

LESSON 5: EAST COAST SWING

Grade-Level Outcomes

Primary Outcomes

Dance & rhythms: Demonstrates correct rhythm and pattern for one of the following dance forms: folk, social, creative, line or world dance. (S1.M1.6)

Rules & etiquette: Demonstrates knowledge of rules and etiquette by self-officiating modified physical activities and games or following parameters to create or modify a dance. (S4.M6.7)

Embedded Outcome

Working with others: Accepts differences among classmates in physical development, maturation and varying skill levels by providing encouragement and positive feedback. (S4.M4.6)

Lesson Objectives

The learner will:

- perform the rock step.
- perform the triple step.
- perform the basic swing dance step.
- demonstrate the open-facing two-hand-hold dance position.
- perform a basic swing step with a partner.
- demonstrate proper social dance etiquette by performing a skit.

Equipment and Materials

- Swing dance music
- Music-playing device
- Poly spots or tape

Introduction

Today, we will begin a new dance form called swing dance. There are many different types of swing dance; we will learn the east coast swing. We will begin with the two basic components for swing dance: the rock step and the triple step. Today, we will learn the basic swing dance step and work with partners.

Show video of swing dance to provide a visual for students.

Instructional Task: Basic Rock Step

■ PRACTICE TASK

Students perform the rock step.

Students stand in two lines side by side facing each other: leaders with their backs to the wall, followers across from them, facing the wall.

In swing dance, partners mirror movements. Leaders always rock back on the left foot while followers always rock back on the right foot.

Demonstrate with back to the leaders:

1. Left foot steps behind, with weight transferred to the ball of the left foot.
2. Weight then is transferred to right foot, with a small step forward.

Demonstrate with back to the followers:

1. Right foot steps behind, with weight transferred to the ball of the right foot.
2. Weight then is transferred to left foot, with a small step forward.

Repeat “rock step” or “1-2” as students practice, with the weight transfer happening on each word. Practice continues as long as necessary.

Student Choices/Differentiation

- Show video of rock step pattern.
- Slow speed of practice.
- Choose leader or follower role.

What to Look For

- Students transfer weight with each step.
- Backward step is on the ball of the foot.
- Steps for the rock step are small.

Instructional Task: Swing Dance Triple Step

■ PRACTICE TASK

Students perform the triple step.

Students are in two parallel lines facing each other: leaders with their backs to the wall, followers across from them, facing the wall. Leaders and followers continue to mirror each other’s movements.

The triple step is a three-step sequence done in two counts. Each of the steps is a small step. The first step is on count one; the second and third steps are quick on the half count and count two. The cue is “one and two.” Steps two and three are taken on the ball of the foot, with weight transferred with each step.

We will practice a triple step to one side.

Demonstrate with back to the leaders:

1. Left foot takes a small side step to the left, followed by right foot and left again. With each step, weight should be transferred from one foot to the next.
2. (Count slowly while demonstrating to the left.)
3. Prompt leaders: *Leaders go to the left first, as I count the steps. Ready? One and two.*

Demonstrate with back to the followers:

1. Right foot takes a small side step to the right, followed by left foot and right again. With each step, weight is transferred from one foot to the next.
2. (Count slowly while demonstrating to the right.)
3. Prompt followers: *We go to the right first. Ready? One and two.*

Repeat with both groups.

Students next combine two triple steps, first in one direction followed by one in the opposite direction. Leaders begin going left and followers begin to the right.

Teacher cues: *Ready? One and two, one and two.*

Cue students and continue practice as long as necessary.

Extension

Post dance and movement vocabulary in the classroom or gymnasium as reinforcement and a learning aid for visual learners.

Refinements

- Take the second and third steps on the ball of the foot, almost as if limping on the second step.
- Students may incorporate a slight lean of the torso in the direction of the dance.
- Some students might need a visual prompt for steps. Poly spots or pieces of tape on the floor can help. Cues for poly spots could be *Red, yellow, red. Green, blue, green.* Tape can be colored or numbered (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6) for steps.

Student Choices/Differentiation

- Show video of triple step pattern.
- Slow speed of practice.
- Choose leader or follower role.

What to Look For

- Students demonstrate rhythmic acuity.
- Students transfer weight with each step.
- Students combine the two triple steps together without pause in between.

Instructional Task: Basic Swing Step

■ PRACTICE TASK

Students combine the triple step and the rock step for a complete basic swing step.

Students stand in two parallel lines facing each other: leaders with their backs to the wall, followers across from them, facing the wall.

Leaders and followers continue to mirror each other's movements.

Leaders begin to the left, followers to the right.

Demonstrate with back to leaders, and repeat demonstration in the opposite direction with back to followers.

Prompt students: *Ready? One and two, one and two, rock step.*

Repeat, with prompts, as long as necessary.

Student Choices/Differentiation

- Show video of basic swing step.
- Slow speed of practice.
- Choose leader or follower role.

What to Look For

- Steps are rhythmically accurate.
- Students transfer weight with each step.
- Students combine the two triple steps without pause in between.

Instructional Task: Rock Step in Open-Facing Two-Hand-Hold Position With Partner

■ PRACTICE TASK

Students practice with partners.

Partners request and accept the dance.

