

Instructions

Use these terms to compare and contrast different forms of dance, so that we have a common "language" to talk about dance.

Dance Elements

Dance Elements of Space

The following elements can be used to describe or analyze dance by looking at how the dancers utilize space.

SPACE ELEMENT	QUALITIES
Size / range of movement	
Level of movement	low, medium, high, aerial
Dimension of movement	depth, width, height
Body design	curved, angular, symmetrical, asymmetrical
Pathway	
Direction	
Facing	
Proximity	
Focus	
Location in the space / on the stage	

Dance Elements of Time

The following elements can be used to describe or analyze dance by looking at how the dancers utilize time.

TIME ELEMENT	QUALITIES
Speed (tempo)	quick, moderate, slow, stillness
Meter and subdivisions	metered, pulse, rhythm phrasing, non-metered, personal time, breath phrasing
Acceleration	accelerating, decelerating
Effort	

Dance Elements of Energy

The following elements can be used to describe or analyze dance by looking at how the dancers utilize energy.

ENERGY ELEMENT	QUALITIES
Energy	sudden, sustained, delicate, strong, free flow, bounded flow, contrast, swinging, vibrating, suspending

Dance Vocabulary

DANCE TERM	MEANING / USAGE
Abstract	To remove movement from a particular or representative context and, by manipulating it with elements of space, time and force, create a new sequence or dance that retains the essence of the original
Axial movement	Around the body's center (in contrast to locomotor movement)
Ballet	The premiere form of dance art; features a series of technical, controlled bodily positions requiring precision in dance
Breath Pause	A fleeting interruption of the flow of movement; comparable to a singer taking a breath during an aria
Call and Response	A structure that is most often associated with African music and dance forms, although it is also used elsewhere; one soloist/group performs with the soloist/group entering "in response" to the first

DANCE TERM	MEANING / USAGE
Canon	Choreographic form that reflects the musical form of the same name, in which individuals and groups perform the same movement / phrase beginning at different times
Chance	A choreographic process in which elements are specifically chosen and defined but randomly structured to create a dance or movement phrase
Choreography	The designing of a dance composition; it may also refer to the design itself, which is sometimes expressed by means of dance notation; a “choreographer” is one who designs dance compositions; aspects of dance choreography include the compositional use of organic unity, rhythmic or non-rhythmic articulation, theme and variation, and repetition
Dynamics	The expressive content of human movement, sometimes called qualities or efforts; movements can be sharp vs. Smooth, fast vs. Slow, heavy vs. Light, abstract vs. pedestrian
En pointe	ballet term for standing on one’s toes
Elevation	The body’s propulsion into the air away from the floor, such as in a leap, hop, or jump
Extension	Includes the action of stretching away from the body, also refers to an unfolding of the body parts
Jeté	Ballet term for “leap”
Gesture	A non-weight bearing movement; gestures are usually of the limbs but may also be of the head, torso, and its parts

DANCE TERM	MEANING / USAGE
Improvisation	Movement that is created spontaneously, ranging from free-form to highly structured environments, but always with an element of chance; provides the dancer with the opportunity to bring together elements quickly, and requires focus and concentration; improvisation is instant and simultaneous choreography and performance
Initiation	Point at which a movement is said to originate; this particularly refers to specific body parts and is generally said to be either distal (from the limbs or head) or central (from the torso)
Levels	The height of the dancer in relation to the floor
Locomotors Movement	Movement that travels from place to place, usually identified by weight transference on the feet; basic locomotors steps are the walk, run, leap, hop, and jump and the irregular rhythmic combinations of the skip (walk and hop), slide (walk and leap) and gallop (walk and leap)
Modern Dance	Style of dance started in the 20th century that departs from classical tradition and style
Movement Quality	Typical terms denoting qualities include sustained swinging, percussive, collapse and Vibratory; and effort combinations such as float, dab, punch and glide
Musicality	The attention and sensitivity to the musical elements of dance while creating or performing
Narrative	Choreographic structure that follows a specific story line and intends to convey specific information through that story
Pas de deux	French phrase meaning “step of two”, a usually slow dance duet set to melodious accompaniment

DANCE TERM	MEANING / USAGE
Percussive	A movement quality using sharp, quick and staccato movements
Phrase	A brief sequence of related movements that has a sense of rhythmic completion
Pirouette	Spinning movement executed by the dancer balancing on one foot
Plié	French ballet term for a basic position in which the dancer squats down, keeping the feet extended horizontally with heels touching
Projection	A confident presentation of one's body and energy to vividly communicate movement and meaning to an audience; performance quality
Stillness	An absence of movement
Sustained	A movement quality characterized by slow extended movements