

let's talk

# TAP

with Christine Denny  
from Tapatak Oz

→ TODAY LET'S TALK TAP EISTEDDFODS!

Hi Everyone and welcome back to another edition of Let's Talk Tap.

I have recently had quite a few emails from students asking me to give them a few tips on **how to approach tap sections at Eisteddfods** and as it is that time of year when most of us start preparing these routines, I thought it would be the perfect opportunity to give you my ideas on this.

First of all I think it is very important to remember that **any type of dance is subjective**, so whilst most adjudicators have an educated opinion based on years of experience, it is still just that - their opinion. **So if you are aiming to do well in any sort of dance competition you have to make sure that you are so good that any judge would have you as a contender.** So that means making sure you have a great piece of choreography from your teacher with good technical content that is well rehearsed and perfected in every way including technique, timing, style and showmanship.

## 1. Timing

You must be exactly on the beat of your music when performing a tap routine otherwise the beats do not go with the music. **When you are rehearsing you must practice the routine flat out to ensure your timing holds when adrenaline kicks in.**

## 2. Speed Tap

It is remarkable that in an average speed tap section nearly 50 % of participants are unable to keep up with their music. Make sure you choose the tempo of the routine well. **If by the week prior to the competition you can not comfortably and confidently perform the whole routine from start to finish perfectly in time with your music, then I suggest you ask your teacher to slow the music down a little.** You can always increase the speed the following year when you have had a chance to practice a little more and gain the speed you need.



## 3. Slow Tap

In your Tap Championship it is really important that your slow tap routine shows a total contrast to your speed. You really need to give this routine a totally different style and personality, control all your beats and make sure they melt into the floor to give the routine that fluidity and smoothness that a slow tap requires. **Remember that the idea of performing these two routines in a championship is to demonstrate your ability to vary your style, personality, dynamics and technique to match the contrasting music and choreography of your routines.**

## 4. Technique matches Style

I often find when adjudicating tap sections that there are very few competitors who have the whole package. I find some dancers are fantastic technicians with lovely lyrical sounding beats but they have not developed their performance skills and tend to have bad posture with little personality and showmanship. Then on the other side of the equation you have dancers who have very little tap technique but look fantastic, wowing the audience with their smile and style. This puts the adjudicator in the predicament of choosing what they are going to value more highly - the technique or the style! Both are very important! **So your best bet is to make sure that you have equal amounts of both. If you know that one area of your performance is lacking then really focus on strengthening that aspect of your performance.**

## 5. Content

A simple routine with little content that is performed brilliantly will have a hard time competing with a very technical and challenging routine that is also performed brilliantly by someone else. **So you have to know your capabilities and pace yourself.**

## 6. Rhythm

Be sure of all your rhythms. **The rhythm should flow out naturally blending with the music.** So often this is not the case and it is really difficult to tell what the rhythms are meant to be. So make sure you secure all your rhythms with a good accent so the audience can follow what you are doing!

## 7. Attitude

My personal opinion is that Eisteddfods are a great way to perfect your performance skills and improve your technique, as your teacher can tailor make a routine to extend your personal abilities to their utmost. But at the end of the day you should always be competing with yourself and no one else. **IF YOU PRACTICED SOLIDLY PRIOR TO THE COMPETITION AND THEN DID YOUR BEST ON THE DAY, THEN YOU HAVE WON - REGARDLESS OF THE OFFICIAL PLACINGS.** And if you did not perform well on the day and know you didn't do your best, but still win first place then you are justified in feeling a little disappointed. Competition is about pitting yourself against yourself - not anyone else! It is seeing what the best is you can achieve with the talents you have been given and the effort you have put in. Perhaps your best was not judged to be as good as the winner's best on the day - but that is life! We can't all be the best at everything and what a boring place the world would be if we all liked the same thing. And remember - this is the arts and it is subjective! **SO LOOK AROUND AND APPRECIATE THE OPPORTUNITY TO SEE WHAT OTHER DANCERS AND DANCING SCHOOLS HAVE TO OFFER.** If you like it - then you work towards becoming more like that. And if you don't - then you applaud their efforts and continue on your merry way!! **THE IDEA IS TO BECOME THE BEST YOU CAN BE AND TO HAVE FUN!**

So - those are my Eisteddfod Tips for today. I hope they work for you and I wish you all the best if you are competing in the near future. So remember - nothing can beat hard work and passion for what you do.

If you are looking for some new steps and rhythms to add to your routines then grab a Tapatak Oz DVD and get cracking! Check them out at [www.tapatakoz.com.au](http://www.tapatakoz.com.au) as there is loads of chore on each one!

Till next time - Happy Tapping  
Christine



pic: Keith Howley