



Dance Terminology

Elements of Dance

[“Elements of Dance” by KQED Art School \(5min\)](#)

[HHS Elements of Dance \(3:42min\)](#)

Body: The art of dance is created by the human body—its arms, legs, head, and torso. Dancers isolate specific body parts or use the entire body to create lines, shapes, and forms.

Energy: the amount of energy, intensity, or power with which the movement is released. Energy helps us identify intentions and emotions. Movements could be described as sharp, smooth, percussive, sustained, sudden, swinging, suspended, vibratory, and floating. Texture is created by using a variety of energy types.

Space: the body can occupy a lot of space or small space. Dancing can happen on high, medium, and low levels. The body can move through space in various directions (forward, backward, diagonally) using curved, straight or free form lines.

Time: dance is painted on the canvas of time. It has a beginning, middle, and end. Like music, dance can have rhythms, pulse, or tempo.

One Step Further

Contemporary Dance: style of expressive dance that combines elements of several dance genres including modern, jazz, lyrical and classical ballet.

Culture: understandings, patterns of behavior, practices, values, and symbol systems that are acquired, preserved, and transmitted by a group of people and that can be embodied in art works.

Levels: Low-close to the floor with the intention downwards. Medium-the level of everyday walking. High-any movement done with elevation, not necessarily a jump. It implies a lifting of the chest and an upward focus.

Locomotor Movement: travelling by walking, running, jumping, creeping, rolling, and skipping.

Motif: a brief movement or gesture that can be developed in a variety of ways.

Non-Locomotor Movement: movement in which the body remains anchored to one spot. This can include bending, stretching, pushing, pulling, bouncing, swinging, shaking and twisting.

Social dance: Dance that is primarily performed for the enjoyment of participants.

Social context: A dance work that refers to the society or culture in which it is made and that reflects the dynamics within that society or culture.



Dance Terminology

Body	Energy	Space	Time	High Level	Low Level	Medium Level
Motif	Line	Shape	Form	Beginning	Middle	End
Solo	Group	Pulse	Rhythm	Locomotor	Non-Locomotor	

List ways the dancers get from one point to another (locomotor movement):

List ways dancers move their bodies without changing their location (non-locomotor movement):

Describe the manner in which the dancers move—or the energy used to create the movement:

Use basic terminology to describe movement characteristics and patterns you see. Select specific movement cues and explain how they relate to the main idea of the dance.



Dance Terminology

Body	Energy	Space	Time	High Level	Low Level	Medium Level
Motif	Line	Shape	Form	Beginning	Middle	End
Solo	Group	Pulse	Rhythm	Locomotor	Non-Locomotor	

What characteristics make a dance artistic and why? Create a set of criteria and use it to evaluate a dance performance.

Use basic dance terminology to describe patterns of movement that create the style or theme of a dance.

How do the elements of dance, use of body, dance technique, dance structure and context contribute to the artistic expression of one of the dances?



Performance Etiquette

Audience members have an important role at a live performance. The students' attention helps the performers do their best. Laughter and applause in appropriate places helps and encourages the performers. Here are some tips to make the performance enjoyable for everyone:

- Students must show respect for others before, during, and after the performance.
- Sounds and glare from phones and other electronic devices will prevent you and others from fully enjoying the show. Turn them off before the show starts.
- Students should leave backpacks at school.
- Do not bring food, gum, soda, or candy into the theater.
- Cameras, recorders, and laser pointers are not allowed.
- Keep your feet on the floor and avoid bouncing in your seat.
- No children under age 5 are permitted to attend.



Remember that some are really energized by lighting effects, sound volume, and crowds while others are more easily overwhelmed. Be patient and understanding of each other's differences—whatever they may be.

If the lights or noises of the show become overwhelming, ask an usher or the house manager for ear plugs or to watch the show in a slightly more removed setting.

Are the people around me able to enjoy the show?

What behaviors may prevent other people from seeing the show?

What behaviors may prevent others from hearing the performers?

What behaviors may distract others or make the experience less enjoyable?

Are there moments when some of those behaviors may be perfectly acceptable?

What are some ways I can enjoy the show without preventing others from enjoying it?



Dance Performance Worksheet

Kindergarten & 1st Grade

(K.D.CO.1 & 1.D.CO.1)

Write down the feelings you experienced during the dance performance:

Did it remind you of any experiences in your life?

Show and Tell after the Performance

(K.D.R.2 & 1.D.R.2)

Identify a movement from the dance that you liked. Demonstrate it to your classmates and explain why it was fun to watch or to do or what makes the movements so interesting.



Dance Performance Worksheet

2nd Grade

(2.D.R.1 & CO.2 & R.2)

Body	Energy	Space	Time	High Level	Low Level	Medium Level
Motif	Line	Shape	Form	Beginning	Middle	End
Solo	Group	Pulse	Rhythm	Locomotor	Non-Locomotor	

List ways the dancers get from one point to another (locomotor movement):

List ways dancers move their bodies without changing their location (non-locomotor movement):

Describe the manner in which the dancers move—or the energy used to create the movement:

Use basic dance terminology to describe how those movements suggest an idea.

How did the dances in the performance relate to the people or environment in which the dances were created and performed?

Describe the characteristics of dances from a genre or culture that make the movements interesting, giving reasons for the choices of movements.



Dance Performance Worksheet

3rd Grade

(3.D.P.9, CO2&3, R1&2)

Use performance etiquette during the performance.

What experiences in your life came to mind as you watched the dance performance?

Use basic terminology to describe movement characteristics and patterns, select specific movement cues, and explain how they relate to the main idea of the dance.

Find a relationship between movement in a dance and the culture where it originated; explain what the movements communicate about key aspects of the culture.

Select dance movements from specific genres, styles or cultures, and identify and describe the movement characteristics that make dance artistic. Discuss why the movements were chosen.



Dance Performance Worksheet

4th Grade

(4.D.P.9, CO1&4, R.1&2)

Use performance etiquette during the performance.

Explain how the main idea of a dance is similar to or different from one's own experiences, relationships, ideas, or perspectives.

Select and describe movements in a specific genre or style, and explain how the movements relate to the culture, society, historical period, or community from which the dance originated.

Use basic dance terminology to describe patterns of movement that create a style or theme.

What characteristics make a dance artistic?



Dance Performance Worksheet

5th Grade

(5.D.P.9, CO1&3, R.1&2)

Use performance etiquette during the performance.

Compare and contrast two dances with different themes, discuss feelings and ideas evoked by each, and relate to personal experience.

Describe how the movement characteristics and qualities of a dance in a specific genre or style communicate the ideas and perspectives of the culture, historical period, or community from which the genre or style originated.

Use basic dance terminology to describe patterns of movement that create a style or theme.

Discuss the characteristics that make a dance artistic and meaningful; talk about why these characteristics were chosen, and apply those criteria to dances observed in a specific genre, style, or cultural movement practice.



Dance Performance Worksheet

6th Grade

(6.D.CO1&3, R.1&2)

How does the experience of creating and sharing a dance reinforce personal views or offer new knowledge and perspective?

How does the dance communicate perspectives of its culture, historical period, or community purpose or meaning?

How do the elements of dance, use of body, dance technique, dance structure and context contribute to the artistic expression of one of the dances?

Interpret artistic intent. Create a set of criteria and use it to evaluate a dance performance.