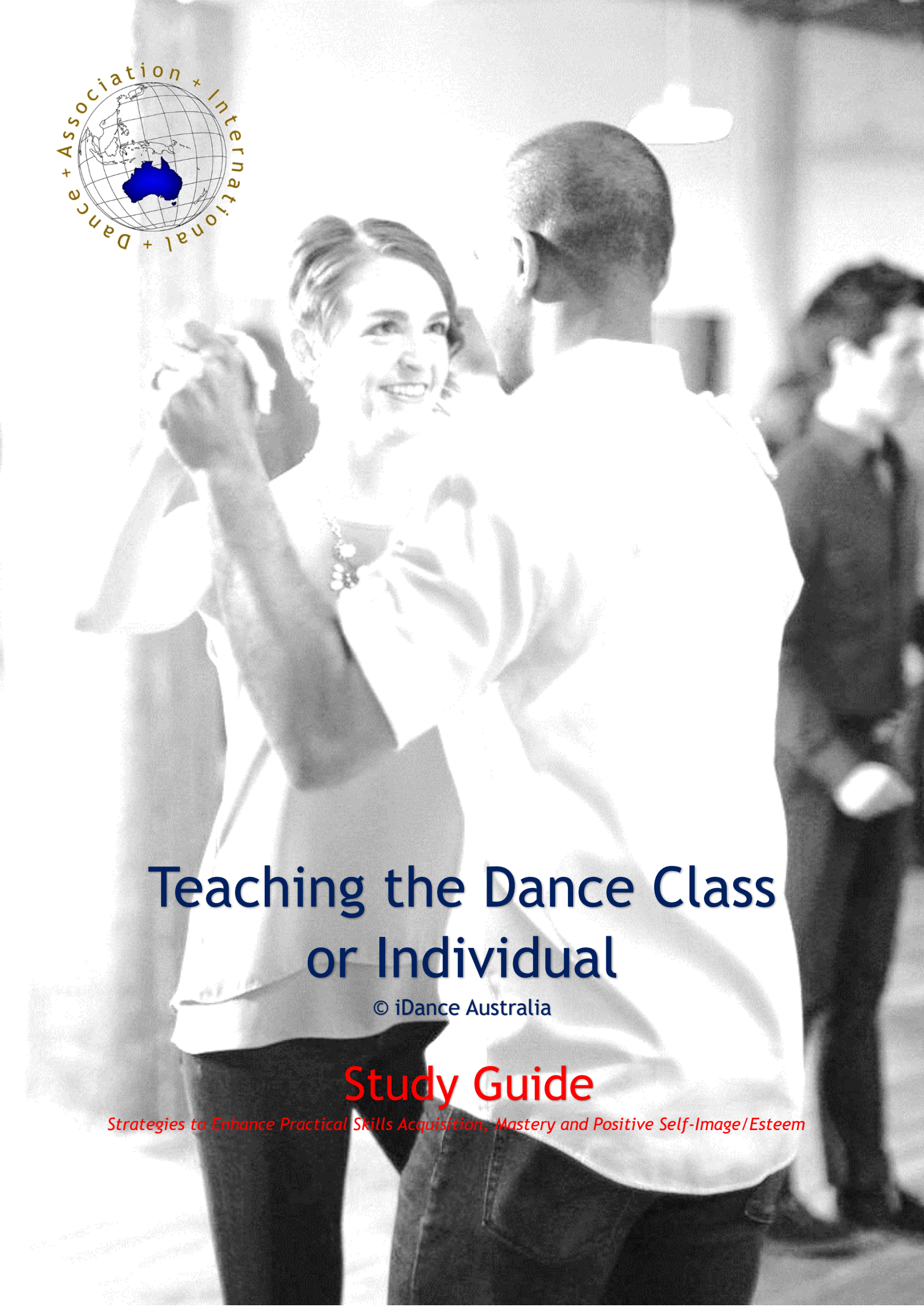


Teaching the Dance Class or Individual

© iDance Australia

Study Guide

Strategies to Enhance Practical Skills Acquisition, Mastery and Positive Self-Image/Esteem

Contents

Introduction. 2

Guidelines for Dance Teaching and Learning. 4
- ✓ Process and Goals
- ✓ Influences Affecting the Dancer
- ✓ Structure and Content of the Class or Individual Lesson

Process and Goals *(Guidance)*. 5
- ✓ SMART Planning
- ✓ Decision-Making by Objective
- ✓ Optimising the Self Within Community
- ✓ Ritualising Respect

Influences Affecting the Dancer *(Guidance)*. 7
- ✓ Mentoring & Nurturing the Learner
- ✓ Creating Fun and Challenges for ALL
- ✓ Empowering the Self
- ✓ Focusing on the Task
- ✓ Thinking about Learning

Structure and Content of the Class or Individual Lesson *(Guidance)*. 11
- ✓ Building Foundations
- ✓ Mixing and Matching
- ✓ Developing Body Awareness
- ✓ Enhancing Body Image
- ✓ Embracing the Safe and Sound
- ✓ Creating Enlightened Practice

Teaching Dance Figures (The Steps) *(Guidance)*. 15

Biomechanics in Dance. 16
- ✓ Laws of Motion – Balance, Energy, Acceleration & Backwards Movements
- ✓ Momentum
- ✓ Swing & Sway
- ✓ Rise & Fall

Finding the Beat & Timing. 30
- ✓ Exercises for Hearing the Beat
- ✓ Dance Timing
- ✓ Musical Emphasis
- ✓ Latin and Rhythm Dances
- ✓ Ballroom Dances

Lead and Follow. 35
- ✓ The Lead & the Follow
- ✓ Fundamental Theory
- ✓ Social Partner Dance Principles
- ✓ Weight Transfer
- ✓ Avoiding Obstructions (Floor-craft) & Recovery from Mis-communication
- ✓ Gender Roles
- ✓ The Lead & the Follow – Methodology
- ✓ How to Lead & how to Follow
- ✓ Latin Leads
- ✓ Ballroom Leads

Helpful Hints *(Guidance)*. 48
- ✓ Teaching Young Beginners - General Recommendations
- ✓ Teaching Young Beginners – Dance Positions
- ✓ Teaching Young Beginners - Motivation

Reference Resources. 50

© iDance Australia Study Guide - *Teaching the Dance Class or Individual*

Teaching the Dance Class or Individual

(Strategies to Enhance Practical Skills Acquisition, Mastery and Positive Self-Image/Esteem)

Introduction

Effective teaching of dance skills is schooled by a variety of theoretical frameworks and individual teaching and learning styles.

The purpose of this literature is to present practical teaching strategies that enhance the mastery of skills, promote self-esteem, self-efficacy and positive self-image.
The materials covered should be used as a guide to understanding the teaching of partnered dance with support from an accredited trainer strongly recommended.

The predominant thinking and primary research findings from dance instruction, general education, physical education, sport coaching and psychology are distilled into 16 guidelines for teaching dance.

Subsequently, theoretically and empirically informed strategies for best teaching practices are explored by reference to three broad categories:

1. Clarifying the process and goals of the class/lesson.
2. Discussing various influences that affect the dancer's progress and,
3. Clearly defining the class/lesson structure and content.

Effective teaching of dance skills is informed by a variety of theoretical frameworks, strategies, and individual styles and critical education identifies a range of teaching styles from a command style (authoritarian); in which the teacher makes all the decisions, to a student-centred style; directed by student decision-making.

In addition to various teaching styles there are multiple ways to structure a dance class, ranging from classes devoted exclusively to skill acquisition, to classes with a primary focus on developing personal and inter-personal skills.

Lesson structures are determined by the teacher's expertise and their approach.

Just as dance educators have varied strengths, abilities, values, personalities and constraints, that influence how they teach; students will also differ in ability, talent, personality and learning styles.

Can we identify styles of teaching and learning that optimize both skill acquisition and the development of high self-esteem and personal growth in dancers?

Are there methods for designing and delivering the dance lesson that can simultaneously enhance mastery of skills while promoting self-esteem and positive self-image?

A variety of disciplines and numerous theories within each discipline provide insight and knowledge that inspire best teaching practices.

These include but are not limited to; dance background; education; physical education; sports disciplines and psychology.

© iDance Australia Study Guide - *Teaching the Dance Class or Individual*

Mosston's Spectrum of Teaching Styles (ranging from teacher-directed to student-directed styles) has been the single most influential model of teaching for physical education tuition.
It developed from Mosston's philosophy that physical attributes such as agility, balance, flexibility, endurance, strength and relaxation, was at the root of the development of physical performance, and could be developed by gradual sequences of movement.

It was based on two processes: individualized learning and the cognitive processes.

In the original model, the ultimate goal for teachers and teaching was fostering independent thinking and decision-making.
While the goal has remained the same, contemporary revisions are not ranked and allow for more fluidity between various approaches.

In other words, there is no one best method.

Similarly, the study of the learning process has resulted in numerous taxonomies and inventories, and no one classification system is thought better than any other; psychologists and educators have yet to identify the best method for learning despite numerous attempts to identify various styles or approaches to the learning process.

Gibbons specifically applied Mosston and Ashworth's revised Spectrum of Teaching Styles to dance and Puretz and Skrinar emphasized the importance of applying motor learning theory to teaching the dance technique class.

Therefore, the main points from contemporary research on teaching and learning styles have been distilled into 16 guidelines for dance teachers which are presented below. The guidelines are then outlined by means of practical strategies with specific examples described.

There are many strategies teachers can employ to achieve the goals established by the guidelines and these goals are to encourage students to learn and develop mastery while they develop positive self-esteem and remain passionate about dancing.

The ability of a dancer to master a particular skill or technique depends on many factors: physical ability; motor and kinaesthetic feedback and learning processes; physical practice; mental practice for skill enhancement; sufficient physiologic rest; motor memory consolidation; appropriate breakdown and acquisition of complex skills; growth and development; knowledge of results through appropriate external feedback mechanisms and an environment that facilitates learning and a sense of joy and purpose.

One of the most comprehensive and prominent theories of how humans acquire mastery, learn values, regulate themselves and are motivated is Social Cognitive Theory.

A social-cognitive perspective emphasizes the interaction between a person's thinking and behaviour, and their social environment.

Its main beliefs state that people learn by observing others; learning is an internal process that may or may not, change behaviour; people behave in ways to attain goals; behaviour is self-directed and; reinforcement affects behaviour and learning.

Fundamentals of Being a Dance Teacher

Students are eager to learn and hunger to become good dancers. They entrust us to teach them correctly, efficiently and simply, therefore we owe it to them to know, and be able to communicate, the essentials of dancing.

Guidelines for Dance Teaching and Learning

Process and Goals

1. SMART Planning:
   Encourage students to set specific, measurable, age-appropriate, realistic and time targeted goals.
2. Decision-Making by Objective:
   Provide variety in decision-making aspects of the lesson and identify the objectives to be met by each task.
3. Optimizing the Self Within Community:
   Recognize individual differences and optimize individual potential; encourage students to work in collaboration with peers.
4. Ritualizing Respect:
   Foster an environment of mutual, reciprocal and self-respect in and out of the studio environment.

Influences Affecting the Dancer

5. Mentoring:
   Embody the qualities of a positive leader and role model.
6. Nurturing the Learner:
   Provide positive reinforcement and constructive criticism in ways the student can develop skills mastery and comprehension of principles.
7. Creating Fun and Challenges for All:
   Foster an enjoyable, challenging atmosphere for learning and experience.
8. Empowering the Self:
   Recognize and positively reinforce the student for personal qualities and contributions to the class/lesson; empower students to feel good about their bodies and their self-development.
9. Focusing on the Task:
   Encourage students to focus on the task at hand, and not the outcome or social or inter-personal comparisons.
10. Thinking about Learning:
    Provide opportunities for students to explore personal metacognitive strategies ('How do I learn?' activities and discussion).

Structure and Content of the Class or Individual Lesson

11. Building Foundations:

Build foundations of domain specific knowledge in progressive sequence and with complementary background information.

12. Mixing and Matching:
    Provide opportunities to learn or process information in various ways across learning tasks and situations, including physical and analytic strategies, and contextual variety.
13. Developing Body Awareness:
    Provide physical experiences, information and opportunities.
14. Enhancing Body Image:
    Provide opportunities to discuss and reinforce healthy body image and supportive strategies in terms of nutrition and conditioning.
15. Embracing the Safe and Sound:
    Ensure safe practices are established and based on sound scientific, medical and/or empirical evidence regarding alignment work and prevention and management of injuries.
16. Creating Enlightened Practice:
    Provide constructive feedback and incorporate appropriate repetition.

Teachers enhance the learning environment for skill mastery with the enhancement of self-esteem and self-efficacy.

Self-esteem is a dancer's feelings of worth or value.

Self-efficacy is a person's belief that she or he can perform a specific task successfully and is one of the best predictors of successful achievement.

