

**NOAC AIA DANCE CLOTHES COACHING OUTLINE  
FANCY DANCE**

**DANCER:** \_\_\_\_\_ **CONTEST** # \_\_\_\_\_  
**Lodge#** \_\_\_\_\_

**COACH:** \_\_\_\_\_

**THE PURPOSE OF THE NOAC AIA COACHING SESSION:**

Plains Powwow Culture is a ‘popular’ culture, evolving continuously in many areas; certainly in the areas of the music, the dance and the dance clothes. Dance competitions continue to be increasingly popular not just at the summer tribal gatherings, but at big annual dance competitions happening throughout the year. Hundreds of dancers compete for thousands of dollars in prize money. Powwow-style dancing is a passion for many people and the most competitive among them actively keep their eyes on the latest fashions and their ears open to the latest songs. Smart dancers are always looking for ways to improve their dance moves and their dance clothes. Even the best-dressed dancers know their dance clothes can always be ‘bumped up a notch’. While dance clothes are not ‘judged’ at these dance competitions, they do matter. Savvy dancers know they have to look their very best if they want to catch the judges’ eye and make a positive impression. And when you look good, you feel good and then you’re sure to dance your best.

In our many years of experience and involvement in dancing and powwows, we know that ‘powwowing’ is a family activity; rare are the dancers who go it alone. The construction of a set of dance clothes is far too complicated an endeavor to be accomplished by any one person. A set of dance clothes is a compilation of items made, received as gifts, purchased, and borrowed for the event. *It Takes a Family to Dress a Dancer*. From Tiny Tots to Golden Age, all dancers have help with their clothes. And guidance from experienced dancers is some of the best help you can get.

At the NOAC AIA Dance Clothes Coaching Session a dancer has the opportunity to discuss his dance clothes with a senior powwow dance enthusiast, tapping into years of experience in the areas of dance, dance clothes, craft and powwow culture. This outline is to be used as a guiding framework, with the understanding that ‘change happens’ and everyone needs to keep his eyes open to the latest trends - competitors and coaches alike.

It is the goal of all Arrowmen who have been selected as NOAC Dance Clothes Coaches to share their knowledge and experience with younger dancers (and their support teams) in the hope of inspiring yet another enthusiastic, better-dressed dancer.

**A note about DANCE CLOTHES:**

The most important thing about a set of modern Fancy Dance dance clothes is the overall look. Dance clothes are meant to be danced in, not to be judged in a still position. The components of your dance clothes should move well when you dance and work to enhance your dancing style. For this reason, materials, size, shape, and placement of the individual dance clothes components listed above must be in order. When specific materials are called for—such as beadwork—an adequate substitution of cloth, fabric applique, sequins, painted material can be used. However, proper colors, designs, and proportions must be in place for the article to get maximum points and for your dance clothes to have maximum visual impact.

This outline is not just a “scoring sheet”; it is a resource for you to constantly improve your dance clothes to be the best they can be. When you look at the individual scores of the various headings as well as the overall score, think of what you can do to improve each item, even if just by just a couple of points. Our goal as the NOAC Fancy Dance staff is to help you to elevate your dance clothes to a higher level. By continually improving your dance clothes, your presentation on the dance floor will improve as well.

**A note to DANCERS:**

This outline is designed to summarize what a Fancy Feather dancer would wear at a contemporary powwow. It represents the norm as defined by modern dancers in Oklahoma, the northern plains, and across the country. Some relevant works on the subject of Fancy Feather Dancing dance clothes include:

- (1) “The Modern Fancy Dancer” by C. Scott Evans and J. Rex Reddick, Book Publishing Co., 1998.
- (2) “Fancy Dance” DVD/VHS video, Full Circle Communications.
- (3) “Powwow Trail, Episode 6-Fancy Dance.” DVD, *Powwow Trails* video series.
- (4)

Be aware that although a printed or recorded work may have been relevant at the time of its making, Fancy Dance is an ever-changing dance style and these works can sometimes become outdated within a short period of time. If possible, attend powwows and notice the subtle trends being added to Fancy Dance dance clothes of today. If you live in an area where it is difficult to attend powwows, you can use resources such as

[www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com), [www.gatheringofnations.com](http://www.gatheringofnations.com), [www.powwows.com](http://www.powwows.com)

to view photos and video footage of powwow dancers. Please be respectful of other’s dance clothes. Model your dance clothes after contemporary dancers, but do not copy a specific set of clothes verbatim.

The history of the Fancy Dance is one of the most fascinating and well documented of all the men’s dance styles. While Fancy Dance dance clothes of the past have their place in history, many of the components are not appropriate for contemporary dance styles. Stay current and up-to-date on your dance clothes style.

