

## Glossary for Dance

The glossary for Dance includes terms commonly found in dance education and for performance techniques. The intent of the glossary is to promote consistent terminology when creating curriculum and assessment documents as well as communicating with stakeholders.

**AB:** This two-part compositional form has two themes, an “A” theme and a “B” theme. This binary form consists of two distinct, self-contained sections that share either a character or quality, such as tempo, movement quality, or style.

**ABA:** This ternary or three-part compositional form has a main theme “A”, then a contrasting second section “B,” and finally a third section that is a recapitulation of the first theme “A” in a condensed, abbreviated, or extended form.

**abstract:** This refers to choreography without a narrative. An *abstract* dance does not tell a story or express any kind of feelings or ideas other than movement itself.

**aesthetic:** The essential components or characteristics of a dance that can be used as a frame of reference when making judgments about the merit of a dance work or dancer.

**alignment:** In dance training, it is the process of adjusting the skeletal and muscular system to gravity to support effective functionality (also see: *functional alignment*).

**alternative performance venue:** A performance site other than a standard Western-style theater (for example, classroom, site-specific venue, or natural environment).

**anatomical principle:** The way the human body’s skeletal, muscular, and vascular systems work separately and in coordination.

**artistic criteria:** Aspects of craft and skill used to fulfill artistic intent.

**artistic expression:** The manifestations of artistic intent through dance, drama music, poetry, fiction, painting, sculpture, or other artistic media. In dance, this involves the choreography and the dancers within a context.

**artistic intent:** The choreographer’s purpose or intention for creating a dance work.

**artistic statement:** An artist’s verbal or written introduction of their work from their own perspective to convey the deeper meaning or purpose.

**body patterning:** Neuromuscular patterns (for example, core-distal, head-tail, homologous [upper-lower], homo-lateral [same-side], cross-lateral [crossing the body midline]).

**body-mind principle:** Concepts explored or employed to support body-mind connections (for example, breath, awareness of the environment, grounding, movement initiation, use of imagery, intention, inner-outer, stability-mobility).

**bound movement:** An “effort element” in which energy flow is constricted.

**canon:** A 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.

**capstone project:** A culminating performance-based assessment that determines what 12th - graders should know and be able to do in various educational disciplines; usually based on research and the development of a major product or project that is an extension of the research.

**choreography:** The process of creating movement sequences for dancers; it can also describe specific dance work.

**choreographic devices:** Manipulation of dance movement, sequences, or phrases using tools like repetition, inversion, canon, retrograde, call and response, or chance.

**codified movement:** Common movements set in a particular style that often have specific names and expectations associated with it.

**context cues:** Information obtained from the observation of a dance that helps one understand or comprehend meaning from a movement, group of movements, or a dance as a whole.

**contrapuntal:** An adjective that describes the noun, counterpoint. In dance, it describes at least two movement patterns, sequences or phrases danced simultaneously using different body parts or performed by different dancers.

**cultural movement practice:** Physical movements of a dance that are associated with a particular country, community, or people.

**dance literacy:** The total experience of dance learning that includes the doing and knowing about dance: dance skills and techniques, dance making, knowledge and understanding of dance vocabulary, dance history, dance from different cultures, dance genres, repertory, performers and choreographers, dance companies, and dance notation and preservation.

**dance movement principles:** Fundamentals related to the craft and skill of dancing (for example, the use of dynamic alignment, breath support, core support, rotation, initiation and sequencing, and weight shift).

**dance phrase:** A brief sequence of related movements that have a sense of continuity and artistic or rhythmic completion.

**dance structures:** The organization of choreography and movement to fulfill the artistic intent of a dance or dance study (for example, AB, ABA or theme and variation); often referred to as choreographic form.

**dance study:** A short dance composed of several dance phrases based on an artistic idea.

**dance technique:** The tools and skills needed to produce a particular style of movement.

**dance terminology:** Vocabulary used to describe dance and dance experiences

*Simple dance terminology* (K–2): Basic pedestrian language (for example, locomotor words: walk, run, tiptoe, slither, roll, crawl, jump, march, and gallop; and nonlocomotor words: bend, twist, turn, open and close).

*Basic dance terminology* (grades 3–5): Vocabulary used to describe dance movement techniques, structures, works, and experiences that are widely shared in the field of dance (for example, stage terminology, compositional vocabulary, language defining dance structures and devices, anatomical references, dance techniques such as alignment or “line”).

*Genre-specific dance terminology* (grades 6 up): Words used to describe movement within specific dance forms like ballet, contemporary, culturally specific dance, funk, hip-hop, jazz, modern, tap, and others (for example, in Polynesian dance [Hula]: auwana, kahiko, halau, kaholo; in ballet: glissade, pas de bourree, pas de chat, arabesque; in jazz: kick ball change, pencil turn, jazz walk, jazz run; in modern: contraction, triplets, spiral, pivot turn; and in tap: shuffle-step, riff, wing, time step).

**dance work:** A complete dance that has a beginning, middle (development), and end.

**dynamics:** The qualities or characteristics of movement, which give a dance expression or style; also called “effort” or “energy” (for example, lyrical, sustained, quick, light, or strong).