Dance Teachers promote these positive psychological qualities by:

1. Clarifying the process and goals of the lesson.
2. Discussing various influences that affect the dancer's progress and,
3. Clearly defining the lesson structure and content.
   Teachers expand and enhance the lesson content through a superior understanding of related fields such as dance science (including anatomy), kinesiology, biomechanics, motor learning and, dance psychology.

Process and Goals *(Guidance)*

SMART Planning

From the first day, the teacher needs to establish clear goals and expectations so that there is no confusion or uncertainty about the lesson objectives.

Students respond well to goals that are specific and they benefit from being able to assess measurable results such as increased stamina for an extended period of time on the dancefloor and improved control in movements that involve balance and stability. The teacher needs to understand what is age-appropriate in designing the lesson plan and establish a process over time that acknowledges both physical and motor development for that age group.

By stating the daily and long-term goals, the teacher provides a context that determines how students can realistically succeed and observe their improvement.

Decision-Making by Objective

Identifying specific objectives encourages students to express their personal goals for individual progress in conjunction with the goals and tasks established for the group.

This process of establishing and expressing personal goals can be self-empowering as well as motivating, while asking students to write down their personal goals or keep a journal, can highlight this process of clarity and self-direction.

In addition to motivating students to identify their goals, the teacher can provide opportunities for individual and group decision making.

For example; when learning new material, the student or class can be given a choice of whether they wish to review the material presented or whether they wish to add sequences or complexity.

Even if the class wishes to add complexity, an individual student can be given the choice to continue working on the simpler phrase.

This teaching style is consistent with the student-directed approach described in Mosston and Ashworth's Spectrum of Teaching Styles.

Optimising the Self Within Community

The teacher can provide information that allows students to understand and embrace individual differences in both anatomical physique and dynamic movement qualities.

As students learn about their unique qualities and potential, both physical and artistic, they can direct their energy toward optimal development.

For example, the highly flexible dancer who lacks strength and core support can understand that investing time in enhancing those attributes, rather than stretching all the time, will result in far more progress.

Such open discussion of individual differences also encourages them to appreciate each other's qualities and learn from each other through observation and discussion.
As they become more self-reliant and peer-reliant, they are less likely to become overly dependent on teacher approval and more appreciative of peer feedback.

In a class, the teacher can allow time for personal exploration and for students to work in pairs or small groups to review and discuss material and give feedback to each other. Appreciating that not all the answers lie with the teacher they can then discover information through self-exploration and work with peers which can build self-confidence as well as enhance learning.

It can also assist in encouraging the student to be both a leader and listener, and embrace the benefits of collaborative work.

Ritualising Respect

It is useful to clarify class etiquette from the perspective of an atmosphere that optimizes concentration and mutual respect, rather than autocratic rules and good behaviour.

This approach can assist students in learning to balance self-involvement with group sensitivity.

For example, observing an atmosphere of quiet encourages them to support and respect others' learning processes; it is not so the teacher can control their behaviour.

An atmosphere of concentration and focus promotes optimal learning and creates a sense of community rather than competition and, the work on motivational climate is particularly relevant to this consideration of class atmosphere.

Motivational climate describes the context in which teaching and learning occur within the lesson environment, including teaching style, type of task, modes of feedback, recognition of students and their work, class groupings and pacing or timing associated with skills learning.

There are two stages of ritualizing respect that can occur; the first is creating this motivational climate; the second is open discussion and acknowledgment of its purpose and benefits.

Influences Affecting the Dancer *(Guidance)*

Mentoring

Of the multiple influences that impact the student's development, the teacher is central as in the traditional class model…teachers represent authority.

In the current environment of expanding methods, teachers may choose a more authoritarian or a student-directed style.

Regardless of teaching style, the teacher is perceived as a role model.

In the student's minds, the teacher brings not only personal perspective to the environment but, represents the broader knowledge of the field and, all the teachers that have come before this individual.

Rather than trying to avoid this role, teachers can recognize that they are powerful influences and can maintain a disciplined and driven atmosphere while inspiring and encouraging the dancers through energetic and constructive criticism and praise. They can serve as positive role models in terms of respecting the whole person and recognizing individual needs and differences.

Nurturing the Learner

Optimal development of the (young) mind and body occurs with healthy experiences, both inside and outside the classroom with the lesson offering a particularly enriching

© iDance Australia Study Guide - *Teaching the Dance Class or Individual*

environment and experience for the development of skills mastery and of the whole person.

Students should come to a lesson with a desire to develop dance skills; the training will be enhanced if the teacher provides a larger conceptual context and a thorough understanding of movement principles.

For example, taking time to explore principles of good alignment is more beneficial than simply adjusting a student's pelvis during a particular exercise and, there are various methods that the teacher can use to explore viewing dance from a broader conceptual perspective.

Initially, the teacher can construct and present specific set material, followed by an open time period for reflection and questions.

These questions can be posed by both the teacher and the students, and can encourage not merely inquiry about form and details (i.e., what are the counts, which leg is the pirouette on, and so forth) but also the critical and conceptual background for the movement.

As students learn to observe material and think about it conceptually, their understanding improves and therefore develop more self-confidence in approaching new material.

Another goal of the lesson is expanding learning styles and strategies.

Individuals tend to have preferred methods of learning, such as visual (seeing a demonstration), aural analytic (hearing an explanation of how to do a phrase or execute a skill), or kinaesthetic (learning through touch or sensation).

Teachers can encourage the use of a variety of strategies to learn material and to increase the speed and accuracy of learning strategies.

As the learning of material and skills improves, students becoming increasingly motivated to examine material from a variety of perspectives.

Finally, looking to the psychological realm; dance lessons can incorporate methods to enhance self-esteem and self-efficacy.

The student needs encouragement to nurture self-esteem and to instil self-belief.

When students are struggling to achieve the material, teacher confidence in student abilities can provide the encouragement and motivation needed for continued effort.

Verbal communication, body language and tone, all convey the teacher's attitude.

The teacher can provide praise when improvement is demonstrated and constructive criticism when changes and corrections are needed.

Positive reinforcement can both inspire and motivate the dancer in the class or lesson.

© iDance Australia Study Guide - *Teaching the Dance Class or Individual*

Creating Fun and Challenges for ALL

As the teacher presents the material and influences how the students absorb and refine the work, the teacher is simultaneously establishing the atmosphere or, motivational climate.

Students learn more effectively in an environment that is both challenging and enjoyable.

If the pace of the lesson is too slow or the goals are too easy, students can become bored and unmotivated.

In the other extreme, if the pace is too pressured or the goals too difficult, students can become frustrated and anxious.

The teacher's task is to find a balance and promote an atmosphere of joy and stimulation.

Empowering the Self

It is important to discuss beliefs and attitudes regarding what determines a good dancer, with a focus on the whole person and not merely the body.

If the only attributes discussed are physique related (such as extreme flexibility, perfect proportions, or low body weight) dancers can begin to feel overwhelmed and hopeless; that they have little control over their progress.

Physique comments can be balanced with discussions of performance skills, musicality, and artistic qualities.

Students can be encouraged to develop all aspects of artistic and technical skills, and begin to value personal attributes as well as understand areas that need improvement.

Additionally, there are other influences that may be less obvious but equally powerful.

It is beneficial to explore openly the students internal dialogue, especially as it reflects negative self-talk and the impact of negative inner dialogue and the associated underlying beliefs on diminished skill development and performance.

While it is in the nature of learning dance to develop self-critical skills, constant negative thoughts and belief systems interfere with concentration and the willingness to take risks.

It is also essential to allow discussion of external influences that affect internal dialogue, such as media, dance culture expectations and previous learning experiences.

For example, some students may have experienced disparaging corrections and/or public humiliation in previous learning environments, and these events can leave lasting inhibitions on future progress.

© iDance Australia Study Guide - *Teaching the Dance Class or Individual*

Focusing on the Task

There are numerous distractions that interfere with the student's ability to stay on task and to focus on important elements of the work required during lessons and practice.

Focusing on the task at hand can lead to a sense of competence that relates to the results of one's work.

In contrast, focusing on comparisons to others can lead to the fixation on proving oneself superior in order to feel competent and distract from the task at hand.

The student might become concerned with; comparisons with other dancers around them; body image issues; the pace of progress and, fears of not being sufficiently skilled to dance in a community space.

Teachers can encourage students to focus on the task through a variety of strategies.

For example; by acknowledging and respecting the attributes and accomplishments of each individual, teachers can reduce the compulsion for students to compare themselves with others and, encourage each dancer to remain focused on personal development.

Thinking About Learning

The teacher can enhance student learning through recognition of each student's personal learning style: visual, auditory, analytic, kinaesthetic-spatial, kinaesthetic-external, kinaesthetic-internal, and so on.

It can be useful to assist each student in understanding the benefits of the various learning styles and how the individual can broaden one's approach to learning new material.

The teacher can pose questions that encourage dancers to observe how they learn:

1. Do I hear music through rhythm or melody?
2. Do I learn material through shape design or spatial information?
3. Am I visual or kinaesthetic in how I absorb new information?
4. How do I learn best?

It is empowering for students to learn about their own learning styles.

Initially, individual corrections can be geared to align with these learning style preferences so that learning is easier for the dancer.

Eventually, students can be challenged to attempt to learn in a style that is typically not in their comfort zones.
Improving and expanding learning strategies enhances skill development and self-esteem simultaneously.

It will give the student advantages in their performance for dance assessments (Medals), social situations, competitions and performance (and can boost their self-confidence!).

Structure and Content of the Class or Individual Lesson *(Guidance)*

Building Foundations

Every teacher knows that a dance lesson is more than a series of exercises and combinations across the floor, with most teachers constructing a lesson around a particular approach to movement or a specific dance technique.

A good dance lesson builds progressively from the basic knowledge and skills to a wide array of abilities that support the complexity of the art form.

In each aspect of dance training, the teacher needs to identify the basic foundation and then build upon that knowledge base.

Whether a lesson is founded in Ballroom, Latin, or Club dance, certain fundamental movement skills will need to be explored.

These skills include aspects such as alignment, balancing mechanisms, spatial awareness, musicality, motor control and coordination.

This foundation must be in place before more complex and sophisticated terminology and skills can be absorbed.

Mixing and Matching

Teachers can enhance learning by providing opportunities to learn in a variety of ways.

One day a combination might be approached analytically, that is; breaking down the material and examining its detail and components.

The next day the teacher might use physical practice to address the material from a kinaesthetic perspective.

To deepen the experience, the material can be explored through various states; feeling; sensory; and physical.

Another teaching strategy that can enhance learning is the removal of certain aspects of the traditional lesson that can limit the use of multiple sensory methods, especially for dancers with some experience.

Examples of strategies the teacher can explore include working entirely without a partner; working with no mirrors, working with no ‘sequenced routine’ on certain days; removing the sense of ‘front’ in the room (face various directions); trying stationary work with eyes closed; taking away music; and working in silence or using unusual music on occasion.
Contextual variety is an excellent way to challenge motor learning and enhance progress.

Developing Body Awareness

Another essential component of the lesson is increasing the students body awareness and the mind-body connection.

This may be directly approached through incorporation of physical work in the lesson or indirectly addressed through traditional structures and exercises; emphasizing awareness and focus as an important component in dance instruction.

A useful tool in stimulating the mind/body connection is the use of imagery.

Imagery, created both by teachers and students, can provide a multi-dimensional perspective and experience of the physical work and can consolidate movement principles.

Imagery can enhance alignment and physical expertise, as well as develop expressivity and projection.

Allowing students to describe their personal imagery creations in an individual lesson or with each other in a class situation serves a twofold purpose; it gives students more tools to explore body awareness and, it reinforces the idea that the teacher values the students' ideas, thus building their self-confidence.

Enhancing Body Image

The current dance literature strongly suggests that there are serious issues with many dancers' nutrition and physical and psychological health!

Due to the body image demands of the profession, many dancers have poor self-image, and resultant disordered eating.

Striving for the traditional vision of the ideal female or male dancer places students at risk for injury or psychological difficulties.

In general, self-esteem has been shown to be related to psychological well-being, global physical self-concept, depression and, body dissatisfaction.

Repeated exposure to the contemporary ideal images of beauty can result in increased dissatisfaction with self, depression, anger, dissatisfaction with body image and poor self-esteem.

The teacher can provide opportunities to discuss and reinforce healthy body image and supportive strategies in terms of proper nutrition and exercise.

Dance teachers can set the appropriate tone and standards for weight management, through discussions on 'thinness', the societal ideal of an underweight body, and good health behaviours and practices.

Teachers can incorporate creative work and practice ideas in the lessons as a strategy to combat body image issues; as creative movement in dance lessons has been related to increases in social self-esteem, and physical self-esteem in young children.

Embracing the Safe and Sound

In the interest of healthy and safe dance practice, there is an increasing focus and interest on the need to improve physical attributes such as strength, flexibility, core support and a variety of other types of conditioning.

Teachers may add supplementary classes to assist students in developing these traits, or consider adding specialized exercises directly into the lesson format.

