



COSTUME PRICING GUIDE

The Real Cost of Costumes

Pricing costumes is one of the most overlooked but critical parts of running a profitable and smooth recital season. While most studio owners calculate only the base price of a costume, there are hidden costs and operational factors that can dramatically affect your bottom line. This guide highlights the top 5 things studio owners often overlook, provides the formulas you need to get accurate numbers, and shares real-world insights from DSOA mentors.

TOP 5 OVERLOOKED FACTORS IN COSTUME PRICING

SHIPPING & HANDLING COSTS

Don't forget about the hidden costs beyond the catalog price. While Weissman offers free ground shipping on orders over \$99, single-item orders or size exchanges may still incur approximately \$15+ in shipping and handling fees per costume. Over the course of multiple orders, those charges can add up quickly.

TAXES

Sales tax on costumes is not always rolled into calculations, leaving the studio covering the difference. Even a small 4–6% tax rate can eat into your margin if not properly allocated.

ALTERATIONS

It's common to have a handful of students who need minor adjustments, yet many studios forget to plan for this expense. At around \$20 per alteration for 5–10 students, that can take several hundred dollars off your bottom line. You can choose to pass this cost along to families, or turn it into a “surprise and delight” moment by offering Stage Ready costumes — building value and loyalty while covering your costs.



LABOR COSTS

One of the most overlooked expenses is the staff time it takes to manage the costume process — from ordering to labeling, organizing, and distributing. While many owners estimate 15–20 hours total, it's often closer to 2 hours per group class (depending on class size). At \$20/hour, this can easily climb into the hundreds of dollars in hidden labor costs. Factoring this in ensures you're valuing your team's time and protecting your profit margin.

PROFIT MARGIN AWARENESS

Owners often set costume prices emotionally (e.g., “\$100 sounds fair”) instead of running the numbers. The difference between charging \$110 and \$120 per costume could be thousands in missed profit across the school.

FORMULAS TO USE

COST OF COSTUMES	Total Costume Cost = Number of Costumes × Cost per Costume
SHIPPING & HANDLING	S+H Total = Number of Costumes × S+H per Costume
TAX	Total Tax = Number of Costumes × Tax per Costume
ALTERATIONS	Total Cost for Alterations = # of Costumes Needing Alterations × Cost of Alteration per Costume
LABOR	Labor Total = Hours × Hourly Rate (broken into ordering, labeling, distribution, etc.)
TOTAL COST PER COSTUME	Total Cost per Costume = (Costumes + S+H + Tax + Alterations + Labor) ÷ Number of Costumes
REVENUE & PROFIT	Revenue = Number of Costumes × Price Charged per Costume Profit = Revenue - Total Costs Profit Margin = Profit ÷ Revenue

EXPERT STUDIO OWNER TOP TIPS

“When setting costume pricing, it’s important to account for all associated costs, including your team’s time (sizing, entering orders, trying on costumes, processing exchanges), the costume director’s salary or hourly pay, accessories and tights, shipping and return fees, as well as the profit margin you aim to achieve. After covering these expenses, you deserve to earn a profit that reflects the value of your work and the services provided.”



- HEATHER JACKSON



“I use a charted budget system for each age group (3–5, 6–10, 11–13, and 14+), giving teachers clear spending limits in USD by costume company. The chart is built from past years’ data, adjusted for exchange, duty, and shipping in Canada, with a buffer to protect our 50% profit margin. I also factor in staff and coordinator time to ensure all costs are covered while keeping the process simple for teachers to follow. I also never include the discount that Weissman gives us so that I have that as wiggle room for additional cost like exchanges in any other unforeseen expenses.”

- NADINE SELINGER

“Use the Weissman wish list feature to only select costumes within your budget for teachers to select from. You can share the wish list without displaying any pricing information.”



- TANYA NEARY

CLOSING NOTE

By using these formulas and being proactive with hidden costs, studio owners can not only avoid losing money on costumes but actually build in a healthy profit margin. Costumes are an extension of your studio’s brand and recital experience—price them with the same care you apply to tuition and programs.