**elements of dance:** The key components of movement; movements of the body using space, time, and energy; often referred to as the elements of movement.

**embody:** To physicalize a movement, concept, or idea throughout the body.

**energy:** The dynamic quality, force, attack, weight, and flow of movement.

**evaluative criteria:** The definition of values and characteristics with which dance can be assessed; factors to be considered to attain an aesthetically satisfying dance composition or performance.

**explore:** Investigate multiple movement possibilities to learn more about an idea.

**folk dance:** Dances that were created and performed by a specific group within a culture.

**free-flowing:** An “effort element” that is described as energy that is continuous.

**functional alignment:** The organization of the skeleton and musculature in a relationship to gravity that supports safe and efficient movement while dancing.

**general space:** Spatial orientation that is not focused toward one area of a studio or stage.

**genre:** A category of dance characterized by similarities in form, style, purpose, or subject matter (for example, ballet, hip hop, modern, ballroom, cultural practices).

**kinesthetic awareness:** Pertaining to sensations and understanding of bodily movement.

**Laban Movement Analysis:** A comprehensive movement vocabulary and analytic study of human movement developed by theorist and choreographer, Rudolf Laban (1879–1958).

Movement is studied using four basic components: body, effort, shape, and space.

- Body – physical characteristics of the body in motion (examples: movement sequences, body organization, body patterning).
- Effort – (dynamics) the qualities, characteristics, and intention of movement (examples: direct or indirect, strong or light, sudden or sustained, bound or free flowing).
- Shape – form of the body in motion or stillness (examples: static shapes – like a ball, active shapes – rising, sinking).
- Space – the body in relation to the environment (examples: spatial patterns, pathways).

**Labanotation (Kinetography Laban):** A notation system for recording, describing and interpreting human movement, which was first developed by Rudolf Laban and further codified by Ann Hutchinson Guest and others. Symbols are placed along a vertical staff to indicate numerous movement factors. The Dance Notation Bureau maintains notation scores of prominent choreographers, offers notation services, and educates Labanotation techniques.

**levels:** The height of a dancer in relationship to the floor (for example, low: kneeling, mid-level: standing, high: jumping).

**locomotor:** Movement that travels from one location to another in a pathway through space (for example, walk, run, tiptoe, roll, crawl, jump, march, gallop, prance, hop, skip, slide, leap).

**movement characteristics:** The qualities, elements, or dynamics that describe or define a movement.

**movement phrase:** A brief sequence of related movements that have a sense of continuity and artistic or rhythmic completion.

**movement problem:** A specific focus that requires one to find a solution to complete a task; this requires self-reflection and feedback.

**movement vocabulary:** Codified or personal movement characteristics that define a movement style.

**narrative:** Choreographic structure that follows a specific story line or intends to convey a specific feeling.

**negative space:** The area (space) around and between the dancer(s) or dance images(s).

**nonlocomotor:** Movement that remains in place; movement that does not travel from one location to another or in a pathway through space (for example, bend, twist, turn, open, close, swing, sway, spin, reach, pull).

**performance etiquette:** Performance values and expected behaviors when rehearsing or performing (for instance, no talking while the dance is in progress, no chewing gum, neat and appropriate appearance).

**personal space:** The area of space directly surrounding one's body extending as far as a person can reach; also called the kinesphere.

**phrase:** A brief sequence of related movements that create one choreographic statement.

**polyrhythmic:** In music, several rhythms layered on top of one another and played simultaneously; in dance, embodying several rhythms simultaneously with different body parts.

**production elements:** Aspects of performance that produce theatrical effects (for example, costumes, make up, sound, lighting, props).

**production terminology:** The words commonly used to refer to the stage, performance setting, or theatrical aspects of dance presentation.

**rhythm:** The patterning or structuring of time through movement or sound.

**see, think, wonder:** An inquiry-based learning method developed by Harvard University's Project Zero called Visual Thinking Strategy (VTS). It is used to develop critical analysis, in which children respond to simple questions: What do you see? What do you think? What do you wonder? This helps children begin to form meaning from an observed (dance) or work of art.

**sound environment:** Sound accompaniment for dancing other than music (for example, street noise, ocean surf, birdcalls, spoken word).

**space:** Components of dance involving direction, pathways, facings, levels, shapes, and design; the location where a dance takes place; the element of dance referring to the cubic area of a room, on a stage, or in other environments.

**spatial design:** Pre-determined use of directions, levels, pathways, formations, and body shapes.

**stimuli:** A thing or event that inspires action, feeling, or thought.

**style:** A dance that has specific movement characteristics, qualities, or principles that give it a distinctive identity (for example, Graham technique is a style of Modern Dance; Macedonian folk dance is a style of International Folk dance; Congolese dance is a style of African Dance).

**technical dance skills (or technique):** Is the degree of physical proficiency a dancer achieves within a dance style (for example, quality, form, strength, speed, and range).

**tempi:** Different paces or speeds of music, or underlying beats or pulses, used in a dance work or composition (singular: tempo).

**tempo:** The pace or speed or pulse of music or movement, or the underlying beat (plural: tempi or tempos).

**theme:** A dance idea that is stated choreographically.