Research has shown that many teachers agree that these are important features of dancer development and are exploring ways to improve dance training in this regard.

Assisting energy management and helping dancers develop stamina are also components of the dance lesson.

While dance sessions are not necessarily structured to enhance cardiorespiratory endurance and anaerobic capacity (an important considerations for overall fitness), these aspects can be improved in these sessions.

Some teachers choose to make these improvements specific lesson or class goals.

Dance professionals are taking a wide range of approaches to these health-related developments and there is growing interest in ways to incorporate scientific information into the lesson structure to work on prevention and management of injuries.

One of the more recent developments in dance training is the creation of teacher certification programs in safe and healthy dance practice.

Pacing is probably one of the most challenging aspects of teaching dance and the pace (or when things are done) of the dance session is critical in developing both the mastery of skill and high self-esteem.

Instructional material can be progressed in a manner consistent with what is known as progressive overload in the conditioning domain; pushing the limits of capacity without overwhelming the student.

If the student is overwhelmed, it can lead to physical injury as well as lowered confidence levels.

Finally, the teacher can empower students with the knowledge and ‘permission’ to modify material in respecting safe dance practices.

This might be during a period of a growth spurt for an adolescent, where the dancer is encouraged to ‘ease’ lowering leg/knee/hip movements to avoid strain to the developing body.

It might be learning to modify material such as foot rise, extended foot articulation and jumps while recovering from an ankle injury or, reduce range of motion in the spine while developing core support after a back injury has healed.

A dancer can feel highly anxious after an injury, therefore giving them knowledge of how to best recover full function can relieve some of these fears; giving the dancer a confident approach to the return to dancing.

Creating Enlightened Practice

The study and impact of feedback on learning movement skills has been a focus in the motor learning literature for some time and it is important to provide constructive feedback (evaluation) both from the teacher and from students after material is attempted.

Repeating material over and over with no time for reflection and feedback can result in repeating the same errors and thus produce diminished self-esteem.

It is also best to allow students to repeat material after receiving feedback, so that they are provided with the opportunity to improve the work and not merely hear what was lacking.

This helps develop and consolidate cognitive and motor frameworks.

How the teacher provides corrections and feedback can significantly impact on dancers' willingness to take risks and their understanding of the nature of mistakes and motor learning.

After an attempted exercise or combination, the teacher can discuss how and why the attempted work was useful in the learning context, regardless of how 'successful' or 'correct' it was from the traditional dance perspective.

This approach demands a shift in the teacher's perspective from the idea that the goal is to make no mistakes (e.g., there should be no loss of balance) to the idea that mistakes are in fact part of the learning process (e.g., the neuromotor system and the balancing mechanisms require error and loss of balance to learn new motor strategies).

Through this process, experimentation and risk-taking are highly encouraged.

While perfectionist qualities are often found in the dancer's personality make-up, this experimental approach can allow for error in a positive way and enhance self-esteem through a more accepting point of view.

In essence, all of the above call for a reframing of the student's point of view.

It is not that the teacher is being less demanding by permitting errors and imperfection; in fact, the teacher is being more demanding because error and experimentation helps to accelerate progress and develop improved motor control.

Teaching Dance Figures (The Steps) *(Guidance)*

Great teachers present new figures in a systematic way.

First, give an overview to introduce students to the figure, then delve into the details of the Leader's and Follower's parts.

Always give students ample opportunity to practice dancing the new figure and offer constructive feedback to refine students' technique and style.

Once students are ready, give them an amalgamation that combines the new figure with figures they already know.

The following explains this practical, structured approach in more detail and suggests ways to adapt it in different situations:

- ✓ Demonstrate and Demystify: Start by demonstrating the figure so that students see what they are going to learn.

  Help demystify the new figure by noting how it is similar to other figures (or components of figures) that students know.

  If a student is a beginner, use analogies comparing the steps to familiar shapes (e.g., square, circle, the number seven, etc.) or common actions (e.g., backing up a car or sitting in a chair).
- ✓ Generate Excitement: Tell students why the figure is important or what makes it fun (and therefore worth the effort to learn).

  Give students a framework of when and how this figure is commonly used.

  For example, in the Ballroom dances, a 'hovering movement' from Closed or Promenade Position is a common opening or finish to many figures.

  In the Latin dances, a Follower's underarm turn to the right is a common way to either end or commence a figure.
- ✓ Mention Variations: When appropriate, explain that what you are teaching is one of many ways to dance the figure.

  You may want to teach (or at least demonstrate) other ways the figure may be danced or modified (taking care not to overwhelm students with too many options).
- ✓ Summarize: Demonstrate the figure again, verbally breaking it down into components (e.g., open break or half a box).

In summary, teaching a dance lesson based on the above theoretical foundations and accompanying practical strategies relies on the fundamental belief that students essentially want to progress, work at their optimal level and, be their best.

Only in an environment of mutual respect can open discussion and self-motivation be encouraged while the results can be rewarding to both the teacher and the student.

The teacher can act as a guide in providing an environment that challenges and stimulates dancers to achieve their highest level of mastery and at the same time inspires the dancers to honour the body and elevate the spirit.

Teachers and students can embrace the concept of the healthy dancer in the context of high technical demand.

In this way, mastery and self-esteem can work hand-in-hand to create great dancers who are self-reliant and ready to become the next generation of great teachers.

Biomechanics in Dance

Why do some dancers perform such a perfect and effortless looking Feather step? Why is the Latin- American style more suitable for some people than Ballroom or vice versa? What makes for a good hip action? What creates a better swing in Waltz? How about a powerful and quick movement?

The answers may be rooted in physiological, psychological, or other areas but, the problems identified are biomechanical.

What are Biomechanics?
The term biomechanics combines the prefix bio; meaning "life", with the field of mechanics; which is the study of forces' actions.

Bio-mechanists use the tools of mechanics to study the anatomical and functional aspects of living organisms.
For example; how does a bird fly or a dancer leap across the floor?

There are two main branches of Biomechanics; Kinematics that deals with the geometry of the motion of objects, including displacement, velocity and acceleration without taking into account the forces that produce the motion and; Kinetics, which is the study of the relationships between the force system acting on a body and the changes it produces in body motion.

In terms of this, there are skeletal, muscular and neurological considerations we also need to consider when describing biomechanics.

In dance, some of the areas where biomechanics is applied to either support the performance of or solve issues may be in the:

- ✓ Identification of optimal technique for enhancing performance in terms of linear and angular movement.
- ✓ Analysis of body loading to determine the safest method for performing a particular movement.
- ✓ Assessment of muscular recruitment and joint loading.
- ✓ Analysis of dance and exercise equipment e.g., shoes, surfaces and costumes.

Newton's Laws of Motion
There are three laws that describe, in a nutshell, how an object that has mass or weight can move around in space as a result of the forces applied to it.

In our case; a dancer has a mass/weight and therefore moves; and, the only way we can move in dance is through internal or external forces; internal being our muscles and external being gravity, the floor, or our partner.

1st Law - Inertia
Isaac Newton's first law of inertia explains that; for the dancer to move we need some force to act on the dancer's body for it to move and; objects tend to resist changes in their state of motion; while an object in motion will tend to stay in motion and; an object at rest will tend to stay at rest…unless acted upon by a force.

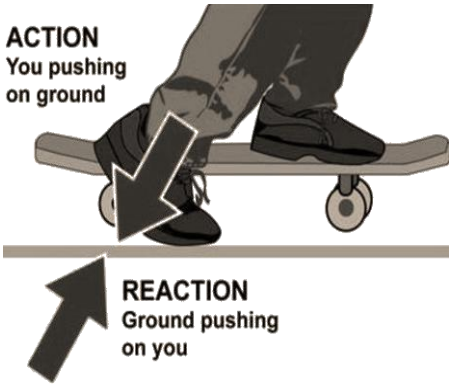
For example; the body of a dancer who dances scatter chasses around the floor will tend to want to retain that motion unless muscular forces can overcome this inertia and either transition to another step, change direction or stop.

2nd Law - Acceleration
Newton's second law explains how much motion a force creates, i.e.; the acceleration an object experiences is proportional to the force's size and, inversely proportional to the object's mass.

For example; when a ball is thrown, kicked, or struck, it tends to travel in the direction of the applied force's line of action; similarly, the greater the amount of force applied, the greater the speed the ball has.
Suppose a dancer improves leg strength through training while maintaining the same body mass…in that case, they will have an increased ability to accelerate the body using the legs, resulting in better agility and speed (this also relates to the ability to rotate segments of the body).

3rd Law - Action and Reaction
The Third Law tells us that for every action (force), there is an equal and opposite reaction (force).

For example; the force created by the legs "pushing" against the ground results in ground reaction forces in which the ground "pushes back" and allows the dancer to move across the floor (as the Earth is much larger than the dancer, the dancer accelerates and moves rapidly, while the Earth does not accelerate or move at all).



This action-reaction also occurs when we try to stand on our toes.
By pushing through the calf muscles to the floor, the ground reacts on our bodies with equal and opposite force causing us to get up on the toes much like a ballerina on point.

Friction is another important force for dancers and the friction between a dancer's feet and the floor is an example of a horizontal ground reaction force…providing that there is enough friction between the dancer's foot and the floor, the horizontal ground reaction force of friction then pushes the dancer's mass forward.

Similarly, when we need to stop moving or change direction, the friction from the floor is needed. The dancer pushes forward to stop moving forward and the reaction force from the friction pushes backward, stopping the dancer.

The (COG) Centre of Gravity is an imaginary point around which the dancers' body weight is evenly distributed and the centre of gravity (of the human body) can change greatly, since the segments of the body can move their masses with joint rotations…this

© iDance Australia Study Guide - *Teaching the Dance Class or Individual*

concept is important to understanding balance, stability and how gravity can affect dance techniques.

The direction of the force of gravity through the body is downward towards the centre of the earth and this line of gravity is important to understand and visualize when determining a person's ability to successfully maintain balance and when the line of gravity falls outside the (BOS) Base of Support (the area supported beneath the object), a reaction is needed to stay balanced.

Balance

What is Balance? How to maintain it through linear and angular momentum? Is Distance the same as Displacement? How does speed relate to velocity and, how it can make you a better dancer?

Understanding Balance
Balance is the ability of a dancer to control their body equilibrium or stability and is often a by-product of good alignment in the body. There are two types of balance; Static and Dynamic, with a good understanding of both needed to perform efficiently and prevent injury.

Static Balance
This is the ability to control the body while the body is stationary.
It is the ability to maintain the body in some fixed posture and to maintain postural stability and orientation with the centre of mass over the base of support and body at rest.

For example; static balance is needed is in the final moments of line figures like a ‘Throwaway Over-sway’, ‘Contra Check’ or ‘Same Foot Lunge’; when you reach the last line or a "picture moment", good static balance is needed to maintain your balance and not disturb your partner.

Dynamic Balance
This is defined as the ability to control the body during motion and to transfer the vertical projection of the centre of gravity around the base of support.

Dynamic balance is also the ability to maintain postural stability and orientation with the centre of mass, over the base of support, while the body parts are in motion.

For example; Imagine dancing a Natural Spin Turn…the step calls for a weightless hovering action on Step 5, right before lowering.
The moment is challenging since both partners are up on their toes and finishing the rotation simultaneously.
Having a good dynamic alignment and bringing the centre of weight over the base of support (in this case, the R ball of foot for Lead and L ball of foot for Follow) are crucial for succeeding in the Natural Spin turn and producing a nice balanced movement.

Momentum

This is directly proportional to an object's mass and its velocity therefore, the greater an object's mass or the greater its velocity, the greater its momentum.

This momentum can be transferred from one object to another with different types of momentum having a different influence on dance movement.

Linear Momentum
Linear momentum is the momentum that a dancer creates by moving in a straight line down the dance floor.

For example; The first step of a Feather Step for the Lead is described in a technique book as a RF Forward taken down the (Line of Dance, Diagonal to Wall or Diagonal to Centre). By executing this step correctly, according to the book, we would create a linear momentum that is moving down the floor.

Angular Momentum
Angular momentum is the rotational equivalent of linear momentum and is created by the rotations of various body segments.

For example; The rotation of the shoulder plane when performing a Feather Step aiding in the stepping outside partner.

Energy

For the dancer to be moving around and have velocity in space, they need to have energy in the body and, that energy comes from a force that is applied to the object either internal (muscle force) or external (your partner's influence).

Acceleration

This describes the movement of the body through space and provides the connection between movement and force.

For example; Pushing the car's accelerator makes the engine use energy and gives the car some velocity…the energy that the car is using is producing force.

Correct biomechanics provide efficient movement and may reduce the risk of injury. In dance and, any other sport, it is always good to consider abnormal or faulty biomechanics as a possible cause of injury and incorrect technique can cause abnormal biomechanics; which can lead to injuries.
Below are just a few examples of the relationship between faulty technique and possible associated injuries.