Swing dance is performed in many different dance positions. We will use the open-facing two-hand-hold dance position. It is similar to the practice position that we used in the waltz.

Leaders extend their arms slightly below waist level, palms facing upwards in a relaxed position. Followers place their hands palm down in their partners' hands.

We start by working on the rock step with a partner. Remember, leaders always rock back on the left foot, while followers rock back on the right foot.

As partners step back on the initial step, leaders open their left hands to drop the followers' right hands. Partners maintain contact: leaders' right hands and followers' left.

On the step forward of the rock step, partners rejoin hands for the dance position.

Partners practice the rock step independently.

Refinements

- Students talk to each other to problem-solve step length, rhythm, and footwork.
- Students may have a slight turn of the torso toward their respective free hands on the back step of the rock, turning back to face their partners on the forward step.
- For added style, the free hand and non-weight-bearing knee may be slightly elevated on the back step, as partners use their connected hands as a counterbalance point.
- As partners step forward, the leader's left foot and the follower's right foot should not come to rest, as this step initiates the triple step.

EMBEDDED OUTCOME: S4.M4.6. While students are talking to each other about the mechanics of the dance, they also should provide positive feedback and encouragement to their partners.

Student Choices/Differentiation

- Students working alone can work independently on either the leader's or follower's footwork or technique.
- Some students might find it helpful to stand behind a classmate and shadow his movements.

What to Look For

- Partners work together, mirroring each other's dance steps.
- Students hold the full-count steps for a full count and the half-count steps for just a half.
- This is not a traveling step; students might begin to shuffle step from side to side, as opposed to taking small steps in place.

Instructional Task: Basic Swing Dance Step in Two-Hand-Hold Open Position

■ PRACTICE TASK

Students practice the basic swing dance step.

The basic swing dance step is a rock step and two triple steps.

Demonstration: Two students demonstrate as you cue them.

We begin with the rock step, followed by two triple steps, and continue to repeat the pattern. Leaders step back on their left, followers step back on their right. As you take the second step forward, rejoin hands and move into two triple steps, leaders to the left and followers to the right.

Teacher cues: *Ready? And rock step. One and two, one and two, rock step. One and two, one and two, rock step.*

Extension

Repeat, rotating to a new partner.

Student Choices/Differentiation

- Choose partner.
- Choose leader or follower role.
- Slow speed of sequence.
- Review video of basic swing dance step.

What to Look For

- Partners work together.
- Partners are rhythmically accurate with the music.
- Steps are smooth and are not marching steps.
- Students are able to sustain the rhythm and pattern.

Instructional Task: Basic Swing Step With Music

■ PRACTICE TASK

Students practice with partners to music.

The swing dance music we are using is in 4/4 time. This offers a wide variety of music to choose from. With students new to swing dance, consider using music with fewer than 140 beats per minute. Suggestions:

“Ability to Swing” by Patti Austin

“Love Shack” by the B-52s

“Mercy” by Duffy

“Right as Rain” by Adele

Extensions

- With music playing, students rotate, request the dance, and assume the two-hand-hold open dance position. To assist students in finding the rhythmic pattern, count aloud: *Rock step. One and two, one and two, rock Step. One and two, one and two, rock step.*
- As students gain confidence in the pattern and the music, stop your verbal count. You can use rhythm sticks to reinforce the rhythm, as needed, throughout the class.
- Rotate partners every 2 minutes.
- Encourage partners to look at each other when swing dancing. It is a social dance, and there is a lot of partner communication.

Refinement

Make sure that students have smooth transitions.

Student Choices/Differentiation

- Choose partner.
- Choose leader or follower role.
- Slow speed of sequence.
- Review video of basic swing dance step.

What to Look For

- Students’ footwork is correct.
- Partners work together.
- Partners maintain a smooth flow of dance.
- Partners maintain their space instead of drifting side to side.

Instructional Task: Etiquette

■ PRACTICE TASK

We have been dancing for a while now. In small groups, demonstrate your dance etiquette skills by creating a short skit on proper and improper dance etiquette.

Extension

Peer assessment checklist on skits

Student Choices/Differentiation

- Show students an example each of proper and improper etiquette.
- Have students choose from a list of etiquette choices.

What to Look For

- Students demonstrate knowledge of dance etiquette through well-planned skits.
 - Students work well in groups, and skits are creative.
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Formal and Informal Assessments

Peer assessment checklist on proper and improper dance etiquette, group work, and creativity

Closure

- What is another way that we could count the triple steps in basic?
- Can you feel you and your partner leading each other with your hands in the triple steps? Is that helpful?
- What level of energy did you feel when performing this dance?

Reflection

- Did students understand the difference between a full count and a half count in the triple step?
- Are students without partners participating?
- Were all students treated respectfully?
- Did students get to rotate and participate with a large portion of their classmates?

Homework

Students can practice the basic swing step at home.

Students can interview parents, grandparents, neighbors, friends, relatives: Did you ever learn to swing dance?

Resources

Harris, J., Pittman, A., Waller, M., & Dark, C. (2008). *Dance a while: Handbook for folk, square, contra, and social dance*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

Kassing, G. (2014). *Discovering dance*. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.

Wright, J. (2013). *Social dance: Steps to success*. 3rd ed. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.

Internet keyword search: "basic triple step," "east coast swing," "learning to swing dance"