

**2015 NOAC AIA DANCE CLOTHES COACHING OUTLINE  
GRASS 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, 2012, 2015*

**MAXIMUM SCORE: 110 Points**

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

**STANDARD ITEMS**

**SCORE**

**Item 1: HEAD** Roach; Roach 'Uprights'; Spreader; Headband with Medallions (10) \_\_\_\_\_

Superior: Northern-style porcupine/deer tail hair roach, well made and correctly worn; usually more than 14 inches in length. Beaded or German silver spreader with two imitation golden eagle tail feathers properly attached or two wires with fluffs attached at the outer ends. A "Bull's tail" of matching colors and designs, worn off the back of the spreader/roach. A roach pin may be worn. Typically large beaded medallion(s) is/are worn on the headband in the center of the forehead, and at the sides.

Acceptable: Northern-style hair roach of poor construction or fiber imitation; improper spreader; poor quality or missing roach feathers or uprights.

Inappropriate: Bandanas; sunglasses; baseball caps; missing items.

**Item 2: NECK** Choker; Beaded Bib or Necktie; Scarf & Slide (10) \_\_\_\_\_

Superior: Properly constructed choker; beaded bib or necktie matching the clothing attire; scarf & slide (German silver or beaded)

Acceptable: Lower quality, but properly made examples of all the things listed above.

Inappropriate: Scout neckerchiefs; missing items.

**Item 3: UPPER TORSO** Shirt; Cape (10) \_\_\_\_\_

Superior: Shirt decorated with fabric appliqué work, worn under the cape. Cape, made of an appropriate material, decorated with fabric appliqué or beadwork. Cape has ribbon or yarn hanging down 10-14 inches in length. The front and back of the cape are decorated.

Acceptable: Lower quality, but properly made examples of all the things listed above.

Inappropriate: Ribbon shirts, improper materials or prints, bare chest, missing items.

**Item 4: ARMS** Cuffs; Armbands (10) \_\_\_\_\_

Superior: Fully beaded cuffs and armbands of appropriate colors, designs, and technique.

Acceptable: Lower quality beadwork or fabric appliqué that is still correct for designs, colors, and technique. Cross stitch canvas (plastic) with woven yarn to form beaded designs.

Inappropriate: Improper colors, designs or construction techniques; etc.; missing items; fake beadwork.

**Item 5: HANDS** Fan; Hoop; Mirror Board; etc. (10) \_\_\_\_\_

Superior: Fan- wing, flat or loose; mirror board; beaded or decorated dance stick or dance hoop - can be leather, fur or sweetgrass wrapped; items decorated in an appropriate way.

Acceptable: Lower quality wing fan, scarves

Inappropriate: Items not typically seen in use on the Plains.

**Item 6: LOWER TORSO** Aprons; Side Tabs; and Pants (10) \_\_\_\_\_

Superior: Aprons made out flashy fabrics with bead work or fabric appliqué work. Apron has ribbon or yarn hanging down 10-14 inches in length. Front and back of aprons are decorated. Matching side tabs are fully beaded (lazy stitch) or fabric appliqué work, with ribbon or yarn hanging down 10-14 inches in length. Pants are made of satin/silk material with ribbon or yarn hanging down from the knees 10-14 inches.

Acceptable: Apron and pants without decoration. Lower quality beadwork or fabric appliqué that is still correct for designs, colors, and technique.

Inappropriate: Inappropriate designs, materials, or construction; aprons or pants without ribbon or yarn; sweatpants; jeans; missing items.

**Item 7: FRONT ASSESORY** “H”-Harness; Loop Necklace (10) \_\_\_\_\_

Superior: Fully beaded or fabric appliqué “H”-Harness with proper colors, designs, and technique meet the standard. The harnesses of various lengths are seen.

Acceptable: Lower quality beadwork or fabric appliqué that is still correct for designs, colors, and technique. Cross stitch canvas (plastic) with woven yarn to form beaded designs.

Inappropriate: Improper colors, designs or construction techniques, fake beadwork.

**Item 8: FRONT ASSESORY** Belt; etc. (10) \_\_\_\_\_

Superior: Belt- fully beaded with proper colors, designs, and technique.

Acceptable: Lower quality beadwork or fabric appliqué that is still correct for designs, colors, and technique. Cross-stitch canvas with woven yarn to form beaded designs.

Inappropriate: Improper colors, designs or construction techniques; missing items; fake plastic beadwork

**Item 9: FEET** Plains Hard-sole Moccasins; Anklets; Bells (10) \_\_\_\_\_

Superior: Properly designed and constructed two-piece, hard sole northern-style moccasins. Fully or partially beaded with proper colors, designs, and techniques meet the standard. Fur anklets are worn just above the ankle. Bells are either large sleigh or sheep bells that are properly attached and worn above the ankle. Bells are worn over the angora anklets.

Acceptable: Properly designed and constructed two-piece undecorated hard sole moccasins. Properly designed and constructed two-piece hard sole moccasins with lower quality beadwork.

Inappropriate: Bare feet and improper footwear such as slipper-type moccasins, missing items.

**Item 10: 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? (20) \_\_\_\_\_

**FINAL SCORE** (110) \_\_\_\_\_

**Ribbon Scale**

White 1-30                      Red 31-60                      Blue 61-90                      Gold 91-110

**A note about DANCE CLOTHES:**

The most important thing about a set of modern Grass 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 appliqué, 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 2015 NOAC Grass 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 male modern Grass Dancer should wear on the dance floor.

Numerous books are now available with photos of the many items used by modern Grass Dancers. Publications such as *Whispering Wind* magazine also provide excellent information.

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

While Grass Dance dance clothes of the past have their place in history, some of the components may not appropriate for contemporary dance styles. Stay current and up-to-date on your dance clothes’ style.