- ✓ Wrong fitting shoes can cause pain, inhibit development and uneven weight distribution over the foot while incorrect footwork can also cause an uneven distribution of weight.
- ✓ Allowing the weight to roll on the outside of the foot can cause injuries of the ankles and knees.
- ✓ Misalignment of the lower and upper body can affect your personal balance and your partner's posture, with the potential to cause injuries while misalignment of the joints in flexion ankle, knee and hip can cause loss of balance and ligament tear.
- ✓ Not counterbalancing a body part that works in extension away from the base of support.

© iDance Australia Study Guide - *Teaching the Dance Class or Individual*

Biomechanics is an incredibly complex topic and the laws, concepts and principles we have briefly covered are the core basics of it.

Every physical/sport discipline has a number of studies conducted on the biomechanics to perfect and tune technique for the most efficient, powerful and injury-free movement.

Understanding the basics allows you to discover for yourself how these principles may apply to a particular movement…it can be enjoyable to study and will make you a better dancer, teacher and coach.

Backward Movements

We can see that backward steps are difficult, because we cannot see what is behind us and, we are not used to doing them.

The third problem is that most people can flex their thigh at the hip forward by 90 degrees or more but, few people can bend the thigh back more than about 20 degrees!

This raises two problems in ballroom dancing.

Firstly, if the partner who going forward compresses their standing leg, their knee will project forward of their body…so, how can the partner going backward compress their standing leg with their knee also projecting forward of their body, without their knee clashing with that of their partner?

The answer is provided by dancing on four tracks where each foot of each partner, steps on its own separate track along the floor.

The track for the right foot of each partner is between the tracks of the feet of the other partner therefore the partners do not dance exactly facing each other but are offset to the right of each other by the width of one shoe.

This allows the partners right foot to be placed between the feet of the other partner, which means that the feet can never exactly close since each must always leave space between the feet for their partner's right toe.

It also means that when dancing, the thighs of each dancer will continuously be brushing the thighs of their partner.

This is an intimacy usually not given to strangers but it is necessary to be comfortable with this when dancing with one's dance partner.

We already have five points of contact with our partner in taking the ballroom closed hold so, what is wrong with one more?

The second problem caused by the difference in flexions of the thigh forward and back, is one of perception rather than reality.

It might be thought that the partner travelling forward will be able to reach their leg much further forward than the partner going backward can reach their leg backward but

© iDance Australia Study Guide - *Teaching the Dance Class or Individual*

we have already determined that by stepping forward as described above, at no time is the foot of the partner stepping forward ahead of their body.

The stride length of the partner going forward is limited by how far they can push their body ahead of their standing foot; which as they step forward will become the back foot.

Therefore, both partners are limited in their stride length by how far they can extend their leg backward.

Curiously, the most interesting thing about stepping backwards has nothing to do with either of these problems.

It is that, despite having eyes at the front and being able to extend the leg further to the front, the human body develops more power when travelling backwards than when travelling forwards.

- ✓ Tug of war teams pull backwards
- ✓ Rowers row backwards
- ✓ If your car breaks down, you can push it more easily by putting your back against it and pushing backwards

So, in ballroom dancing, the partner who is travelling backwards has the power.

This is particularly important in turns since the partner going backward controls the speed and amount of turn.

The partner going forward can determine the nature of the turn.

For example; whether it is a pivot; an open turn; or a heel turn, the power of any turn is controlled by the partner who is going into it backwards.

If the partner going backward does not apply that power, the partner going forward will not succeed in getting around them.

This is most obvious in the Viennese Waltz.

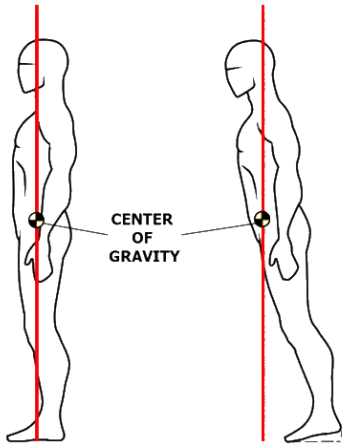
Each partner, as they take their backward half of the turn, must take their partner from behind them to in front of them, otherwise, the progression of their dance will not be along the Line of Dance but will curve into the side of the room or, into other dancers.

The partner going forward cannot control this, only the partner going backward can do this.

<u>Momentum</u>

So, what's up? You've seen the videos of professional dancers flowing through step after step, so seamlessly you can't even tell where one pattern ended and another began…but when you dance, it feels like each step clunks down about as smoothly as bricks on a wall.

The differences between what you see and what you dance yourself lie in how you direct your momentum from point A to B.



When practicing the techniques below, always remember that the end goal is to dance efficiently, by conserving momentum with minimal effort.

Why? Because it's the loss of momentum that makes your dance feel so clunky.
Would you enjoy a rollercoaster that stopped and started every 5 seconds?

Follow these steps, and you'll ensure a smoother ride for you and your partner.

Rolling Through the Steps
This is probably the first momentum-generating technique we are taught; the goal is to simply travel in a straight line, using the following foot technique:

For Standard/Smooth: Walk normally.
Notice how your heel strikes the ground first, then rolls to the front of your foot as you take your next step.
Concentrate on keeping your body level by softening your knees and push off the back foot to create your forward energy.
Don't lean forward! If it starts to feel like the concourse at an airport, you know you're getting somewhere.

Do the same thing backwards, this time by sliding the ball of the foot back and letting it roll until the heel makes contact.

For Latin/Rhythm: Slide forward on the balls of your feet, NEVER losing contact with the floor.
There's no foot rolling action here but, there is hip-rolling action.
As your weight transfers forward and your heel kisses the ground, let that forward energy settle into your hip, rolling it backwards, until it almost feels like your weight is moving towards your heel.
The energy must roll forwards again, so send it into the opposite hip, stepping forward as you do, and repeat.

The movement should feel like an infinity symbol rolling around in your hips, fed and maintained with your forward (or backward) momentum.

Aim for 'Zero'
At rest, we must always return to the balls of our feet.
This means we anticipate the amount of energy we need to get from point A to B, and practice until we can transfer from ball to ball without wasting energy.

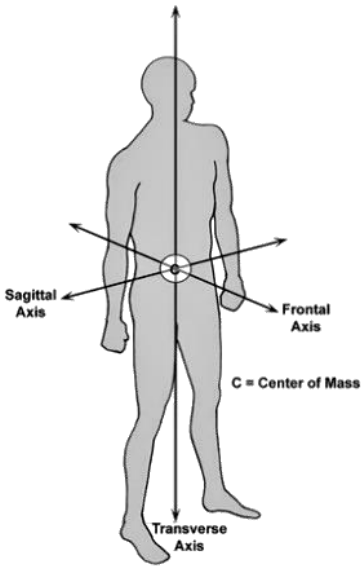
One way we do this, especially on the side steps, is by driving a wedge out with the inside of the free foot, then rolling to a flat on the weight transfer.

© iDance Australia Study Guide - *Teaching the Dance Class or Individual*

Why? Because the rolling action helps to slow us down, exactly as much as our transfer to the side 'sped us up' so we come to rest over our foot – at zero.
In smooth/standard, we use this technique for our forward and backward movements too, rolling through our foot to ensure continuous movement.

Of course, we don't actually want to stop moving on the dance floor – we want to stay balanced and in control…because uncontrolled momentum is lost momentum.

Blending the Movement
The above techniques are great for single-direction travel, but what about changing directions (i.e., turns)?



We are already completing each weight change on the balls of our feet, which is the best place for them to pivot, if needed.
Now it's up to our body rotation (Smooth/Standard), or our hip rotation (Rhythm/Latin) to rotate strongly enough to turn the rest of our body along a new path.

This includes anything from the waltz reverse turn to a triple spin in mambo – the only change in our bodies is how strongly we rotate; also, we must make the turn as we arrive on a new foot or, in others words, the last instant before our forward energy would stop.

Wait longer, and you'll have to 'force' the twist to build up momentum again. Turn too early, and you won't be balanced on the ball, and end up falling out of the turn.

Blend the energy from the previous movement into the new one and nothing will be lost.

Juggling Energy
In ballroom dancing, your partner is just as important as you are for conserving momentum.
The two of you must be constantly working in tandem or in opposition to each other, in order to keep energy juggling between you.

One common way this is expressed is through a light but responsive frame, which acts as a shock absorber for any movement – it can compress and extend, but always with resistance and like the willow branch, it immediately snaps back to place once the pressure is reduced.

Often, the follower acts as a shock absorber for the leader, bending slightly to receive their momentum, which then travels into their body and moves them a split second later.

A back-leading follower might think they are helping but, in reality, they are killing the momentum for both of them.

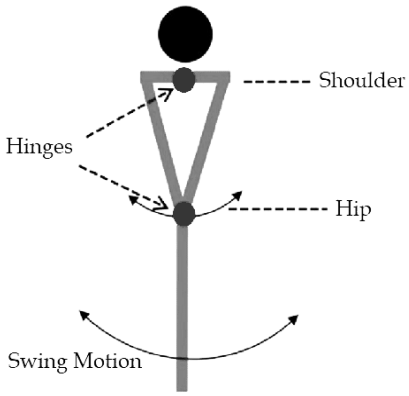
Remember that, like the rollercoaster, there are no sudden stops or changes.

© iDance Australia Study Guide - *Teaching the Dance Class or Individual*

Work hard to make every movement soft but irresistible and enjoy the delightful flowing dance that arises.

Swing

In Standard ballroom style dancing, Swing is what gives a couple strong and fluid movement.
There are three types of Swing, and each of them generates movement in a different way.



One of the largest differences between beginner dancers and advanced dancers is their mastery of this key principle in Ballroom dancing, for without Swing, movement looks forced and 'choppy'.

Pendular Swing
Pendular Swing is the swinging of the leg or the entire body like the pendulum of a grandfather clock, and just like a large pendulum, it is Rise and Fall that produces the Swing.

From a high position, smooth lowering initiates the Swing (often called the Down Swing), from which it is redirected into a driving movement, and then finally the body continues to ride that energy into the next Rise (often called Up Swing).

Both the Up Swing and the Down Swing are equally important but unfortunately, many dancers neglect the Down Swing, which causes them to lack forward drive and makes their Up Swing appear forced and awkward.

Pendular Swing is most characteristic of Waltz, but it also exists in Quickstep.

The Foxtrot used to be danced without much Pendular Swing at all and mostly Rotational Swing but, more and more Pendular Swing is being used in this dance as it evolves.

Rotary Swing
Imagine you are holding a large sledge hammer, and you swing it like a baseball bat. After you finish your swing, the hammer continues to pull you through; this is known in Ballroom as Rotary Swing.

Like all forms of Swing, Rotary Swing is used to generate momentum and progression down the floor so just rotating alone doesn't cut it; instead, you have to rotate and allow that rotation to generate movement.

Foxtrot uses Rotary Swing all over and it is a major source of confusion for beginners learning the Feather Step and the Three Step.

Metronomic Swing
Just as the top of the metronome ticks back and forth while the base stays in place, so does Metronomic Swing affect your body.

If you are standing perfectly straight, you cannot move anywhere; it is Metronomic Swing, a slight tilt of the top half of your body, that initiates all movements and even when you begin to walk from standing still, the first thing that happens is that your body tilts slightly forward.

In this sense, many don't even think about Metronomic Swing as a commencement for all movements but this tilted feeling is used by itself to generate momentum in figures such as the Quickstep 'Six Quick Runs', and all Open Level Quickstep Runs in PP.

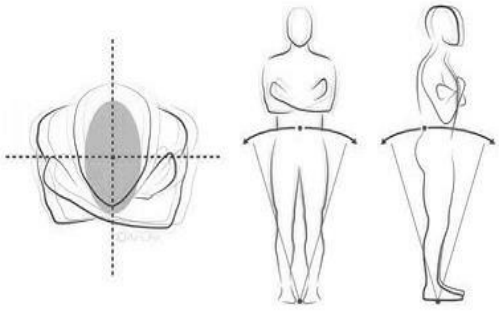
Combinations of Swing
Most figures don't use just one type of Swing, but a combination of them, if not all of them.

Let's take the Waltz Natural Turn, for example…
To commence movement, Metronomic Sway needs to be employed as the Fall occurs. Then it transitions into the Down Swing of Pendular Swing and the Rotary Swing begins.

The Rotary Swing and Pendular Swing work together to turn the couple as they begin to rise and then the energy of the swing is dissipated through Rise and Sway.

<u>Sway</u>

Sway is characteristic of good dancing in Standard, so much so that students of dance will try to emulate that one characteristic.



The problem is that the way Sway looks is vastly different from the way Sway feels and a lack of correct understanding of fundamentals will result in broken frame and posture.

Technical Sway
When most people talk about Sway, they are talking about Technical Sway, which is a natural inclination of the body away from the direction of movement.

What this means is that if you dancing a Waltz Natural Turn; on step 2, your body should make a line from the LF (Lady's RF) to the top of your head.



