



Teach Primary Dance with Confidence

A teacher's guide to delivering fun, engaging dance lessons in your primary school.



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How to deliver dance with confidence in your primary school.

As a team, we are extremely proud to have collectively worked within the education sector for over 20 years, and to have worked alongside 100's of schools supporting amazing and inspirational teachers just like you.

And in all those years of experience, we know the daily struggles and challenges that our teachers face.

We know that when it comes to teaching dance in primary schools, lack of confidence is a big issue amongst many teachers who often tell us:

"I have two left feet and CAN'T teach dance"

"I'm afraid of looking silly and losing control of my class"

"I'm worried I'll teach my children badly and let them down"

It's not surprising that teachers feel this way, especially when you consider the lack of initial teacher training in subjects like physical education and dance.

That's why we've created this dedicated guide just for you.

It's a step by step guide to build your confidence so you can ENJOY teaching awesome dance lessons to your class.

We've broken it down into 3 bite size chunks, and included some simple tools for you to use in your next dance lesson:

- **Chapter 1 – Understanding Music Structures**
- **Chapter 2 – The 6 Principles of Dance**
- **Chapter 3 – Teaching Methods**

This handy guide can be accessed anytime, anywhere, by you and your colleagues. It's just a little something to help you feel super confident when teaching dance, so you and your class can have loads of fun with this inspiring and creative subject.

Imogen Buxton-Pickles | Founder and Director of imoves



You'll find a series of webinars and CPD support on the imoves platform.

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Chapter 1 - Understanding Music Structures

When teaching dance, always start with the music - it's the foundation that EVERY dance is built upon.

Children move more effectively to music when they understand the structure of it.

It tells them the speed of the moves, the type of character they will be and the story they want to tell. It can help to create the mood of the performance, and builds excitement around a gesture, story or a character.



Top tip – when choosing your music, ensure it's age appropriate and inspires your children (and you!). Try something funky that is attention grabbing, modern and keeps your children's interest.

You'll find tonnes of fun and modern music tracks on the imoves platform.

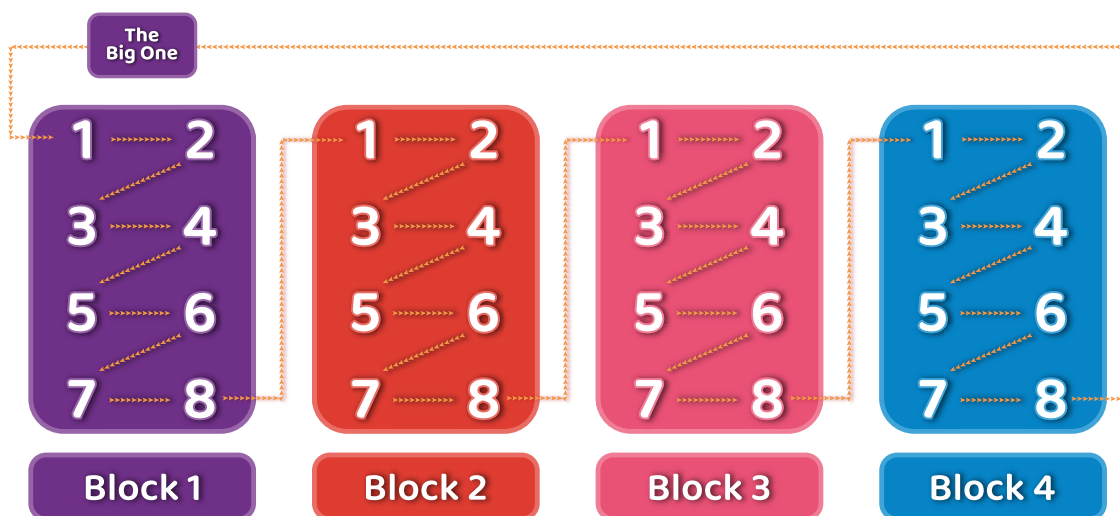
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The 32-count music structure

Children need to learn to move in time to the music – therefore it's important for them to understand the structure behind it. This will help them to move more fluently, with good timing and confidence.

We are going to explore the 32-count music structure - it's made up of 4 blocks, and each block has 8 counts (or beats). This is what makes a 32-count phrase.

Below is a great visual to help children understand the structure of your music:



The first beat (in block 1) will be exaggerated to indicate the start of the new block of 32 counts - it usually sounds bigger, louder and a little different.

This is called **THE BIG ONE** - it's important because it's easier to remember "BLOCKS" of choreography in order.

