

**2015 NOAC AIA DANCE CLOTHES COACHING OUTLINE**  
**STRAIGHT DANCE**

DANCER \_\_\_\_\_ LODGE # \_\_\_\_\_

COACH \_\_\_\_\_ CONTEST # \_\_\_\_\_

**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 my 40 years of involvement with this activity one thing I’ve learned is 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 of the Arrowmen who have been selected as the 2015 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.

*Tim Caster*  
*Head Dance Clothes Coach*  
*NOAC 2009, 2015*

**MAXIMUM SCORE: 90 Points**

**Items 1, 4, 5:** 10 points each

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

**Items 2, 3, 6:** 20 points each

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

**STANDARD ITEMS**

**SCORE**

**Item 1: HEAD** Roach; Roach Feather(s); Roach spreader; Scalp Feather; Headband. Optional: Otter Fur Turban

(10) \_\_\_\_\_

Superior: Roach—well made, worn correctly, appropriate flare, should stand up in the front, colors coordinated with dance clothes, with German Silver or bone spreader and 1 or 2 roach feathers; scalp feathers correctly decorated; Porcupine hair roaches are preferred. Headband (optional) - white handkerchief, correctly folded. Or - Otter fur turban correctly decorated with ribbon work and beaded rosettes. .

Acceptable: Fiber roach; un-coordinated color roaches; inadequate length, poorly constructed or worn out roach; Otter fur turban made from other fur or fake fur.

Inappropriate: Un-coordinated feather crest; bandannas covering head; no roach; war bonnets; animal skin headgear; missing spreader or spreader with no roach feather socket, missing items.

**Item 2: UPPER BODY** Ribbon Shirt; Scarf & Slide; Bandoliers; Otter Dragger; Belt; Armbands with Ribbon Decoration. Optional: Vest; Breastplate; Hair Plates

(20) \_\_\_\_\_

Superior: Ribbon shirt with contrasting ribbon decoration, length should be to the crotch; scarf - in color matching the shirt ribbons; German silver neckerchief slide and armbands - all with stamped designs; bone or imitation hair pipe bandoliers with glass or plastic beads; beaded belt or Concho belt; vest with matching decorations to the rest of the straight dance suit, breastplate of proper size to the style of dance clothes, properly decorated otter fur dragger, or German silver hair plates, preferably stamped with designs.

Acceptable: Items that do not coordinate well with the dance clothes; belt with little or no decoration; ill-fitting ribbon shirt; bandoliers poorly constructed and sized wrong in relationship to body size.

Inappropriate: No scarf or slide, no bandoliers; no belt; parts of dance clothes from other dance styles; OA sash; other missing items.

**Item 3: MID & LOWER BODY** Straight Dance Suit Consisting of Aprons, Leggings & Trailer; Finger Woven Yarn Set; Bells. (20) \_\_\_\_\_

Superior: Straight dance suit (aprons, leggings, trailer) made from broadcloth decorated with proper ribbon work; (optional) leather leggings; (optional) floral beaded aprons – only if used with proper tribal style of dress; finger woven side drops and garters; proper bells.

Acceptable: Dance suit made from substitute materials and decorated with other than ribbon work; something used to substitute the finger woven yarn set (painted canvas belt webbing, drops decorated with chrome metal spots or small mirrors, braided yarn,) small bells; dew claw bells (only if used with a proper tribal style dance clothes).

Inappropriate: no dance suit; or leggings, shirt, apron, trailer, all made from ceremony team dance clothes parts, (usually with cloth cut fringe); no yarn set; no bells, missing items.

**Item 4: HANDS** Fan; Mirror Board; Dance Stick (10) \_\_\_\_\_

Superior: Imitation eagle tail feather flat fan w/beaded handle; Imitation eagle wing fan w/beaded handle; Macaw loose fan w/beaded handle; decorated mirror board; beaded dance stick.

Acceptable: Feather fan not beaded; simple mirror board; dance stick with minimum decoration.

Inappropriate: No hand articles; whip sticks; hand articles from other dance styles; missing items.

**Item 5: FEET** Plains Hard-sole Moccasins (10) \_\_\_\_\_

Superior: Fully or partly beaded plains hard-sole moccasins, preferably Southern Cheyenne style, or Kiowa/Comanche style “duster” type moccasins.

Acceptable: Undecorated hard-sole moccasins or painted canvas deck shoes with proper designs.

Inappropriate: No moccasins; leather soft-sole moccasins; sneakers

**Item 6: 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”? Are they consistent the current styles? Does this set represent a “tribal” style? (20) \_\_\_\_\_

**FINAL SCORE** (90) \_\_\_\_\_

**Ribbon Scale**

White 1-24                      Red 25-49                      Blue 50-73                      Gold 74-90

**A note about DANCE CLOTHES:**

The most important thing about a set of modern Straight 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 broadcloth, beadwork, or finger woven yarn work, - an adequate substitution of cloth, sequins, etc. 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 2015 NOAC Straight 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 Straight Dancer would wear at a contemporary powwow. It represents the norm as defined by modern dancers in Oklahoma and across the country. Some relevant works on the subject of Straight Dancing dance clothes include:

- (1) *Men’s Southern Straight Dance* DVD video, Full Circle Communications.
- (2) Many articles in past hobbyist publications, including *The American Indian Hobbyist*; *American Indian Traditions*; *American Indian Crafts & Culture*; *Moccasin Tracks*, and *Whispering Wind Magazine*. Although most of the above listed magazines are out of print, Xeroxed copies of the various articles mentioned are available.

Be aware that although a printed or recorded work may have been relevant at the time of its making, Straight 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 Straight 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 verbatim.

The history of the Straight Dance is one of the most fascinating and well documented of all the men’s dance styles. While these 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.