



# Education Support

## How to be the Most Prepared for Contest

*By Joyce E. Pennington*

**Preparation:** Have a special "run through" at home before you depart for contest. Practice entering from both sides of the performance floor in case that your entry point may change. Do a taped critique for your team or have a local director come in for a "trade out" to critique each other's teams before contest.

**Goals:** Sit down with your team for a question and answer time prior to the first contest to answer questions they might have. This can set aside any anxiety or confusion about the contest day itself and allow them to concentrate totally on their own personal performance. Set the goals together that you want them to achieve. Never confuse "winning" with the positive experience you want them to have. Teach them to win joyously and to lose gracefully. Remember that you are only there to get the objective opinions of the judges and do not always expect to agree with them. With such a variety of philosophies in the dance/drill team world, it is important to take in the feedback from everyone to build a stronger team. If they are not challenged, they will not learn.

**Spacing:** At some contests, you may have the opportunity to spend a few minutes on the floor for 'blocking' or 'spacing' of the routines. Do not confuse this for practice time or memory work. The formations of each routine should be numbered and 'rehearsed' prior to contest day so that if the time is allowed, you can take the floor and go through each of your team routine formations within the 5 minutes that you are allowed.

**Parents:** Meet with your parents or send home a memo to them about the important details of the contest (date, time, where to sit, admission price, wear team colors, spirit signs, etc.). Never assume that they will automatically know these things. It would also help if they had a copy of the goals you have set for your team as well as a copy of the awards explanation for the contest. This way they can cheer louder to know that the team has reached their goals and the meaning of their award.

**Dressing:** Expect to have VERY LITTLE SPACE FOR DRESSING!!! Let's face it: If the contest is located at an arena or coliseum, you can be assured that your dressing space will be limited so plan accordingly. This does not mean that the space can be

hoarded by the first team that arrives. Show good sportsmanship and only use the dressing room when you are changing. Take your team and their belongings back out to the arena to observe and learn from other teams.

**Music:** It is imperative to have a good quality recording to get the best results from the sound system at contest. The quality and dynamics of the music can determine the energy level that your team produces. Never practice at a contest site in the hallways as the sound carries into the performance area itself. By the time you arrive at contest, your team should be prepared for their routines.

**Itinerary/ Lists:** Type out an itinerary for the day so that each participant knows where to be, when, and what to wear. Your new members will especially need to have everything spelled out for them to lessen their fears. If you have several days planned for your team, it will be even more important to let them know the activities that will take place. Type out a checklist for the items to bring with them to contest. A forgotten costume can destroy the day for you and the team.

**Pictures:** Make sure that you have assigned someone to take photographs or slides of the contest including a group photo at the end with their awards. These will preserve valuable memories for their banquet or spring show.

**Before Departure:** Have the managers or assigned parents go back to check the dressing area for items that may have been left behind and to pick up all trash left by your group.

**Have Fun!:** Don't forget that contest should be fun for everyone. Make sure that your nerves are in check so that your stress doesn't spread to the rest of the group. Make contest a motivating experience, not a dreadful one! Plan to have a pizza party, tour an amusement park, go shopping, have ice cream sundaes or some kind of enjoyable activities for your team.

