one costume for multiple routines. Parents love this as it shows you have put a lot of thought into how much performances are costing.

For example, the age group 8 & Under might take ballet, jazz, tap, acrobatics and musical theatre.

- We would group jazz, tap and musical theatre into one costume.
- Ballet would be a separate costume.
- Acrobatics would use the ballet leotard but just add bike shorts.

In this suggestion, the potential of 5 costumes becomes 3 or possibly only 2. You can then mark up the costumes

giving you more profit but only have to buy 3 different types of costume saving time and shipping/tax costs.

Another tip is to create a vision board.

If you are anything like me, you want every part of your uniform or costumes to work perfectly together. Creating a vision board for a performance, for example, means that you can see how the costumes look side-by-side. It also shows similar costumes that could be used for another item.

- Pinterest is great to save options (make sure the board is secret so parents don't see your thoughts!)
- Vision boards

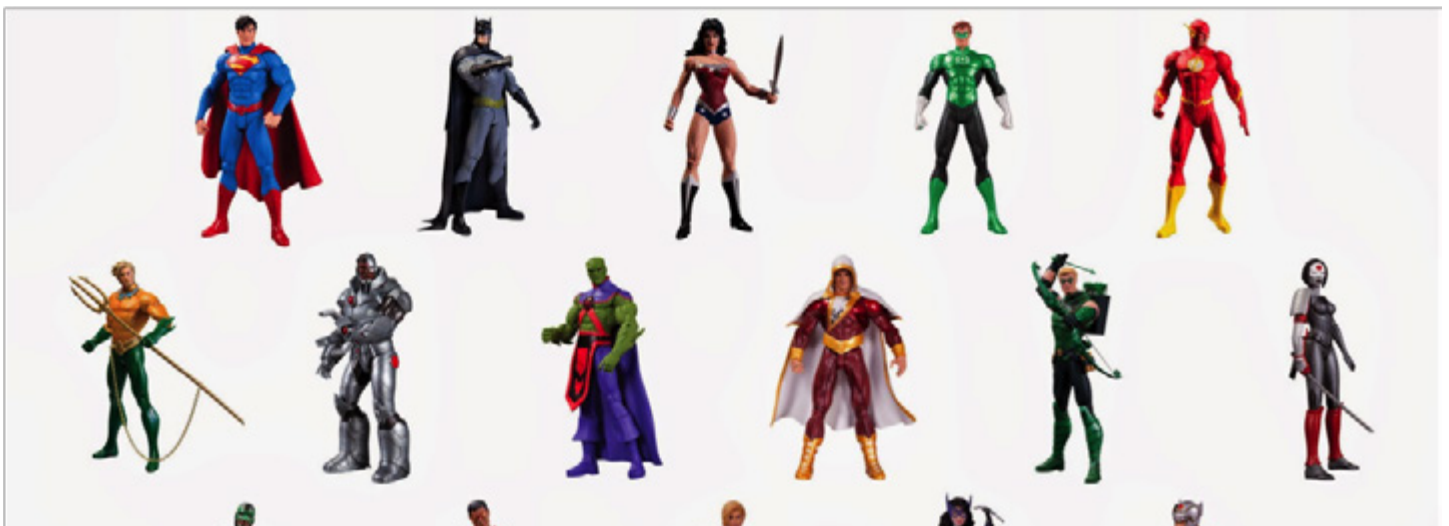
EXAMPLE A

Have each routine on a separate piece of paper along with the supplier name and a sample of fabrics if available. Write details next to your costume drawing.



EXAMPLE B

Put all the costumes on one board. Include the dance number, class, age group and song title. Cut them out so you can move them around to ensure your performance flows.



Recommended Supplier List

A Wish Come True	Made to Dance Costume Hire	Karen Feldmans Dance Costumes
Aida Style boutique	Milanoo.com	Bravo Dance Costumes Australia
Airy Fairy Dancewear Costumes	NX3 (Curtain Call)	Competitive Dance Costumes
Algy Costumes	Razzle Dazzle Dance Costumes	Dance Costume Connection
Art Stone	Reedle Dancewear	Attitude Dance and Costumes
Belly Dance Costumes	Revolution Dancewear	Dancing Princesses.Dancewear
Blossom Costumes	Sammy Dress Dance Costumes	Jessie's Tutus Costumes and Alterations
Camille Wolfe Design	Stage Boutique	The Dancebox Costumes for Hire
Cicci Dance	Stagegear Costumes	Glitterati Custom Dance Costumes
Classically Costumed	Tenth House	Georgie Girl Costumes
Costume Box	Thelineup.com	Dance America Attire
Costume Collection	Tutu Perform Dance Costumes	Contours Designed
Costume Gallery	Victoria Dancewear	Jordan Grace Princess Wear
Costume Glitz	Weissman	Kats Designs
CostumeBox	Xplosive Dance	Kenerly Kreations inc
Costumes Australia	Smiffys.com.au	Leos Dance Wear
costumes4hire	Dance Station Costume Hire	MARCEA INC
Couture Costume Dancewear	RazzleDazzleDanceCostumes	Liberts Dance
Curtain Call	DanceMumCostumes	Reverence Dance
Dance Costumes Australia	TutuPerform	Satin Stitches
Dance Costumes Sydney	dancefestivalcostumes	Show off Inc Dance Costumes
Dance Depot	dancecostumesupplies	Couture Costume Dancewear
Dance Direct	imagescostumes	Starmaker Designs
Dance Trends Australia	Dance Costume Emporium	The Lineup
Dancewear Nation	Made to Dance Costume Hire	Triple Threat Dancewear
Dancewear Solutions®	Dance Costume Patterns and Trims	House of Priscilla
Dancing Princesses Boutique	Sparkle dance	Rubies Deerfield
Dansco	Dance Costumes Galore	JBs wear
Discount Dance	Dance Costumes For Hire	RAMO
Dynamic Costumes	DanceSole	School uniform
Execukids	Locreado Dance Company Costume Hire	Dance Desire
Firefly Dancewear	and Costume Sale	Dance & Play Dancewear
Flair Dancewear	Margarets Dance Costumes and Dress-	Studio 7 Dancewear
Funidelia Costumes	making	Strut Stuff
Glitter and Dance	Cathryns Dance Costume Hire	Angelbows Dancewear
Glitz and Glamour	Costume Star	Bloch
Highland In Style	Elite Dance Designs	Eurotard
Costumes Australia	Custom Dance Costumes	Capezio
IDS International Dance Supplies	Costumes At Dance Effects	Danceware
Images Costumes	Dance Costumes By Tracy	Blank Clothing
Irish Dance Dresses	Costumes for Dancers	Pumpers Dancewear
Just For Kix	ZBling12	Step by Step
Kellé	Clearance Dance Costumes	
Kinetic Creations	MadeToDanceCostumes	
Lara Costumes	Fusion Dance Costumes	
Lebo's	Central Dance Supplies Costumes	