# **Chapter 19: Activities**

## **Teaching Dance and Movement Education**

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# Dance Starters

# 1. Moving to the Beat

Dance elements used: time and space

***How to Play***

1. Divide the class in half.
2. Half of the class stands still and claps eight counts: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8. The other half walks to the beat in general space.
3. The groups swap roles and repeat the activity.

***Variations***

* Clap four counts (makes the reaction time and decision making quicker for the students).
* Clap two counts.
* Clappers accent a selected beat, and walkers stomp on the accent (e.g., 1, 2, 3, 4, \*5\*, 6, 7, 8).

# 2. Group Sculptures

Dance elements used: body awareness and relationship

***How to Play***

1. Students move to music in general space. They may move in their own ways, or you may specify a locomotor activity (e.g., walking in zigzag pathways, skipping, tiptoeing).
2. Stop the music and give a sculpture or shape instruction, such as, “Form groups of five and create the shape of a cloud.”
3. Call out a 20-second countdown ending with the instruction “Freeze!”
4. Join students in commenting on the sculptures or shapes created by the groups; for instance, you might note contrasting levels or the use of round or angular shapes.

***Variations***

You can use a variety of shape stimuli used. Choose ones that are appropriate to the grade and level of your students. Here are some examples:

* For groups of three or four—food forms (e.g., hamburger, birthday cake)
* For groups of seven—forms of transport (e.g., car, airplane, yacht)
* For groups of nine—structural shapes (e.g., CN Tower, Chateau Frontenac, Canada Place)

# 3. Responding to Action Words

Dance element used: energy

***How to Play***

1. Students use nonlocomotor and locomotor movement to respond to a series of action words (that is, verbs). Here are some examples:

* Jump
* Leap
* Hop
* Shiver
* Fall
* Collapse
* Spin
* Twirl

1. Encourage students to interpret the action words in various ways. For example, you might say, “Show me how many ways you can collapse with your whole body and all of your body parts. Can you collapse quickly? S-l-o-w-l-y? Like a robot?”

# 4. Different Body Parts

Dance element used: body awareness

***How to Play***

1. In a circle, students take turns leading the class in isolating and moving a body part. Here are some sample motions:

* Flicking hands
* Shrugging shoulders
* Flexing and extending a foot

1. The rest of class first observes the leader, then follows by repeating the action.

***Variation***

Incorporate locomotor activity along with the body-part isolation—for example, walking clockwise around the circle while flicking wrists.

# 5. Follow the Leader

Dance elements used: relationship and space

***How to Play***

1. Students work in pairs and choose one to be the leader.
2. While traveling in general space, the follower copies the leader’s movements. The aim of this activity is for the pair to work together; therefore, the leader’s movement must be easy to follow.
3. On your cue (e.g., drumbeat or clap), both students stop and do a jump-turn to face the other way, after which the follower becomes the new leader.
4. Repeat.

***Variation***

Use this activity to explore pathways. Ask the leaders to explore various pathways (e.g., circular, zigzag) and use a variety of locomotor activities.

# 6. Mirroring

Dance element used: relationship

***How to Play***

1. Students work in pairs, and student A mirrors the actions of student B, who moves slowly to make sure that student A can keep up.
2. Students begin by sitting still and moving only their hands, which move in slow motion.
3. Students progressively add the rest of the body, starting with the head and shoulders.
4. Students move on to the knees, which enables more upper-body movement possibilities.
5. Students move to a standing position, thus involving the whole body.

# 7. Shadow and Mirror

Dance element used: relationship

***How to Play***

1. Students form groups of three.
2. Student A faces student B, and student C stands behind student B.
3. Student A performs an action, B mirrors it, and C shadows B.
4. On your cue (e.g., drumbeat, clap, spoken word), students change roles.

# 8. Skipping Game

Dance element used: space

***How to Play***

1. Students spread out and sit anywhere in the space.
2. Nominate four students to act as skippers, who skip to the music. When they want to stop, they select someone to sit beside, and that student takes over the skipping role.
3. The student who was the skipper (and is now seated) performs a body percussion action to show that he or she has had a turn. Here are some examples:

* Clapping hands
* Clicking fingers
* Tapping knees

1. Continue in this manner until everyone has had a turn.

***Variation***

Before sitting down, the skipper makes a shape and freezes in front of the student selected as a replacement. The seated person mirrors the skipper’s shape before taking over the skipping role. Students should try to make a balanced shape.

