

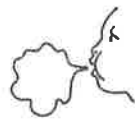
BRAIN-COMPATIBLE

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DANCE EDUCATION



BrainDance



1. **Breath** – Breathe deeply.



2. **Tactile** – Squeeze, tap, pat, scratch, brush all body parts.



3. **Core-Distal** – Reach out with toes, fingers, head, tail and curl back to your core.



4. **Head-Tail** – Move head and tail separately and together in all planes, wiggle spine.



5. **Upper-Lower** – Move all parts of upper half of body, then all parts of lower half of body.



6. **Body-Side** – Move all parts on right side of body, then all parts on left side, do horizontal eye tracking.



7. **Cross-Lateral** – Move across midline and connect upper and lower body quadrants, do vertical eye tracking.



8. **Vestibular** – Move off balance with swings, spins, tips and rolls on all levels and in all directions.

Some of these patterns are based on Bartenieff Fundamentals.
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1. Breath: Take four to six deep breaths through the nose and out the mouth, filling the belly, diaphragm and lungs. While breathing, center the body by pressing both feet on the floor (weight evenly distributed) and align all body parts: knees over feet, pelvis neutral (rather than tipped forward, backward or to one side), shoulders over pelvis (scapulae reaching toward tailbone), back of the neck long and jaw relaxed rather than stretching forward.



stretch and dance the upper body (arms, head and torso) in different ways. Dance technique teachers might explore port de bras in their particular dance style.

Next, ground the upper body by reaching the arms into space with energy, as though hugging the earth. Try other arm positions, such as placing hands on the hips or touching little fingers to the shoulders with elbows reaching out and slightly forward. While keeping the upper body grounded,

2. Tactile: Strongly squeeze all body parts and body surfaces with the hands, as though massaging the muscles. Tap all body parts and surfaces lightly and brush all body surfaces smoothly. Try other touches such as scratching, patting and slapping. Try touching the outside and inside of arms and hands, face, neck, front of torso, down both legs and feet and then up the back of legs, buttocks, back, shoulders and head (face, ears, scalp, etc).

3. Core-Distal: Reach from the center out, through and beyond the fingers, toes, head and tail (distal ends). Curl the distal ends back to the torso (core). Try whole body movements that grow and shrink, stretch and curl. Reach into different planes, directions and levels.

4. Head-Tail: First move just the head and just the tail (pelvis) in different directions with changes in size and energy. Play with movement that brings the head and tail together and apart while curving the spine forward and backward and side-to-side. This looks like the yoga exercise "cat-cow," but it is done standing. Try circling the head and tail. Keeping the knees bent helps to release the tail. End with a spine wiggle to accentuate the spine's flexibility.

5. Upper-Lower: Ground the lower half of the body by pressing the feet on the floor, bending the knees slightly. Stomp first to activate the legs and feet. Keeping the lower body grounded, swing the arms in different directions,

march in place, do knee bends in parallel and turnout, jumps, leg brushes, grapevine steps and other lower body actions. Dance technique teachers might explore pliés and relevés or other lower body steps in their particular dance style.

6. Body-Side: Ground the left side of the body by pressing the left foot on the floor and extend the left arm into space like the letter “K.” Try other grounding positions such as one hand on one hip or the arm reaching down to the ground. The grounded side should be stable or still but energized to support the mobile side of the body. Keeping the left side grounded, dance the right side of the body in many different ways. Swing, bend, twist and stretch in different directions, with changes in energy. Be sure to include “half” of the head, pelvis and torso in these movements along with the leg and arm. Then ground the right side and dance the left side. Dance technique teachers might explore tendus, battements and other body-side movements in their particular dance style.

Next, simulate belly crawling, like a lizard up a wall. Crawl with arms and legs open to the side, with one side reaching up and the other side stretching down. Perform another body-side movement with elbows slightly bent, like a “W.” Bring the whole left half of the body (arm, leg, pelvis and torso) over to meet the right half then open up the left half. Bring the right half over to meet the left half, like opening and closing a book or clam.