Your spine should not be straight up and down in relation to the ground.
The reason for this is mechanical: sway kills momentum and allows you to slow down, stop, or change direction.

The faster you are moving, the more momentum you generate and the more Sway you will need to affect that momentum.

This is the same reason motorcycles tilt as they go around corners and, the faster they are going, the more they tilt.

© iDance Australia Study Guide - *Teaching the Dance Class or Individual*

In Ballroom Dancing, Technical Sway is just a lean in the direction away from the way you're moving, proportional to your momentum, in order to slow down, stop, or change direction.

It is called Technical Sway because it comes naturally from correct technique and is proportionally a result of your Swing, without having to think about the Sway itself at all.

Cosmetic Sway
Okay, here is where things start to get dangerous! Absolute beginners are told not to think about Sway at all because Technical Sway will come as your movement progresses…however, once dancers begin to master basic Swing and Sway, Cosmetic Sway is added to the mix.



Cosmetic Sway is a slight tilting of the shoulder line in order to amplify shape beyond what Technical Sway allows and make the shape more elegant.

This is achieved by stretching one side upward, while making sure not to crunch the opposite side and this is where things start to get dangerous because when beginners see Sway, they try to copy it by stretching one arm up and crunching the other side but, this will result in an ugly shape and a disruption in balance.

Cosmetic Sway is added on top of Technical Sway, not instead of it!

Once the fundamentals of Technical Sway are achieved, Cosmetic Sway is added as an overlay to achieve a more elegant shape.

The idea of Cosmetic Sway is relatively new in Ballroom Dancing and a few decades ago, it did not exist and shapes were less exaggerated and more controlled.

Look at the difference in dancing between these two Waltzes; one from 2016, the other from 1998.

WDSF World Open Standard | Final Presentation Waltz | Copenhagen 2016

Blackpool Championship | Professional Final Waltz | UK 1998

Notice that in the first video, there is extreme Cosmetic Sway everywhere, built strongly on top of Technical Sway. In the second video, while you can notice some Technical Sway, couples seem to float across the floor with their top lines mostly undisturbed and still.

To dance Cosmetic Sway, dance a regular Waltz Natural Turn, with a lot of Swing and therefore a lot of Technical Sway but additionally, between steps 2 and 3 stretch the left side (Lady right side) upward to the sky as the feet close, without distorting the straight top-line from elbow to elbow.

© iDance Australia Study Guide - *Teaching the Dance Class or Individual*

Broken Sway
Broken Sway (sometimes called Released Sway) is when the body generates sway from tilting the upper body, and not much happens with the base.



This is different from Cosmetic Sway, which is a slight tilting added on top of Technical Sway and the reason many dance students are told not to use Broken Sway is because they try to use it in moving figures, like Natural Turns, when in fact Broken Sway should only be used on Line Figures, when not moving your feet but shaping, a great example of which is the Over-sway, in Tango.

To dance Broken Sway in an Over-sway position, stand on the left foot (Lady right foot), with a flexed knee and the free leg extended to the side.
Tilt from the hips and shoulders to the right (Lady left), making sure not to crunch the space under your arms. This is a basic Broken Sway.

Broken Sway should never be used as a substitute for Technical Sway, since they are used in completely different situations.

So, there you have it, the three types of Sway: Technical Sway, Cosmetic Sway, and Broken Sway.

Technical Sway is used on all figures that have Swing (i.e.; all moving figures in Waltz, Viennese Waltz, Foxtrot, and Quickstep); Cosmetic Sway can be added on top of it to make a more beautiful shape and, Broken Sway is only used in Line Figures.

<u>Rise</u>

Dancers are introduced to Rise and Fall from their very first Waltz lesson and it is an integral concept in Standard Ballroom for only on correct Rise and Fall can Swing be built and only with correct Swing can Sway occur…and so on and so forth.

One thing that is not always mentioned however, is that there are different types of Rises and Fall that occur at different times during our dancing.

A solid understanding of these three types can help you feel more connected to your partner and help your partnership look more beautiful and in harmony.

Foot Rise
Foot Rise relates entirely to the flexing and extending ankle joint; by bringing your toes closer or farther away from your knee and decreasing or increasing the angle between your shin and the sole of your foot.

As you rise onto the balls of your feet, you are using foot rise and Foot Rise is described mostly by the footwork, where HT, T, and THT indicate the usage of Foot Rise; whereas TH or Flat indicate sending without Foot Rise.

© iDance Australia Study Guide - *Teaching the Dance Class or Individual*

For example: there is foot rise on step1 of a Waltz Natural Turn for the Man; which is to say he rises onto the Ball before placing his second step however, there is No Foot Rise (NFR)for the Lady on step 1 because although she does eventually lift the Heel off the floor, that doesn't happen until after step 2 is placed…by which time step 1 has already finished.

NFR is an important concept and is used in most figures by the person going backward on the inside of the turn.

By not using Foot Rise, the dancer allows his partner to swing past him freely.

NFR is also used by the Lady during the Feather Step and Three Step in Foxtrot, which is why her footwork is always TH even though the Man rises onto the T on step 2 of the Feather Step.

When your partner uses Foot Rise but you do not, that is when the other forms of Rise need to be used more in order to compensate.

Leg Rise
Leg Rise relates to two separate joints; the knees and the hips.

As the knees flex and extend, the angle between your shin and your thigh decreases and increases and when your hips flex and extend the angle between your thigh and your torso decreases and increases (assuming you don't start tilting the pelvis).

Because of this, both of these joints need to be used in unison to achieve Leg Rise since, if you were crouching and straightened only the knees you would end up bent over forward, as if to touch your toes and, if you straightened only your hips you would look as if you were dancing the limbo.

Leg Rise is where most of the Rise and Fall in our dancing comes from and while Foot Rise can change your height by only a few inches, Leg Rise can change your height dramatically.

It is extremely important to release the knees in order to drop your weight to initiate a driving motion in times like step 1 of the Natural Turn; discussed above.

During steps that have NFR, it is Leg Rise that primarily takes over and allows you to stay with your partner, even though you do not have the ability to use your ankles to rise.

Body Rise
Body Rise is sometimes grouped together with Leg Rise because the two always work together but, it is possible to have Body Rise without Leg Rise.

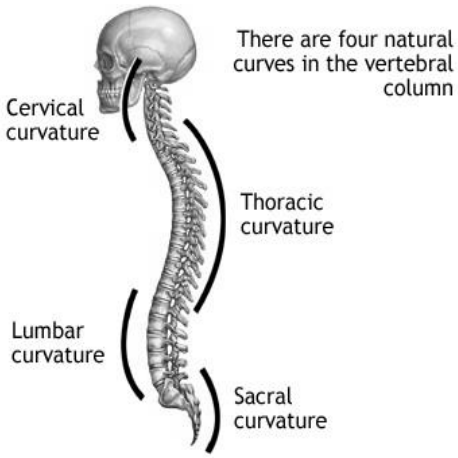
Consider; your spine is made of a series of curves:(from top to bottom) the Cervical Spine which runs through your neck; your Thoracic Spine which runs through the back of your rib cage; your Lumbar Spine which runs from around your lowest rib to your pelvis and your Sacral Spine which is joined to the pelvis.

© iDance Australia Study Guide - *Teaching the Dance Class or Individual*

While the Sacral Spine cannot move because the vertebrae are fused, all the other vertebrae are able to flex and extend; for that reason, the entire Spine can be lengthened by pulling the two ends apart and elongating the curves or contracted by squashing the two ends together and exaggerating the curves.

Body Rise is the elongation of your spine.

To feel it, imagine you are standing in a pool of water up to your chin and you need to keep your head above water to breath (obviously this example will require you tilt your head upward, which is not a part of spinal extension but is a good idea if you want to avoid drowning!).



Have you ever noticed how good dancers seem to hang in the air and then blossom apart from each other?

This is Body Rise; which is being used to create extra shape and to make their dancing float.

In addition, the use of Body Rise correctly also gives your dancing the look that it is 'breathing' as you take certain steps.

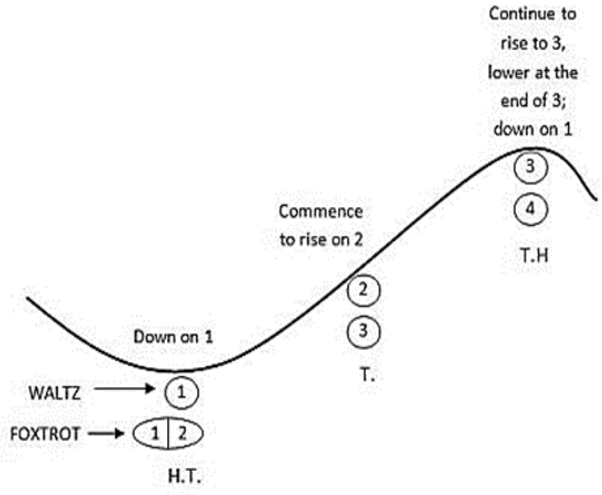
Look at this video of Arunas Bizokas and Katusha Demidova dancing a Waltz and if you are not too distracted by their dancing, examine just one figure at a time and see if you can notice when they use each type of Rise:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bzvi1vLptqg&feature=emb_logo

Rise and Fall

Some of the Standard Ballroom dances are often described as having 'Rise and Fall' or, rising and lowering but the character of this vertical movement is different in the different dances.

In the Waltz, the three steps in each bar are all taken rising continuously, so that they come to a peak at "3".

The time available for compression at the end of the "3" of one bar and the "1" of the next bar is very brief with that rapid compression likened to a fall and, like a fall, it is accompanied with an acceleration of the body through the first step of the next bar, like a car coasting down a hill into a valley.



Then as the body rises through the three beats of the bar, (like a car coasting up the next hill) the body slows.

© iDance Australia Study Guide - *Teaching the Dance Class or Individual*

The result is that the rise and fall of the feet and legs corresponds also to a slow and fast modulation of the flight of the body.

This modulation of body speed, with rising and lowering of the legs and feet, is also part of the character of the Slow Foxtrot and Quickstep but, in these, the period used for rising is about equal to that used for lowering so that the rising and lowering are symmetrical in time.

In all these three dances, the Waltz, the Slow Foxtrot and the Quickstep, the body can be made to look as though it is powered through the lowering actions and then floats over the rises.

The result is a curious optical illusion…particularly for the Slow Foxtrot!

Although the lowered steps are typically 'Slows', with each taking two beats of the music and the risen steps are 'Quicks', with each taking only one beat of the music; because the slows are used for acceleration and the body decelerates through the quicks, it appears that the slows are quick and the quicks are slow.

Even more curious is that if the movement is to look smooth and easy, the length of stride used by a ballroom dancer needs to be the same (or very close to same) for both a slow step and a quick step.

Developing the coordination to achieve this is not a trivial achievement and takes time and patience.

Finding the Beat & Timing

One of the most challenging things for most people when they start dancing is finding the beat (*Beat: The regular rhythmic pulse in a piece of music*).

Since moving in harmony with the music is the whole reason for dance, this is a critical issue and even if you have excellent technique, your dancing will look out of place and awkward if you are out of sync with the music.

First things first…

1. All music starts at the beginning and the beginning is always a '1' beat.
2. Music will always follow a pattern such as '1-2-3,1-2-3' or '1-2-3-4,1-2-3-4.'
3. Not all songs have a strong beat that's easy to pick out but, there's always a beat somewhere…even if it's subtle!
4. Some songs have an intro that may use a sound effect or, snippet of conversation or, other unconventional treatment, but the first true musical beat you'll hear in the song is usually a '1' beat. Learn to hear this and things get much easier!

The '1' beat repeats regularly throughout the piece of music and when you can hear the '1' beat, you can quickly correct problems during the dance.

If you are bumped, or encounter some other problem, knowing where the one beat is means you can get back on track in no time.

Many students hear the beat easily, while others find it elusive and sometimes students are able to hear the beat in some songs but not in other songs.

This is because some music is relatively simple in structure, while other music is complex, with many instruments and rhythms (e.g., Salsa, Bachata, Quickstep (Jazz)).

Exercises for Hearing the Beat

Use these exercises to help students hear the beat in the music:

1. Clap Hands: Begin to clap out the beat in the music and have students join you. Once students hear the beat, stop clapping and let them continue on their own.

   Assure students that they are "on the beat" (and as necessary, help them get back on beat).

2. Tap with Fingers (or Feet): Tap out the beat in the music with a pencil (or your fingers) on a table and have your students join you.
   Students can tap their fingers on the table or on their laps.

   You can switch tapping to a different part of your body on each measure, having students do the same and, even if you have not explained the term measures yet, doing this will begin building their instinctive sense of the measures.

   Alternatively, have students tap out the beat with their feet.
   Students can tap their heels (rather than their toes), as this tends to be easier for people.