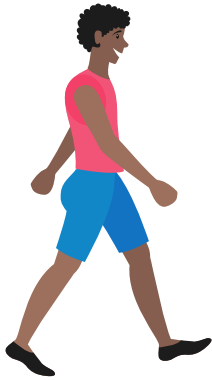
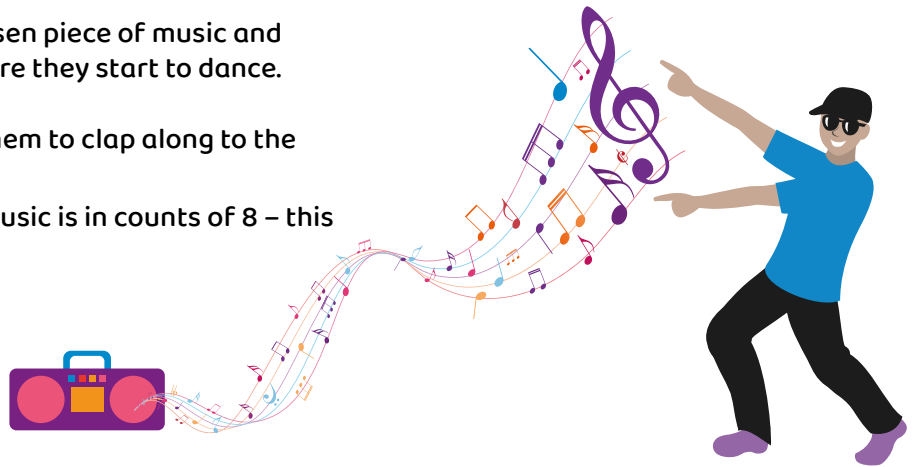
Let's Practice!

To help children understand the structure of the music, we have broken it down into 3 easy steps!

Step 1 – Listen to your music

Familiarise your class with your chosen piece of music and allow them to listen to the beat before they start to dance.

- Sit your children down and get them to clap along to the beat
- They will start to hear that the music is in counts of 8 – this is called a block
- Count out the blocks of 8 beats

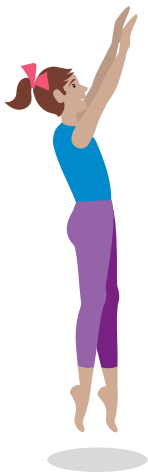


Step 2 – Let's get moving

Allow your children to walk around the room and get them moving in time to the music.

Count out the beats as they go – this will help them to recognise each block of eight counts.

Change direction on the 1st beat of every eight – so you shout "ONE" and your children then change direction.



Step 3 - Finding the BIG ONE

Now get your children to listen out for the four blocks of 8 counts – remember, this is your 32-count music phrase.

When your children hear "THE BIG ONE", they should jump in the air and shout "ONE" loudly.

Understanding the BIG ONE is important because it will help children to structure and remember blocks of choreography when they are creating their performance.

Top tip – always start moving on THE BIG ONE (the 1st beat of the first block of eight counts). Then everyone will start at the same time and keep in time to the music!

This is a great approach to use with children and it really does work – it helps to get every child super confident with music before asking them to do any dance moves.

Progress this activity with older children by trying to find different beats in the music.

Once your children have grasped the structure of the music, you can challenge them to start finding the different beats in the music:

Regular Beat

Eight beats per 8-count block

Example – clap in a regular beat of 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8

Slow Beat

Four beats per 8-count block

Example – only clap on the 1, 3, 5, 7

The slow beat allows more dynamic movement as children have more time to perform the move. This progression in knowledge will also help them to create more interesting choreography and improve their timing skills.

Quick Beat

16 beats per 8-count block

Example - clap on the half beat between each regular beat – like this &1&2&3&4&5&6&7&8&

The quick beat is quick; therefore, children will soon realise that small, isolated movements should be used when moving to the quick beat.

Chapter 2 - The 6 Principles of Dance

There are 6 building blocks that make up a dance performance – these are:

- ✓ **Travel** (moving from one place to another)
- ✓ **Turn** (changing direction)
- ✓ **Jump** (leaving the ground)
- ✓ **Stillness** (still like a photograph)
- ✓ **Levels** (high, mid-level or low)
- ✓ **Gesture** (telling a story)

By using these 6 principles of dance, children can develop choreography that is exciting to watch and interesting to perform.

It helps give structure and variety to the movements so the dance doesn't become too repetitive.

Telling a Story

Every dance should tell a story and lead the audience on a journey. Your music lays the groundwork for this, and the movements and choreography provide the details.

Your music will help to create the gesture, story or characters that your children will use.

Here's how it works:

- ✓ Decide on your gesture, story or character
- ✓ Ask children to think about how that character will travel or turn, jump or be still
- ✓ Now introduce different levels to those moves - high, mid-level, low and on the ground

And don't forget to use regular, slow, and quick moves to make the performance even more dynamic!

Children can work individually, in pairs or small groups to create their performance.

When children are working as a team, they can make their performance even more effective and interesting by using different formations and patterns.