To develop horizontal eye tracking, repeat the “book” movement several times by following the opening hand with the eyes as it moves right to left or left to right. For more horizontal eye tracking practice, touch one finger of the right hand to the nose and look at the left hand while stretching it to the left side. Touch a finger of the left hand to the nose and look at the right hand while stretching it to the right. Repeat this several times. A third eye-tracking exercise is to follow one thumb with the eyes, without moving the head, while moving the thumb from left to right. The thumb should be at eye level about ten inches from the nose.



7. Cross-Lateral: Simulate creeping on hands and knees by doing a standing crawl with legs and arms parallel in front of the body. This looks like climbing a ladder. To practice vertical eye tracking, let the eyes travel up and down while “crawling.” Look at one hand (or ceiling and floor) as it reaches high and then low. Another way to practice vertical eye tracking is to look at one thumb without moving the head as it moves up and down, about ten inches from the front of the body.

After practicing vertical eye tracking, do a cross-lateral “boogie” dance. Find as many ways possible to move cross-laterally, such as touching right knee to left elbow, right hand to left knee, left hand to right foot (crossing both behind and in front), swinging both arms sideways across the midline, spiraling and skipping in place with arms swinging. Dance technique teachers might include specific cross-lateral movements based on the particular dance style they are teaching.



8. Vestibular: Spin in one direction for fifteen seconds or until dizzy (maybe only five to ten seconds), breathe and rest for fifteen seconds, then spin for fifteen more seconds in the other direction. Do not “spot” when turning; it is important to get dizzy to stimulate the balance system. Take three to four deep breaths to center oneself after spinning.

For more vestibular stimulation, try tipping in different directions, swinging the whole body forward and back and side-to-side, rolling on the floor and spinning on a low level on bottom, stomach and back.

Once students are familiar with the eight patterns of the BrainDance as a warm-up activity, refer to these patterns throughout the dance class. They will help students realize their maximum cognitive, physical, emotional and social potential.

Specific benefits of each pattern follow on the next page. Also, refer to Peggy Hackney’s *Making Connections: Total Body Integration through Bartenieff Fundamentals*.



Benefits of Each Pattern

Some patterns are based on the Bartenieff Fundamentals

- 1. Breath:** Deep breathing is essential for a fully functioning brain and body. The brain consumes one-fifth of the body's oxygen. All movements and rhythms are based on breath.
- 2. Tactile:** A variety of touch leads to bonding, sensory integration, proprioception (knowing where the body is in space) and appropriate behavior.
- 3. Core-Distal:** Reaching out with distal ends (fingers, toes, head and tail) connects us to the world beyond ourselves (interpersonal intelligence) and creates full body extension. Curling back to the core (pelvis and trunk) returns us to our own self (intrapersonal intelligence) and creates an awareness of core support for correct alignment and a sense of aliveness.
- 4. Head-Tail:** Being aware of the interactive relationship between the head and tail (pelvis) leads to a full use of both ends of our spine for propelling us through space with ease, both on and off balance. Release of the head and tail creates an open path for our central nervous system to fully function. This pattern also strengthens back, neck and shoulder muscles used in sitting, writing and focusing on book, screen or blackboard.
- 5. Upper-Lower:** Grounding the lower half, by yielding the weight of the body into the earth, allows the upper half to reach into space and relate with people. Grounding the upper half allows the lower to shift weight and travel through space toward someone or away from danger. Grounding and articulating body halves encourages emotional stability. We learn to reach for goals and set boundaries.
- 6. Body-Side:** Grounding the right side allows the left side to be fully expressive and vice versa. Right or left dominance is felt; left and right brain hemispheres are strengthened. Body-side movements develop horizontal eye tracking necessary for reading.
- 7. Cross Lateral:** Connecting body parts from opposite quadrants creates complex, three-dimensional movements such as spirals. Crossing the midline of the body connects both sides of the brain through the corpus collosum, which is essential for developing higher thinking skills. Cross-lateral movements develop vertical eye tracking necessary for reading.
- 8. Vestibular:** Moving off balance develops the balance or Vestibular System. Stimulating the Vestibular System strengthens eye tracking, hearing, proprioception, balance and coordination.