3. Hand on Heart: Without music, have students close their eyes, place a hand on their hearts, and softly say, "beat, beat, beat" in time with their heartbeats.
   Then play a song and have students tap out the beat of the music using the hand over the heart.

   Even though the musical beat will be at a different rate than students' heartbeats, it will still help them to experience the feeling of what a beat is.

4. Say "Beat": Have students close their eyes and say "beat, beat, beat" in time with the music.

5. Count Silently and Aloud: Play a game where you have students count the beats by saying "beat" (as in the previous exercise).
   Tell them when your palms are up to count aloud and when your palms are down to count silently to themselves.
   Switch your palms every few phrases throughout the song.

Dance Timing

Dance music has timing aspects that make each dance unique.

The swaying 3/4 time of Waltz is dramatically different from the crisp 2/4 time of Samba, for example.

One bar in Waltz will go from 1-3 and then start again, while one bar in Samba will only include the 1 and 2.

Dances that rely on 4/4 timing will use a bar that goes from 1-4.

© iDance Australia Study Guide - *Teaching the Dance Class or Individual*

The speed of the music will be different from song to song and dance to dance but whether it counts in 2, 3 or 4 beats will generally always be consistent throughout each song.

Musical Emphasis

In music, the '1' beat usually receives slightly more emphasis but that doesn't mean it's louder!

In fact, sometimes it may even be quieter than other beats but, it somehow has more presence and you'll need to learn to pick it up.

There are some songs where it even feels like a 'hole' in the music, making it easy to notice.

When you first start dancing, you'll find this hard, but it gets easier with practice and once you learn to hear the '1' you'll start to see the bars of music unfold without even thinking about it.

The only way to get there is to listen to lots of music and even listening for the beat count in non-dance music will help.

Count it out loud when you listen to music and try it with your partner to see if both of you hear the same thing.

If you don't, try to figure out who's right and after a while you'll find it quite easy to 'feel' where the '1' beat is and you won't have to rely on hearing that first note to pick it up.

Strict Tempo music is easier for this purpose because it makes an effort to define the '1' more clearly, while chart hits (which are written for artistic style, not dancing) will sometimes be quite uneven in their emphasis.

Many chart hits even put the emphasis on a beat, other than the '1'; which creates unique challenges for the dancer and in such cases, experienced dancers will change their starting point to let the music flow better with the dance, although for most purposes, Ballroom dancing always orients itself to count from the '1' beat.

The Latin and Rhythm Dances

Latin dances have unique challenges related to the beat.

In Rumba there is a visible 'holding' of the 1 beat where your weight settles into the hip but there is no lateral movement of the feet.

In Cha-Cha the fourth beat is split into two parts so that it counts '4 & 1' with a beat value of ½, ½, 1, which creates the natural 'Cha-Cha-Cha' sequence where the Chasse happens.

It would be nice for novice dancers if all dance music clearly defined those points. Unfortunately, not all dance music makes it easy.

There is a balance between the movements and the music that creates beauty and experienced dancers will even play with the music, putting extra motion where the song has less emphasis to keep the dance interesting.

This is called ‘syncopation’.

At higher levels of dancing there are also special timings that hold the action through one or more beats for powerful emphasis, like the ‘Guapacha’ timing found in Cha-Cha.

Never train yourself to listen for the Chasse split beat sequence in Cha-Cha music.

There are many social dancers who do that and it creates a host of problems so, instead, train to hear the ‘1’ in all music and you’ll automatically know where to split the beat (or hold the beat) because you’ll know where the count begins.

The Samba and Jive
The Samba and Jive add additional challenges.
To beginners, both of these dances sound very much like ‘1-2-3-4’.

In actual fact, they have deeper complexities you learn to appreciate as you get more experienced.

Proper Samba music involves a sequence of 8 beats of music (more accurately 8 bars of 2 beats each, but that’s getting really complex).

The first 4 beats go up slightly, the second 4 usually go down.
This is important and the reason why everything in Samba is done to the count of 4.

For example; you might do four basic movements followed by 4 Whisks followed by 4 Samba Walks.

Which is why when we change to a different type of action at the start of a new bar of music, it looks smooth and natural but when we make a major change in the middle of a music bar, it looks out of place.

Let’s say you’re doing 8 Criss-Cross Voltas followed by 4 Criss-Cross Bota Fogo’s.

If you start your Voltas at the beginning of a verse (1-a-2-a-3-a-4-5-a-6-a-7-a-8), you start your Bota Fogo’s at the start of the next 8 beats, which becomes very attractive because you then make your next change where the music starts its next upward swing; now, if you do an extra 2 Voltas, you’ll be putting yourself in an awkward position because then your Bota Fogo’s start one bar into the next verse of music.

Do you see the problem?

That’s why Samba has such carefully defined groups!
If you make a mistake, you can do something like a pair of hip bumps on the Bota Fogo’s to bring you back in line with the music.

Jive isn’t quite as challenging, but it has its own unique pattern.

© iDance Australia Study Guide - *Teaching the Dance Class or Individual*

If you listen closely to Jive or Swing music, you'll discover that every '2' count has a very distinctive downward feeling, while the '1' count is slightly more bouncy and light feeling.

Your dance will look slightly wrong if you go up when the music is going down, so we use that 2 in the Chasse (Triple Step) to drop down (3-a-4, 5-a-6).
Note that the split beat is comparable to the Cha-Cha with beat values of ½, ½, 1.

Watch a quality Jive or Swing and you'll see the very distinctive drop on the 2 and 4 beats in the side Chasses.

The Rock Step happens on a '1' and, while the heel goes down the body actually rises slightly, matching the upward feeling of the beat.

Learn to feel the difference and you'll dramatically improve your Jive.

The 'Ballroom' Dances

The traditional Ballroom dances also offer surprises, even to experienced dancers.

Many dancers are quite shocked when they learn that the Viennese Waltz actually has 8 bars to a phrase…that's because they are first taught to recognize only the individual 123, 123 beat count and stick with this for years.

The best way to count Viennese Waltz is not the usual '123, 123' beat count but to count the bars: '123-223-323' all the way to '823'.
This takes a bit of getting used to but becomes very satisfying because you can bring in your change step on the start of the new phrase where it looks very natural.

Foxtrot music has definite phrasing in 32-beat counts.
Learn to use 8-beat and 32-beat values in your choreography and it will look more 'natural'.

Start moving into the Preparation Step on the 7-8 so that your first step of a group (typically a Feather Step) will start on the 1.
If you do a Feather Step followed by a Reverse Turn; your steps would be SQQSQQ which is a total of 8 beats.

You've used 4 beats for the Feather Step and another 4 for the Reverse Turn and this syncs beautifully with the music.

Tango is interesting because it is actually counted in 2/4 time.
This means 1 & 2 & instead of, as most people assume, 1 2 3 4.

Thinking of it the proper way helps dancers place the emphasis in the right place while dancing.
For example; in two Walks and Promenade Link your SSQQ actually counts as 1 & 2 & 3 & which is where we put the emphasis for the Link.

Learn to listen to Tango more closely and you'll notice that even Tango counts in 8-bar phrases.

© iDance Australia Study Guide - *Teaching the Dance Class or Individual*

Waltz is less dependent on phrasing but choreography tends to look better when you dance Waltz in 6-beat sequences, as in 123-456.

There's always a clearly defined 'strong' bar followed by a softer bar.

Experienced dancers think of this as akin to a 'question' and 'answer' sequence and design their choreography in pairs to show this ongoing 'conversation' between the couple.

Waltz still has phrasing, just like the Viennese Waltz so, if you really want to dance musically you should learn to listen for that and apply these phrase changes to your choreography.

The Quickstep also has phrasing and, benefits considerably if you learn to count the bars of music rather than the beats.

Lead and Follow

Two opposite sides of the same coin that are necessary for a balanced partner dance.

Historically, these roles were called the 'Male' and 'Female' role but in the modern dance world the two roles hold greater fluidity so, in lieu of describing the roles with a masculine and feminine narrative, how do we define them?

The Lead (*conventionally the male in a mixed-sex couple*) is responsible for choosing appropriate steps to suit the music (if it is an improvised dance), and leading the Follow by using subtle signals to complete the chosen steps smoothly and safely.

If the dance is a set (pre-choreographed) routine, the Lead is sometimes responsible for initiating each move, which ensures smooth coordination between the two dancers.

The Lead:

- ✓ The 'Picture Frame' of the dance.
- ✓ Control over structure, spacing, balance, pace and timing.
- ✓ The Planner and Orator.

The Lead provides the 'Picture Frame'; which is the space in which the dance happens. It is the lead's job to plan ahead – kind of like the organizer of the dance and, without their guidance, the dance cannot progress past its base components.

It is critical for the Lead to clearly direct or orchestrate the dance; weak and unclear gestures will do little to power the dance forward.
What comes next in the dance is (mostly) their call – but it is also equally important that the Lead maintains careful awareness that the Follow is right there with them.

A good Lead also balances the Follow's comfort and level with where they want the dance to go.

In terms of connection, a good Lead will provide support for the Follow and always ensure that the Follow is not placed into a dangerous position.

They are the primary Planner – ensuring that their dance space is respected and that they do not veer into other couples.
They have a vision and a map on how to get there, which they impart to the Follow in hopes that their partner will accompany them.

Much of their role is bringing out the best in their Follow – and allowing them to shine.

A bad Lead will not take care of their partner: They move unseeing around the floor, or without a plan; They may navigate the follower into other couples, or try to dance outside the follower's limits; They may attempt to use movements that do not fit into the space, or fail to create a space for the dance in the first place.

Often, a poor leader will drift towards the realm of following or, fail to make a decisive choice in what they ask the Follow to do.
Rather, they ask the Follow to take over as the Planner.

<u>The Follow:</u>

- ✓ The 'Picture' of the dance.
- ✓ Control over style, flare, balance, stability and expression.
- ✓ The Listener and Interpreter.

The Follow provides the image that sits within the frame of the Lead and without the Follow, the dance loses its spice or interest; it becomes flat.

It is the Follow's job to respond and interpret near-instantly the signals of the Lead.
It is critical for a Follow to be a good listener and not disrupt the plan that the Lead is trying to create – unless invited to do so.

For, just like a team project with more than one leader, a partnership with two leads will diverge and fall apart.

It takes equal patience and skill to give the control of the situation to another party as it does to be the team lead.

A good Follow will create within borders; They excel within structure but, still manage to create new and exciting portraits within the lines.

A Follow has the most opportunity to shine in a partnership, as they have more chances to spin, create exceptional lines and truly give themselves in to the flow of the music without having to worry what comes next.

The Follow has the role of creating within the flow, rather than controlling the initial creation.

They are directed by the Lead in a particular movement, on which they build and create an extraordinary performance.

In most dances, after all, it is not the Lead that a spectator will remember – it is the shining performance of the Follow.

A poor Follow will try to take control and, rather than listening and interpreting from their partner, they seek to take over and create their own dance – independent of direction.

They may not care about the level of their partner, choosing instead to dance for themselves rather than the partnership; They may become obstinate, refusing to listen to an idea or frame and choosing to sacrifice the partnership to fulfill their personal vision.

Who can dance what roles?

Anyone can dance either role but, most people find they are particularly inclined towards one of the roles with a small subset of the population enjoying both equally – or may even prefer different roles in different dances.
The hardest part of learning the opposite role is switching your brain to the opposite way of thinking.

It can be as simple as mentally visualizing what you need to do to take on the opposite role, or as difficult as trying to re-wire your existing personality to accommodate a new way of thinking but, it is possible.

If learning both roles is important to you or, if you are just trying to get better understanding of the opposite role, try thinking about the attributes of that role rather than trying to learn simply the technique.

In many ways, 'feeling' the role may prove to be more valuable than any steps or technique you may learn…but please, go learn the technique!

Fundamental Theory

The degree to which the Lead controls the dance (and, by implication, 'controls' the Follow) depends on the dance style and dancer sensitivity; the social context in which the dance exists; the experiences and personalities of each partner and a range of other factors.

Some partner dances such as West Coast Swing or Lindy Hop, involve an open position; which encourages each partner to improvise alone, yet others, such as the Tango or Waltz may involve a close embrace or closed body position; which require the Follow to respond to the Lead more comprehensively.

For many individual dancers, exploring the limits of the Lead/Follow relationship adds to the dance; where this relationship might better be understood as a conversation between partners with each contributing to the style and mood of the dance through their connection.

For other partners, the lead's complete control of the follow and the follow relinquishing a greater degree of creative or expressive autonomy is more personally comfortable or satisfying.

Social Partner Dance Principles

For the Lead and Follow to interact with each other, communication needs to occur between the dance couple and because it's not practical to discuss moves, physical contact is the most effective means.

More advanced dancers will take many cues from each other through this connection, with the Follow using it to communicate feedback to the Lead just as the leader uses it to suggest moves to their partner.

The most accomplished dancers use connection as a line of communication which allows the leader to incorporate the follower's ideas, abilities, and creative suggestions into their own styling and selection of moves.