This adds an extra layer of complexity for the children – ensuring they are in the right place at the right time and doing the correct movements in time to the music.

Top Tip
Print off the next page and stick it up on your wall - children can then use these as a reference throughout the lesson!



The 6 Principles of Dance



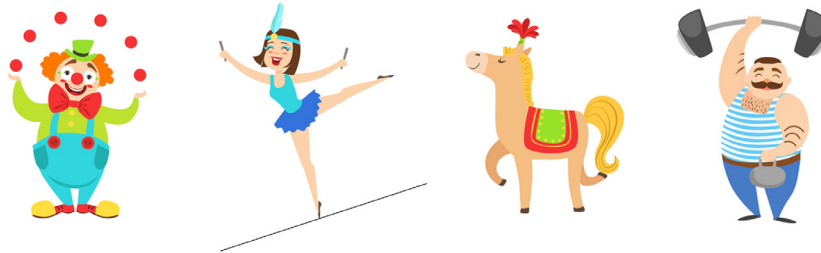
Let's Practice!

Circus Themed Performance

Choose a simple piece of music and ask your children to create a performance using the 6 principles of dance – children can work in pairs or small groups.

Let's take the circus as our theme and create some characters for our story:

- ④ **Clown:** use levels and turning
- ④ **Tightrope walker:** use balance and travel
- ④ **Show horse:** use travel and jumping
- ④ **Strongman:** use balance and levels



Working together, children can create moves for each character using the 6 principles of dance and put these together to create an exciting and interesting performance.

Here are some questions you might want to discuss with your class:

- ✔ Think about how your story will progress and the emotion within it - is there happiness, sadness, anger or any other emotion?
- ✔ How do you want the audience to feel when they are watching your performance?
- ✔ Is your dance telling a true story? Try to be authentic and show the facts of the story in a creative and interesting way.

Other topic ideas

Choosing topics that are engaging and interesting for your children is key – maybe ask them what topic they would like to study!

Here are a couple of interesting themes:

- ④ Under the Sea
- ④ Animals and Minibeasts
- ④ Weather
- ④ World war 1 and 2
- ④ Space
- ④ Romans or Greeks



Hundreds of dance styles and topics are available on the imoves platform.

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Chapter 3 - Teaching Methods

One question we hear a lot from teachers is “How can I teach dance without any experience?”

The truth is you don't have to be a dance specialist to facilitate a primary school dance lesson.

You can use different sources of inspiration to enable your children to create some great choreography of their own, with very little input coming from you as their teacher!

This means you don't have to perform any moves that you are not comfortable with, which is great if you don't feel confident enough to demonstrate dance moves yet.

Here are 4 lovely teaching methods for you to use with your class:

1. Add on teaching method

This is a great one for younger children, but it also works well with older children who are learning a set piece of choreography.

Here's how it works:




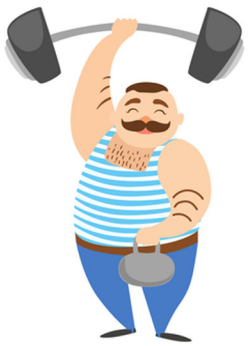
- Teach move 1 and practice the move
- Teach move 2 – now practice move 1 and 2 in order
- Teach move 3 – now practice move 1, 2 and 3 in order
- Teach move 4 – now practice move 1, 2, 3 and 4 in order

“Add on” is great when practicing an end of term performance or Christmas Play!



The illustration below shows our “Circus” theme where we have a clown, a tightrope walker, a show horse and a strongman.

Each character performs a different move – children should practice each move to the beat of the music, before moving onto the next move.

			
> Teach move 1	> Teach move 2	> Teach move 3	> Teach move 4
+ Practice the move	+ Practice moves 1 and 2 in order	+ Practice moves 1, 2 & 3 in order	+ Practice moves 1, 2, 3 & 4 in order

2. Creative Freestyle

This teaching method allows children to create all the movements themselves – you simply provide a brief outlining the main characters and the story. Children then use their creativity to build their own movements into a routine.

Here's how it works:

- **As a class, discuss the first character...**
Let's take the circus as our theme again - how would a clown move? Would they fall over? Would they juggle? Would they move high or move low?
- **Then separate into small groups of 3 or 4**
Children can have lots of fun coming up with ideas and movements based on the first character and thinking about the discussions you've already had.
- **Bring everyone back together**
How did everyone get on with their first character? Share and show good ideas to help inspire other children. Ask children to do some modelling of their favourite moves.



Follow the same process for the next character until each group has a toolkit of different moves for each character. They can then put all the movements together into any order to create their routine.

This gives children creative ownership of their own routine and makes them feel super proud of the dance they have created.

3. Structured moves followed by a creative task

Use this teaching method when you are learning styles of dance with specific techniques.