# 9. Connecting Shapes

Dance elements used: body awareness and space

***How to Play***

1. Students work in pairs, and student A makes a frozen shape while student B dances around student A.
2. Students B ends up in front of A, and they connect with each other physically and freeze.
3. Student A carefully extracts himself or herself from the shape without disturbing student B.
4. Repeat with the roles swapped.

***Variation***

Encourage students to try out more challenging shapes, levels, and connections when they freeze.

# Chance Dance

Chance dance was used by Merce Cunningham as a form of improvisation to provide an element of surprise in his performances. In order to develop chance, Cunningham used techniques such as rolling a die or referring to an instruction manual in order to determine which moves to make and in what order; for example how to change action, direction, and dynamic. Chance dance also develops numeracy and literacy through the learning of key words and the use of directions, dynamics, weight, and a playfulness approach to probability.

Create a table like the following one and give it to a group of four students.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Action word | Direction (space) | Dynamic (energy) |
| 1 | Skip | Backward | Sudden |
| 2 | Jump | Forward | Smooth |
| 3 | Twist | Diagonally | Light |
| 4 | Balance | Upward | Heavy |
| 5 | Gallop | Sideways | Fast |
| 6 | Twirl | Upside down | Slow |

1. To use the table, the group rolls a die. If they get, say, a two on the first roll, they write *jump* (the second word in column 1) on a piece of paper. Then they roll again. If they get, say, a four, they write *upward* (the fourth word in the second column). They use the same procedure to get a word from column 3.
2. For example, if the group rolls a one, then a three, and then a five, it comes up with the following action: skip diagonally fast. Thus the group has the opening move for an improvised dance!

***Task***

In groups of four, students use the chance dance approach to create an improvised dance with six moves! You provide the music.

1. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

4. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

5. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

6. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

# Dance Introduction: What’s in a Name?

***Purpose***

Allow students to explore the possibilities for a simple movement or action to grow into a dance piece presented with other students. Because there is *no* right or wrong way to do this activity, it helps students feel empowered and build self-esteem.

***Ages***

This activity is suitable for every age, including adults (for primary grades, you will need to simplify the modifications made in the progression and group requirements).

***Time***

30 to 40 minutes (or extended up to three or four periods)

***Activity Steps***

1. Students create a circle in which everyone can be seen and has room to move.
2. Students each create a simple action or movement and say their name aloud as they show it to the rest of the group. Explain that there is *no* right or wrong way to do it and encourage students to be creative and unique. You may need to demonstrate a few examples (e.g., hopping on one foot, spinning in a circle, shaking your shoulders, kicking with one leg).
3. For each movement demonstrated, the class repeats it and says its name in return (i.e., in a call-and-response pattern).
4. Next, divide the class into groups of four to six students each and instruct the groups to do the following:

* Be sure that group members know each other’s movement.
* As a group, put the movements into a sequence that creates flow.
* Decide how many repetitions to do for each movement (e.g., 2, 4, 8).
* Create a clear beginning and ending pose.
* The sequence should include a moment when all group members are connected.
* The sequence should involve two of the following qualities: floating, melting, and vibrating.
* The group should practice the sequence without music.

1. Add music in the background so that the groups can begin practicing their sequence with the music. You can also lead a group practice where all the groups will do this together at the same time.
2. Each group presents its movement sequence to the class!

***Extensions and Differentiated Learning***

* You can either assign students to groups or have them form their own groups.
* Two groups can join together and combine their sequences.
* If your students are familiar with the elements of dance, they can explore different levels, directions, tempos, traveling patterns, shapes, and ways of achieving interconnectedness.
* With a group of 12 to 15 students, you can have them try to remember everyone’s name as they share their moves and repeat them in sequence around the circle

***Resources and Equipment***

* Music with a steady beat (Instrumental music is great since it is consistent and doesn’t change with lyrics or verse/chorus.
* Song suggestions: “Tribal Funk” by Benjamin Bidlack, “A Black Man in Space” by Son of Raw, “Mofolo Hall” by Ndumiso, “Tonco Tone” by Chocolate Puma