In many partner dances, the Lead's steps differ from the Follow.
In face-to-face positions, the Follow generally ‘mirrors’ the lead's footwork; for example; if the lead begins on their left foot, the follow will begin on their right foot while in choreographed pieces and other situations where the follow is in a tandem position or shadow position; the lead and follow will use the same footwork.

Usually both partners move together as a unit but in some dances the partners move in opposite directions - together and apart again (Australian New Vogue).

In partner dancing, dancers seek to work together to create synchronized or complementary movements, where the Lead is largely responsible for initiating movement, while the Follow's role is to maintain this movement (although they may choose not to).

Many dancers describe this process as involving the initiation of momentum or 'energy' (by the Lead) and then the subsequent maintenance, exaggeration, decreasing or dissolving of this momentum by both partners.

This momentum or energy may be manifested as movement (in its most obvious form), or in a range of more complex interactions between partners:

- ✓ Compression (where each partner 'compress' the energy by bending joints and moving towards or 'into' their partner, to varying degrees).
- ✓ Leverage (where one partner - usually the lead - exploits the development of compression or connection to shift their follow's weight) or; to 'ground' (develop 'compression' downwards, with the contact their feet make with the floor) themselves more thoroughly before initiating movement.
- ✓ Tension (is the opposite of compression - partners moving away from each other but still in contact).

Weight Transfer

For partner dancers, using weight transfers is a way for a Lead to communicate a 'lead' for a dance step to a Follow.

For example, when a couple is physically in contact each other, for a Lead to have their Follow walk forwards, they may simply begin by walking backwards themselves.

© iDance Australia Study Guide - *Teaching the Dance Class or Individual*

As their arms/points of contact move away from each other, they develop tension, which the follow may either break by dropping their arms or breaking the hold, or 'follow' by moving.

A more experienced Lead may realize (if only on an unconscious level) that the most effective execution of even this "simple" step is achieved by preparing for movement before the step begins as the Lead/Follow connection facilitates this.

The principles of Leading and Following are explored to their most extreme limits in contact improvisation of modern dance, though they are as ancient a process as a parent carrying a child.

Advanced swing dancers do this to enhance their dance connection and to add more fun into the dance.

Another way of ‘breaking the routine’ of the dance is syncopation (the second meaning, making more steps than required by the standard description of the dance pattern).

Syncopations are easier for the Lead to cope with; since the Lead does not have to change the intended dance figure (although experienced dancers try and match the fancy footwork of the partner, at least in rhythm).

This is not as difficult as it might seem, since good dancers match their footwork to musical accents.

Obstruction Avoidance (Floor-craft)

A general rule is that both lead and follow watch each other's back in a ‘dance hall’ situation.

Collision avoidance is one of the cases when the follow is required to ‘back-lead’ or at least to communicate about the danger to the lead.

In travelling dances, such as Waltz, common Follow signals of danger are an unusual resistance to the Lead or, a slight tap by the shoulder.

In open-position dances, such as Swing or Latin dances, maintaining eye contact with the partner is an important safety communication link.

Recovery from Mis-communication

Sometimes a miscommunication is possible between the Lead and Follow.
A general rule here is do not wrestle and never stop dancing.
Techniques of the recovery of connection and synchronization vary from dance to dance, but there are some common tricks:

- ✓ In dances without obligatory body contact (Latin, Swing, Hustle, American Smooth), free spin(s) recovers from anything.
- ✓ In dances danced in body contact (Waltz, Tango, Foxtrot) it is very important to recover the feet match and to recover.

© iDance Australia Study Guide - *Teaching the Dance Class or Individual*

Leads may initiate a well-known (i.e., a basic) step with slightly exaggerated sideways shift of weight to force the Follow to free the required foot; for example, in Waltz or Foxtrot a good suggestion would be to end a measure in the open Promenade position, there would be no doubt as to the direction of the movement and which foot to use at the beginning of the next measure.

Gender Roles

Traditionally, the male dance partner is the Lead and the female dance partner is the Follow, though this is not always the case.

Many social dance forms have a long history of same-sex and role-crossing partnerships and there have been some changes to the strict gendering of partner dances in some competition or performance contexts (an example is a 'Jack and Jack' dance contest).

The Lead - Methodology

1. Body Lead.
2. Arm Lead.

Body Lead vs Arm lead:

A *Body Lead* occurs where the leader initiates a lead by moving their body, which moves their arm(s), and thus transmits a lead to the follow.
Body Lead means much the same as 'weight transfer'.

An *Arm Lead* occurs where the leader moves their arm(s) without moving their body, or moves their body in a different direction to their arm.
As an example, a leader may lead a follow back onto their right foot through the leader's own weight transfer forwards onto their left foot; yet at the same time turn the follower's torso to the left from above the hips.

Techniques for Leading
The Lead has to communicate the direction of the movement to the Follow.

Traditionally, the Lead's right hand on the follow's back, near the lowest part of the shoulder-blade (this is the strongest part of the back and the lead can easily pull the Follow's body inwards).

To enable the Lead to communicate a step forward (backward for the Follow) the Follow has to constantly put a little weight against the Lead's right hand therefore when the Lead goes forward, the Follow will naturally go backwards.

An important leading mechanism is the Lead's left hand; which usually holds the Follow's right hand.
At no point should it be necessary for any partner to firmly grab the other's hand.

It is sufficient to press the hand or even only finger tips slightly against each other; the Follows hand following the Leads hand.

Another important leading mechanism is hip contact.

© iDance Australia Study Guide - *Teaching the Dance Class or Individual*

Though not possible in traditional Latin dances like Rumba, Cha-Cha and Salsa because of partner separation, hip contact is a harmonious and sensual way of communicating movement to the partner and is used primarily in Standard or Ballroom Dances (Waltz, Tango's and Quickstep etc.) and Caribbean dances.

The Follow - Methodology

- ✓ Active Follow
- ✓ Passive Follow

Techniques of Following
Trust is key in ballroom dancing and by developing an understanding of your partners movements you will find that a form of nonverbal communication develops.

Read your partner's intentions based on how they move from one step to another and the facial cues they might give you.

This takes work, but the sooner you begin noticing how your partners behaves as they lead, the sooner your sensitivity will develop.

You and your partner should be connected throughout the entirety of the dance.

This is a major component of communication on the dance floor and requires you to feel and interpret the pressure that your partner provides while learning when to respond to the push and pull of the movement and feeling your partner's muscle engagement will cue you exactly where to follow.

It may be hard for a 'take-charge' kind of individual who has perfected every step to follow another's lead but, this is very important.

Don't try to lead.

Your partner is in charge of where you are going and at what time, so don't try to get there first.
Your movements should complement those of your partner; resisting will hinder your combined ability to appear graceful so, just enjoy the ride.

Nobody becomes a great follower overnight so, practice with as many partners as possible to develop a balanced and controlled dynamic that allows you to 'flow' through any movement with any partner.

Back-leading
Back-leading is when a Follow is executing steps without waiting for, or contrary to, or interfering with the Lead's lead.
Both are considered bad dancing habits because it makes the Follow difficult to lead and dance with.

Back-leading can be a teaching tool that is often used intentionally by an instructor when dancing with a student lead, in order to help them learn the desired technique.

© iDance Australia Study Guide - *Teaching the Dance Class or Individual*

Back-leading sounds similar to ‘hijacking’, and indeed it is often used in place of ‘hijacking’, however the two terms have significant differences, stemming from intentions.

The first, superficial difference; hijacking is usually an occasional ‘outburst’ of the Follow, which otherwise diligently follows the lead, while a ‘back-lead’ may do this almost on every other step.
The second, a more significant one; hijacking is an actual lead, i.e., a hijacker does their stuff and watches for the 'Lead' to 'Follow' (reversed roles!).

Hijacking
Sometimes the Follow ‘*steals the lead*’ and they reverse roles for some time.
This is called ‘hijacking’ (also known as *lead stealing*).

Hijacking requires experience and good connection, since without proper timing it may look like sloppy dancing.

A signal for hijacking is typically an unusually changed (mostly, increased) stress in the connection from the Follow's side – ‘unusually’ means more than typically required for the execution of the current movement (by these partners).

For a Follow to hijack, they must be sure that the Lead will understand or at least guess the Follow's intentions.

How to Lead

1. Maintain a Strong Frame:
   The dance frame is the most important thing in lead and follow as it helps you maintain the connection between you and your partner.

   Your frame should be firm and steady all time; ‘noodle arms’ or, a weak frame will hinder the connection to your partner.

   When you have a good connection/frame, your partner will feel like they are part of your body and wherever you go, they can sense the movement from your body instantly.

   Here are a few checkpoints to help you maintain a strong frame:

   - ✓ Cup your partner's shoulder blade with your right hand.
   - ✓ Lift your right elbow.
   - ✓ Roll your shoulders back.
   - ✓ Stand up straight.
   - ✓ Engage your core (tuck your stomach in).

2. Take Decisive Steps:
   Accidents often happen when the driver isn't sure where he/she is going and is being hesitant with his/her moves.

   On the dance floor, when you are hesitant about your dance steps, your partner will often start leading and you will end up stepping on each other's toes.

© iDance Australia Study Guide - *Teaching the Dance Class or Individual*

As a leader, you must take strong, intentional steps and be clear with your leads and signals and when you are new to a dance step, practice it a lot until you can perform it confidently.
Remember, you are in charge on the dance floor.

3. Lead with Your Body:
   One big misconception in leading is to lead with the arms and hands; which can cause a lot of yanking that is ineffective and uncomfortable to the followers.

   Remember, movements are initiated from the core/torso, your arms are simply the extension of the torso that connects to your partner so, when you are about to take a step, think about moving your body first before you take the step.
   Along with a strong steady frame, your partner will be able to react to your movement accordingly when you lead with your body.

4. Be Gentle:
   Relax your fingers and try not to squeeze your partner's hands.
   Your partner should feel some pressure from your hand but you shouldn't hold your partner's hand too tight that causes discomfort and/or hinder the fluidity of a movement, such as a spin.

   Spins are the very few movements that you use your hands and fingers to lead but still, you don't want to force a spin; Instead, pay attention to where your partner's weight is before a spin, find the right time to initiate the spin and let momentum do the magic.

5. Listen to Music:
   When you are new to partner dance, it can be difficult to listen to the music while executing all the details in leading however, you must try your best to dance to the beat of the song.
   Even though your partner is supposed to follow you no matter how off you are with the music, it will make it easier and more enjoyable for your partner if you dance to the music.

<u>How to Follow</u>

1. Maintain a Strong Frame:
   As a follower, you must keep your frame firm so that your partner can connect to your body and lead you effectively.

   You should feel like you are part of his/her body and wherever he/she goes; you should be able to sense the motion instantly.

   Here are a few checkpoints to help you maintain a strong frame:

   - ✓ Roll your shoulders back.
   - ✓ Push your left wrist slightly forward towards the leader's triceps.
   - ✓ Engage your right arm and keep your right elbow in front of your rib cage.
   - ✓ Stand up straight.
   - ✓ Engage your core (tuck your stomach in).

© iDance Australia Study Guide - *Teaching the Dance Class or Individual*

2. Be Patient:
   The key to following is to slow down and wait.

   As a follower, your movement should always be a tiny bit delayed because you are reacting to your partner's lead.

   It's okay to be late!

3. Let Go:
   It's time for you to relax and let go.

   Stop counting the music for your partner; telling him/her what to do or even back-leading.

   Your job is to maintain a good connection to your partner and travel with him/her. Let your partner surprise you and enjoy the ride!

4. Trust your Partner:
   Next time when you practice with your partner, blindfold yourself and simply follow him/her.

   It might be scary in the beginning but soon you will have fun following.

   It's a great way to build trust to your partner and improve your following skills and your partner will also get better at leading when you are actually following because your partner has to make even stronger and clearer signals when you are not anticipating what your next step would be.

Latin Leads

Leading in the Latin dance styles is a lot less straightforward than in Standard Ballroom, with four main types of leads used; which is why being aware of what each type of lead is and how it functions is extremely important for both social and competitive Latin dancers.

Weight Change
This is the easiest of the four leads; both to implement and for the Follow to read clearly.

Weight change leads occur when the Lead shifts their weight from one foot to another and the Follow responds accordingly and, although this lead can be done in any hold, it is most easily felt in Closed Hold.

To practice this lead, take Closed Hold with your partner and have the Follow close their eyes. With a solid (but not stiff) frame, the Lead will transfer weight from foot to foot and the Follow will follow.

Next, the Lead may take steps forward, back, or to the side and finally he may dance Chasses as well; good leading and following can be accomplished with minimal practice in this way.
This is essentially the same lead that is used in Standard Ballroom; and in Latin it is used in figures such as the Cha Cha Closed Basic, Samba Reverse Turn, Rumba Cuban Rocks, Paso Doble Chasses and Jive Fallaway Rock.