Here's how it works:

- Learn 3 or 4 structured moves that form part of a dance style. For example: Bollywood, Jive or Disco
- In small groups, children put these moves into their own choreography – they can put them in any order, for as long as they like and even start to create a formation.

We've created tonnes of demonstration videos that will teach your children specific dance moves... so you don't have to!

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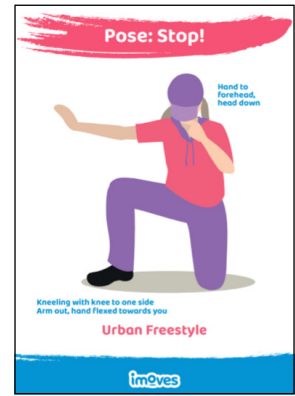
4. Pose and Transition

This teaching method allows children to build up their performance by creating transitions which are underpinned with still poses.

Try using photos or flashcards and get your children using the 6 Principles of Dance to create movements and actions for the characters on the photos.

Make sure the photos are age appropriate and relate to the music you have chosen - popular chart songs always work well!

The photos can be of more than one person, so they show a formation as well as position.



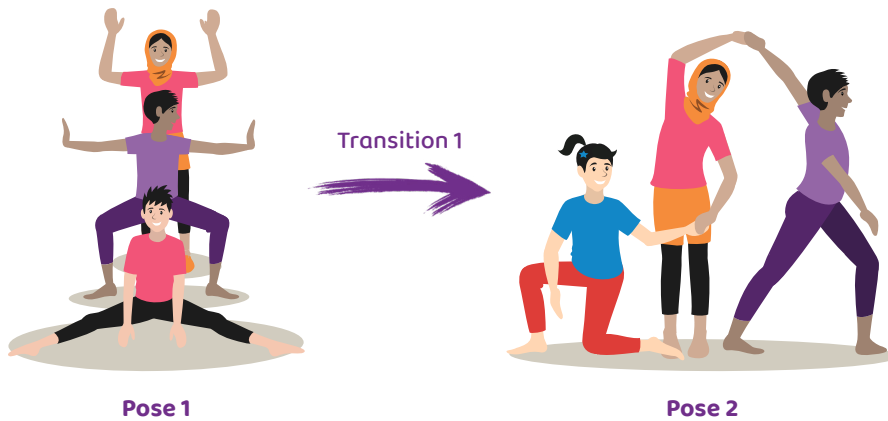
Here's how it works:

Start with **Pose 1** - children start on "The BIG ONE" and hold for 8 beats

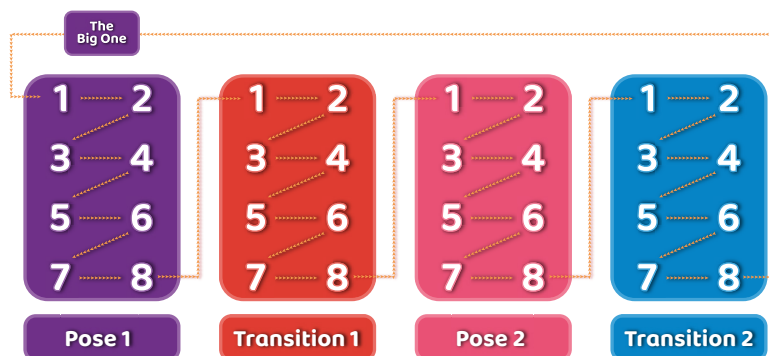
Now create a transition move (**Transition 1**) that will last for 8 beats - let's say a 'travel' move.

Then into **Pose 2** which the children hold for 8 beats.

Create a different transition move (**Transition 2**) that will last for 8 beats back into the first pose again. Let's say a 'jump with a turn'.



So, the four blocks of eight counts look like this:



You can then add in more pose transition sections to lengthen the piece.

Groups of children with little dance experience really excel doing this type of choreography because of its simple structure. Building their own choreography super charges their confidence too!

A final thought from Imogen...

I hope you are now thinking "I can do this!"

You may feel less worried about delivering dance to children and feel more confident that you can engage your class in an awesome dance lesson that you actually ENJOY teaching!

There's lots of high-quality support out there including the resources from imoves which include demonstration videos, music, lesson plans and flashcards plus tonnes of CPD support too.

Please let me know if this report was useful, or if there are any other activities of your own that you would like me to share with my network of like-minded teachers – it's always great to inspire each other!

Enjoy using the 2 fantastic free dance lessons available to you for life in your free for life account with imoves. These lessons bring everything in this guide together for you, giving you the best starting point possible.

You can find me at imogen@imoves.com

Best wishes,

Imogen

PS. You'll find loads more CPD support and teaching guides on the imoves platform. Log in or create your free account at imoves.com

