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### 'My ballet classes give toddlers confidence'

**The inspiration** 'When I went to dance classes as a child my confidence took a knock because I wasn't the best and I wasn't the right shape! But it wasn't until I had children of my own and was helping manage my mum's dance school that I hit upon the idea of non-competitive, fun kids' ballet classes – something that didn't exist where I lived.'

**Getting started** 'I'm not formally qualified to teach dance but, having young children, I knew what little ones enjoyed. Initially, people were dismissive, but I was determined! I learnt about the administrative side of running a school, and the rest was self-belief. I road-tested my idea by

running a few classes at children's play centres and, such was the demand that I soon set up more. In 2005, I set up a limited company, remortgaging the house to raise the finance. Money was really tight, but my husband, who's a fireman, was really supportive. In January 2007, I sold my first franchise, and then four more that year.'

**Why it works** 'As Baby Ballet started taking off, I had two more babies in two years, so life was a juggling act. Being relaxed about routines helps – it's not always possible to have bedtime at 7pm, and my husband is able to share childcare, working four days on, four days off. Now I've taken on staff, I can be there for the children,

if needed, but I still work seven days a week! There are now 28 franchises, and we're discussing international franchises, as well as a campaign to get more boys involved. My advice to mums out there with a passion is to trust your instincts.'

**Claire O'Connor, 37, from Halifax, West Yorkshire, created Baby Ballet classes for preschoolers, which are now franchised across the UK. She has children of two, four, seven and 14. For more info, visit [babyballet.co.uk](http://babyballet.co.uk).**



Claire runs dance classes for young children

### 'I love helping mums save money on food'

**The inspiration** 'I've always enjoyed cooking and when my children were born, I loved planning healthy family meals. I was on maternity leave from my job, which involved foreign travel, and wanted something more flexible. Then, one day while talking to my mum friends about business ideas, I realised there was a gap in the market for a service offering mums weekly family meal planners, based on supermarket offers, saving them time and money. Mums sign up for meal planners for either four weeks, six months or a year, for which I charge a fee.'

**Getting started** 'First, I advertised locally and set up my website. A couple of mum friends helped with their advertising and marketing know-how, and I started offering a weekly menu plan with recipe cards, which included a shopping list. I base them around supermarket offers. For instance, if minced beef is on offer, I suggest making a bumper pan of Bolognese sauce, which can be adapted for spaghetti Bolognese, lasagne and cottage pie. My son was only two years old when I started the website, so I was doing it when he napped. The hardest part has been when the children

are ill. But luckily, my mother-in-law lives locally, so she's there for me if there's an emergency.'

**Why it works** 'I work every morning while the children are at school. It takes me three to four hours to plan a week's menu, and I also spend time researching supermarket bargains. My afternoons are mainly devoted to the children. I find it really satisfying when members email me to say that they've saved £40 a week on groceries; or that I have managed to get their son to eat vegetables at long last. For anyone interested in setting up their own business, I'd advise taking advantage of any free courses out there – it helped me focus on what I wanted to do. And just chatting to mum friends over coffee gives you all sorts of free advice and expertise.'

**Alison Pinto, 44, from Buckinghamshire, set up the weekly family meal planner service website [menus4mums.co.uk](http://menus4mums.co.uk). She has a son of five and an eight-year-old daughter.**



Alison creates healthy meal planners for busy mums

### Musts for mumpreneurs

- ❖ Choose something you enjoy and have a passion for.
- ❖ Have you the right attributes? Self-motivation, tenacity and patience are key.
- ❖ Research your product or service: is it unique or can you make it so?
- ❖ Think about how much time you can realistically devote to your venture.
- ❖ Seek out groups for support, such as [mumpreneuruk.com](http://mumpreneuruk.com) and [mumsclub.co.uk](http://mumsclub.co.uk). And don't forget to visit [Babyexpert.com](http://Babyexpert.com) to chat with other mums and find support.
- ❖ Make the most of free start-up courses from resources such as [businesslink.gov.uk](http://businesslink.gov.uk), where you can also get legal advice.
- ❖ Set boundaries: don't make calls at teatime and allocate quality time for your business and your children.

### Don't forget!

Enter our fabulous competition for YOUR chance to be HippyChick's Mumpreneur of 2011. For details see *Up Front*, p14.