© iDance Australia Study Guide - *Teaching the Dance Class or Individual*

Physical
To use a physical lead the Lead will increase pressure through their arms and the Follow will match that pressure; allowing the Lead to control the Follows movement.

If the Follow does not match the Lead's pressure, the lead works just as well as if the Lead did nothing to initiate it in the first place.

The physical lead is important in Latin, because, unlike weight change, it allows the Lead to affect the Follow's movement without affecting their own.

To practice this lead, use Right to Left hand hold and have the Follow close their eyes.

The Follow will continue to travel forward toward their left hand, even if the Lead redirects the Follow's energy by moving the hand to the left or the right.

If the Lead increases pressure within the connection and leads the Follow to walk backward, they will continue to walk backward until they feel that they are stopped through a stretching of the connection; like a rubber band.

The physical lead is used in figures such as the Cha Cha Open Hip Twist, Stationary Samba Walks, Rumba Three Threes, Paso Doble Separation and the Jive American Spin.

Shaping
The Shaping lead is the least understood of all the leads.

To use a shaping lead, the Lead will stretch his arms and upper body upward to communicate to the Follow that they should turn under the arm.

After the Lead has shaped, the Follow must take the initiative to move themself.

A common error when using the shaping lead is for the Follow not to respond to it, causing the Lead to have to use a physical lead to get through the figure resulting in uncomfortable partnering and strained dancing.

To practice this, the Lead will shape their arms and upper body upward, and the Follow will match that shape to turn under arm.

This lead is used in the Cha Cha Underarm Turn, Samba Maypole, Rumba Spiral Actions, Paso Doble Travelling Spins in PP and Jive Change of Places from Right to Left.

Visual
Least used of all the leads in Syllabus figures is the visual lead, which occurs when the Lead and Follow are not touching each other.

In this case, the Follow must watch the Lead's movements carefully to be able to follow them.

Sometimes the Follow must react immediately, which requires an understanding of the figure danced, such as the Cha Cha 'Follow the Leader' while at other times, the Follow may delay their response; such as when the couple is dancing Cha Cha 'Time Steps' and the Lead decides to dance a 'Spot Turn'.

© iDance Australia Study Guide - *Teaching the Dance Class or Individual*

As a result, the Follow carefully watches the Lead as they continue their 'Time Steps' and then accepts the challenge; dancing their own 'Spot Turn' on the following measure.

To practice this lead, the Lead and Follow should stand apart with the Lead moving clearly so the Follow can follow them, either slowly and calmly or, with short quick movements to allow the Follow to match them.

Ballroom Leads

Leading and Following are equally challenging and the main reason why ballroom dancing is more difficult to master than most other forms of dance.
In order for a couple to move seamlessly together, they need to coordinate their movements so that everything happens at the right time; making things look effortless.

Learning technique is important, but Lead and Follow are vital to create that look you admire so much when you watch great dancing.

There are essentially four types of Lead and the Latin-American dances, American Smooth, Latin Rhythm and Carribean, rely on all four (*see Latin Leads above*).

The Standard Ballroom dances, in which the couple remains in closed hold throughout the dance, only uses three of the four leads.

Weight Change
Perhaps the easiest of the lead types is the weight change.
It can be as simple as moving from one foot to the other; like what you see when a couple gets ready to start moving.

To do a good job of this, the leader needs to have a strong frame, though never too stiff as that makes things harder to follow…a Lead with a weak frame puts the Follow in the position of trying to match a wet spaghetti noodle, making their effort much more difficult.

As the Lead moves their body, the Follow feels the energy of the movement and the direction, making it possible to match both.

You can practice this by taking closed hold and having the Follow close their eyes.

1. Place your feet shoulder width apart, then transfer your weight from one foot to the other.
2. Check if the Follow can match you; If they can't; you either don't have enough 'grounding' or pressure into the floor; or your frame isn't sufficiently strong.
3. Now try taking an actual step to each side.
4. Next, try moving forward and back…these should be easier.

Also try doing chasses to the side and see if they can feel that it's an actual Chasse rather than just a single step to the side.

© iDance Australia Study Guide - *Teaching the Dance Class or Individual*

Many leads are not clear enough in creating the closing and pushing off action during the Chasse, making it hard for the Follow to feel that it's a Chasse.

Physical
A physical lead is different from a weight change because it doesn't require a weight change; It involves the man increasing pressure through the hand on the lady's shoulder blade to direct her energy in a new direction.

This pressure should never come from the arms, though and should come from the man's back, utilizing the lats and the side of the body.
There are many figures where physical lead is used.

In the Waltz, think of the Wing or the Weave from Promenade…even the basic Whisk utilizes a physical lead at the end of step 1 to assist the lady in swiveling her right foot so that she can step back instead of just to the side.
This lead is used often through the American Smooth dances as the connecting hand sweeps through the rotation to guide the lady toward the new alignment.

Shaping
The shaping lead starts to involve more dance experience, because it is easily misunderstood and often used incorrectly.
In this lead, the man stretches the side of his body, or his arms, to create a change in shape. A simple example is the Oversway.

Often, beginner dancers see shaping used by high-level couples and try to create it even though they are barely moving. This looks awkward and unappealing.

The shaping has been created by 'sway' in the movement and is directly connected to the amount of energy and the application of pendulum swing.
This type of lead is applied to create dramatic visual styling, even on very simple figures, and can be a great way for those still fairly new to dancing to develop their understanding of how to use shaping in dancing.

Never collapse one side…instead, lift the other side.

Where this lead starts to get complex is how it is used for more advanced movement such the lady's head turn during the sway in the Running Finish or the Three Step.
As the man stretches (shapes) the right side of his body upwards, the lady instinctively feels a desire to turn her head to the right as her shoulder starts to rise on the left.
At high skill levels, the lady's head turn in such figures can be quite beautiful but, done poorly it looks out of control and overly busy, therefore, use of the shaping lead for head rotations should only be attempted by highly experienced dancers.

How can you use these leads in your dancing?

Take a look at your dancing and determine what lead you are using in each movement. Many figures make use of multiple leads; for example, the Rumba 'New Yorker' starts with a physical lead (steps 1, 2) and ends with a weight change (step 3).

Determining exactly which lead is being used at each point in your routine will help your dancing flow better and improve communication between you and your partner.

© iDance Australia Study Guide - *Teaching the Dance Class or Individual*

Helpful Hints *(Guidance)*

Teaching Young Beginners: General Recommendations

1. Start with a 'non-threatening' activity such as a line dance.
2. Move to a simple partner mixer.
3. Assign a 'home position' where they start every class.
4. Teach that all dances have a name, rhythm and pattern and use that order to teach all dances.
5. 'Lead' always starts with LEFT FOOT and 'Follow' always start with the RIGHT FOOT.
6. When calling, start with '1' (1-2-ready-go).
7. Start all new steps with Lead and Follow's separated facing the center (your place).

    a) Walk rhythm in place without music.
    b) Walk rhythm in place with music.
    c) Walk the pattern without rhythm.
    d) Walk the pattern with the rhythm, without music.
    e) Walk the pattern with rhythm with music.
    f) Stand in front of partner, dance without touching.
    g) Link-up with partner, dance without music.
    h) Dance with partner with music.

8. Change partners OFTEN – almost every step.
9. Students have short attention spans so, spend more time moving and less time describing moves.
10. Change activities and partners often.
11. Use the terms 'Lead' and 'Follow' to refer to traditional male/female roles, especially if there are uneven numbers of male and female participants and, change roles frequently.

Teaching Young Beginners: Dance Positions

Adjust to the age of the student(s) – an example of a primary school approach might be:

1. Start all dances in two-hand position – but don't call it that.
2. Teach that partners must be 'linked' up to dance…like a train.
3. The Lead is the engine; they move the train and they signal the link; arms at right angle, waist high, palms facing up, c-shape for hand.
4. The Follow connects; palms down, c-shape for hand.
5. Practice moving back and forth (walks) being linked-up.
6. When the group is ready, try dance position for Waltz and/or Foxtrot.

Teaching Young Beginners: Motivational phrases and other ways to say 'Well Done!'

You've got it made.
You're on the right track now!
You're doing a good job.
You're very good at that.
I'm happy to see you working like that.
That's the best you've ever done that.
I knew you could do it.
Now you've figured it out.
Good job.
TERRIFIC!
Much better!
FANTASTIC!
You're really improving.
SUPERB!
I think you've got it now.
I'm very proud of you.
That's great!
Way to go.
Now you've got the hang of it!
You've done a great job.
GOOD WORK!
You're doing that much better today.
Congratulations!
Good for you!
You did it that time!
That's the way!
You haven't missed a thing.
FINE!
That's better than ever.
Now that's what I call a fine job!
You're doing beautifully.
You're really learning a lot.
Good going!

Now you have it!
GREAT!
You make it look easy.
That's the right way to do it.
You're getting better every day.
SENSATIONAL!
That's the way to do it.
Best yet.
You've just about mastered that!
OUTSTANDING!
You did that very well.
Keep it up!
TREMENDOUS!
Good thinking!
You figured that out fast.
That's really nice.
Congratulations, you've got it.
That's GOOD!
I'm proud of the way you worked today.
You're really working hard today.
You've just about got it.
THAT'S IT!
You're learning fast.
Couldn't have done it better myself.
Keep up the good work.
Nothing can stop you now!
EXCELLENT!
Wonderful!
I appreciate your hard work.
You must have been practicing!
You're doing fine.
You outdid yourself today!
MARVELOUS!

© iDance Australia Study Guide - *Teaching the Dance Class or Individual*

References used in the compilation of this Study Guide

1. Sicilia-Camacho A, Brown D: Physical Education & Sport Pedagogy 13(1):85- 108, 2007.
2. Mosston M, Ashworth S: Teaching Physical Education (5th ed). San Francisco: B. Cummings, 2002.
3. Bloom BS: Taxonomy of Educational Objectives. Handbook 1: Cognitive Domain. New York: David McKay, 1956.
4. Gardner H: Multiple Intelligences: The Theory in Practice. New York: Basic Books, 1993.
5. Kolb D: The Learning Style Inventory: Technical Manual. Boston: McBer, 1976.
6. Sternberg RJ: Thinking Styles. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1997.
7. Gibbons E: Teaching Dance: The Spectrum of Styles. Bloomington, IN: Author House, 2007.
8. Puretz S: Psychomotor research and the dance teacher. In: Clarkson P, Skrinar M (eds): Science of Dance Training. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics, 1988, pp. 279-287.
9. Skrinar M: Selected motor learning applications to the technique class. In: Clarkson P, Skrinar M (eds): Science of Dance Training. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics, 1988, pp. 269-277.
10. Ormrod J: Educational Psychology: Developing the Learners (4th ed.). Upper -Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2003.
11. Treasure DC, Roberts GC: Applications of achievement goal theory to physical education: Implications for enhancing motivation. Quest 47:475-489, 1995.
12. Ntoumanis N, Biddle SJH: A review of motivational climate in physical activity. Journal of Sports Sciences 17:643-655, 1999.
13. Riding RJ, Cheema I: Cognitive styles—an overview and integration. Educational Psychology 22:193-215, 1991.
14. Duda JL, Ntoumanis N: Correlates of achievement goal orientations in physical education. International Journal of Educational Research 39:415-436, 2003.
15. Brown AL, Campione JC, Day JD: Learning to learn: On training students to learn from texts. Educational Researcher 10:14-21, 1981.
16. Eddy MH: Dance and somatic inquiry in studios and community dance programs. Journal of Dance Education 2(4):119-127, 2002.
17. Fortin S: Simatic's: A tool for empowering dance teachers. In: 1998, pp. 49-71.
18. Baumeister RF, Campbell JD, Krueger JI, Vohs KD: Does high self-esteem cause better performance, interpersonal success, happiness, or healthier lifestyles? Psychological Science in the Public Interest 4:1-44, 2003.
19. Minton SC: Assessment of high school dance students' self-esteem. Journal of Dance Education 2(2):63-73, 2001.
20. Grossman G, Wilmerding MV: The effect of conditioning on the height of dancer's extension in a La Seconde. Journal of Dance Medicine & Science 4(4):117-121, 2000.
21. Harley YXR, Gibson A, Harley EH, et al: Quadriceps strength and jumping efficiency in dancers. Journal of Dance Medicine & Science 6(3):87-94, 2002.
22. Stalder MA, Noble BJ, Wilkinson JG: The effects of supplemental weight training for ballet dancers. Journal of Applied Sport Science Research 4(3):95- 102, 1990.
23. Welsh TM, Jones GP, Lucker KD, Weaver BC: Back strengthening for dancers: A within-subject experimental analysis. Journal of Dance Medicine & Science 2(4):141-148, 1998.
24. Schmidt RA, Wrisberg CA: Motor Learning and Performance: A Situation-Based Learning Approach. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics, 2008.
25. Karen Clippinger, MSPE: Dance Anatomy and Kinesiology, 2007.

Study Guide author: James Elders (Dual Fellow USISTD)