**FANCY DANCE**

**MAXIMUM SCORE: 90 Points**

Scale (Items 1-7): 0 = Missing or Inappropriate Item; 1-3 = Acceptable; 4-6 = Good; 7-9 = Excellent; 10 = Superior

**STANDARD ITEMS**

**SCORE**

**Item 1: HEAD** Roach; Roach Feathers; Rocker Spreader or Spinners; (10)

Scalp Feathers; Roach Crown; Headband

Superior: Roach—well made, worn correctly, appropriate flare, length should not conflict with neck bustle, colors coordinated with dance clothes, with rocker or spinner spreader and 2 roach feathers (can be decorated), optional scalp feather or roach crown can be worn. Porcupine hair roaches are preferred. Headband, beaded or other decoration method, colors should coordinate with the dance clothes. Forehead rosette and side drops preferred.

Acceptable: Fiber roach; roach colors discordant with rest of clothes; inadequate length, poorly constructed or worn out roach. Contemporary feather crests if coordinated with the style of the dance clothes.

Inappropriate: Un-coordinated feather crests, bandannas, no roach, war bonnets, animal skin headgear, missing or single feather spreaders, feather visors, missing items.

**Item 2: CHEST AREA** Cape; Shirt; Vest; Scarf; Necklace; Harness (10)

Superior: Cape with coordinated colored designs in fabric applique, sequins, or beaded, ribbon fringe, 8-14” in length, adequate length and width to cover upper body; colored neck scarf or necklace; Beaded harness, coordinated colors with dance clothes, adequate length. Contemporary vest and/or ribbon shirt if coordinated with the dance clothes.

Acceptable: Items that do not coordinate well with the dance clothes; inappropriate length of cape, fringe, or harness; ribbon shirt with no cape or vest; simple or undecorated items.

Inappropriate: No fringe; yarn fringe; breastplate, bandoliers; OA sash; missing items.

**Item 3: BUSTLES** Neck Bustle; Back Bustle (10)

Superior: Matching neck and back bustle, hackle or swing type. 2-3 tip color hackles, full hackle coverage, streamers of lightweight material, coordinated colors, adequate size and cup (not flat), quill shaft decoration, center rosette, properly worn—neck bustle should be high coming well above shoulders, back bustle should be tied to waist and not conflict with neck bustle.

Acceptable: Smaller bustles, thinner hackle coverage, un-coordinated colors, no streamers on back bustles.

Inappropriate: No bustles (back and/or neck,), poorly made bustles as to not hold up during dancing, traditional style bustle, missing items.

**Item 4: ARMS** Cuffs; Arm Bustles;  
Armbands (10)

Superior: Fully beaded cuffs of colors, designs, and technique which match the rest of the dance clothes. Cuffs fringed with leather or ribbon fringe which matches all other fringe. Arm Bustles - hackles, coordinated colors with back and neck bustle, center rosette, attached to Armbands. Armbands - fully beaded; tooled leather decorated with ribbon, beadwork, or mirrors.

Acceptable: Fabric cuffs and armbands; smaller arm bustles, thin hackle coverage, uncoordinated colors; no arm bands on arm bustles just tied with scarves underneath.

Inappropriate: No cuffs, armbands or arm bustles

**Item 5: HANDS** Whip Sticks; Fan; Mirror Board;  
Scarves (10)

Superior: Whip sticks, beaded or other decoration with coordinated colors possessing streamers, feathers, or scarves at tips with adequate mobility. Optional fan or mirror board can be used with, or in place of, whip sticks, must fit with the overall look of the dance clothes.

Acceptable: Undecorated whip sticks, poor movement of attachments, un-coordinated colors.

Inappropriate: No hand articles. Northern Traditional style dance sticks, hoops.

**Item 6: MID-BODY** Aprons; Belt; Side  
Tabs (10)

Superior: Aprons with coordinated colored designs in fabric applique, sequins, or beaded, ribbon fringe, 8-14" in length, adequate length and width to cover mid body. Belt, beaded or other decoration, coordinated colors. Side tabs, beaded or imitation, cloth, fringed, coordinated colors, adequately covers space between front and back aprons.

Acceptable: Un-decorated aprons, scarves for side tabs, plain belt.

Inappropriate: No aprons; no belt or side tabs; breechcloths, no fringe on aprons; missing items.

**Item 7: LEGS & FEET** Goats; Bells; Knee Bands; Plains Hard-sole Moccasins  
(10)

Superior: "Goats" angora or other long-haired animal, appropriate length, worn correctly.

Bells, sheep bells, below knee or at ankle, do not interfere with goats, properly attached.

Knee Bands; beaded, cloth, other material or colored scarves. Fully or partly beaded

Plains hard-sole Moccasins, colors coordinated with dance clothes.

Acceptable: Goats of questionable length or size; undecorated moccasins or colored water shoes.

Inappropriate: No goats, bells, or moccasins; Leggings; jingle bells; tennis shoes; leather soft- sole moccasins; missing items.

**Item 8: OVERALL**

Scale: 1-5 Good start, room for improvement; 6-10 Solid basic dance clothes, lacking some items; 11-15 Excellent; 16-20 Superior

Does the set look complete? Do the dance clothes have the right “look”? (20)

Are they consistent the current styles? Is the movement of the components appropriate?

**FINAL SCORE (90)**

<b>Ribbon Scale</b>	Red 25-49	Blue 50-73	<b>Gold</b>
<b>White 1-24</b>			<b>74-90</b>