

# JUMP JAM Coaching Tips

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First of all – believe me I am not an expert. What I have found works, may or may not help you, but trust yourself that you will find your own path to coaching successful teams. I have started Jump Jam in 3 schools now – all of whom did not have Jump Jam previously - and I have found the biggest key to success is not a dancing background, or teaching skill, but a passion for Jump Jam and what it offers to schools. With that in mind, here are my top tips to developing a competition team:

1. **Prior to auditions;** I take the senior syndicate Jump Jam twice a week and by focussing on encouraging energy, style and face in these sessions, I have found that children auditioning for the competition team automatically come doing these things. As the whole school has improved in their level of energy, co-ordination and technique, the team that I start with are already performing to a higher standard each year.
2. **Auditions;** I teach the children part of the routine we plan to use this year and then give them a week to practise it. They come back to show me in groups and I quickly get to see who is willing to turn up, put in the commitment required and handle the pressure of performing in front of others. I will always take face and style (hard to teach that) over technique and timing (which most children will get with time). I also value work ethic and the ability to represent our school in a responsible and respectful manner. I do not need drama queens or children who might misbehave. We treat our competition team as a privilege and a responsibility, and children respond by taking it seriously.
3. **Practises;** we start by learning the individual steps before the whole dance. That way, we can make sure that the details like arm height, hand shape, head placement etc are correct. You do not want children learning a step wrong and then having to re-learn it as it takes much longer. Using their face is expected at every practise so that it becomes ‘normal’ for them and a natural part of the routine. We often work in groups or with a buddy to perfect parts – they love to learn from one another. We also video ourselves regularly so children can see what looks different from others. Telling them doesn’t always work – they think they **are** doing what you are asking of them. When they can see it – then they understand.
4. **New choreography;** I tend to keep ours simple as 90% of our team have no dancing background and they don’t always handle complicated moves and formations. Don’t panic if you are not skilled in choreography, simple changes can be just as effective. Make sure you read the marking criteria carefully to cover all aspects.
5. **Performing;** this is the time to have fun and enjoy the amazing work you and your team have put in. Results are not our focus – personal excellence and team spirit is. One thing to talk to your team about if they are new to competition however is not to be put off by how amazing other teams are and how incredible they look (and they do). I always say to my first timers “we have no influence over how other teams perform – only over how we perform”. I always have 1 or 2 who suffer bad nerves especially if it is their first time on a stage of any sort. Let them know it is normal and their whole team is on stage with them to support them.

So well done on joining this amazing event. Every time I attend I come away proud of my team, amazed at the talent from other teams and brimming with ideas for the next year. I hope you get as hooked as I am 5 years on.