

The Stars Skills File

Acting

If you've never acted before, find out if your school has a drama department or check online to see if there are any acting courses or workshops in your area. If there's a theatre near you, find out what activities they offer. The National Youth Theatre in London, for example, accepts students from the age of 14. Youth Music Theatre UK, and the National Youth Music Theatre (who both specialise in musicals), take young actors, singers and dancers from age 11.

It takes time to become an actor (these days, the word tends to mean male and female performers). There's a lot to learn, even if you have a natural talent. There's voice training, improvisation, movement, stage technique, learning how to prepare for a role, and much more besides. It's fun, but it can be intense!

And you can't learn to be an actor on your own. You perform with other people, so you need to learn with other people. Working in a group is great for your confidence, and it's good to know that you're not alone: that there are others who share your dreams. Most importantly of all, you need a good teacher. So take your time, ask around, and choose carefully.

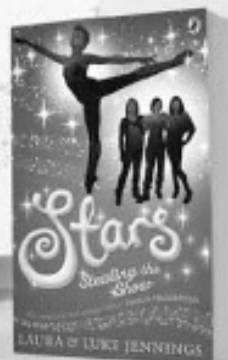
Singing

Almost everyone can sing, given half a chance, but once again the most important thing is to find the right teacher (the Association of Teachers of Singing (ATOS) is a good place to start looking). Because there's loads to learn if you want to do it well.

To begin with there's posture (standing correctly), warming up the voice, breathing, articulation (vocal clarity) and singing in tune. Your teacher will help you discover your range – how high and low you can comfortably sing – and encourage you to try out different styles, from pop to classical to singing in musicals.

As with all stage skills, practice is really important. The shower's a good place to start – bathrooms often have great acoustics! – and it's also a good idea to record yourself singing; if you're not in tune you'll be able to tell straight away. Singing with your friends is a brilliant way of building up confidence, and home karaoke systems make this even more fun. Joining a youth choir is also a great way to learn and to meet other singers of your own age; check online – new choirs are forming all the time!

Here's a handy guide to some of the talents on show in Stars at the Arcadia School of Performing Arts, as well as more info about each talent!



The Stars Skills File

Dancing

Dance, like acting and singing, is for everyone. It's fun, it's good for fitness and confidence, and it's a great way to make new friends. And there are lots of different kinds of dance: hip hop, jazz, tap, ballroom, ballet...

The first step is to find a teacher. Check online for your local dance schools – dance-teachers.org and [The Royal Academy of Dance](http://TheRoyalAcademyofDance) are good places to start – and ask if you can watch a class or two. Most sorts of dance require that you have the right kind of shoes, and sometimes other stuff like leotards and tights, so you need to find out about this before you start.

How often you go is up to you. Your teacher will give you the best advice. But the more classes you attend, and the more you practice, the better you'll get. Just remember that dance is about feeling good, having fun, and expressing yourself, and you won't go far wrong. Dancers come in all shapes and sizes; the trick is to try and be the best dancer that you can be.

Dancing & Deafness

Being deaf doesn't mean that dance isn't for you. In fact, like Spike in Stars, a growing number of deaf people are turning to dance as a means of expression. Here are two inspiring stories about deaf people who have made dance their life: [Nina Falaise](#) and [Mark Smith](#).

Vocational Performing Arts Schools In The UK

For most people, acting, singing and dancing will be hobbies: activities to enjoy for their own sake. But for those determined to take these skills further, there are full-time schools (boarding and day) where you can study performing arts alongside regular school subjects. The best-known of these are [Tring Park School for the Performing Arts](#) in Hertfordshire, which takes students from age 8, [Sylvia Young Theatre School](#) and [The Italia Conti Academy](#), both in London (from age 10), and [The Hammond School](#) in Chester, Cheshire (from age 11). For those aiming at a career in classical dance, there's [The Royal Ballet School](#) and the [Young Dancers Academy](#), both in London, and [Elmhurst](#) in Birmingham. All three accept students from age 11.

Entry to vocational schools like those above is by audition. There's a much longer list (too long to list here!) of performing arts schools in the UK taking students from age 16 and above. Here's some good advice about these from [The Good Schools Guide](#) and [Drama UK](#).

Here's a handy guide to some of the talents on show in Stars at the Arcadia School of Performing Arts, as well as more info about each talent!

