

CLASSWORK &
TEACHING HELPS
FOR THE BALLET
TEACHER OF
CHILDREN
AGES 3 & 4

FOR YOUNG
LEVEL

Ballet Arts

ONE
CHILDREN

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I. Preparing To Teach

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Six Tools for Teaching Ballet

1. A COURSE OF STUDY THAT HAS A PROVEN RECORD OF SUCCESS

DESIGNED FOR GRADUAL, CONTINUAL PROGRESS, & CORRECT FOR THE STUDENTS' AGES

The first tool a teacher of ballet needs is a dependable source of appropriate material to teach, arranged in levels of progress that make sense, and work. This is called a syllabus. If the material is also designed for the potential enjoyment of the students, so much the better. With a good syllabus to base the lessons on, teachers can draw on their own creativity to make the learning fun.

2. A BACKGROUND OF KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERIENCE IN BALLET

(INCLUDING THE HIGHEST LEVEL YOU PLAN TO TEACH)

It is preferable for the teacher to be well trained in ballet. Experience as a professional performer is not necessary, but a teacher does need to have learned ballet correctly through the “basic professional” level in order to prepare students for possible professional study. If your background is not this thorough, there are ways to make up the difference, even as you teach. Meanwhile, it makes sense to not try to teach above the level that you yourself have been correctly taught.

3. AN UNDERSTANDING OF THE MATERIAL TO BE TAUGHT

Ballet teachers need an understanding of the how's, why's, what's, and when's of ballet technique and artistry. Knowing which muscles are used in a demi plié is good. Knowing why is better. Knowing at what age the child is able to begin to feel and use these muscles correctly is better still. You need to know how to recognize incorrect muscle use, and how to pull the correct use out of the students.

When teaching young children, it helps to know why a movement is done, what details of execution are important, where it fits in the development of coordination and skill, and where it fits into ballet later on.

4. AN UNDERSTANDING OF THE STUDENTS TO BE TAUGHT

THEIR ABILITIES, CHARACTERISTICS, PERSONALITIES AND NEEDS

Lessons that fit are like clothes that fit: comfortable, and attractive. With a good understanding of the general characteristics of the students, teachers are able to obtain correct results without stress or strain on themselves or the students.

5. AN UNDERSTANDING OF TEACHING SKILLS & LEARNING SKILLS

WHAT CONTRIBUTES TO LEARNING AND WHAT DOES NOT.

Teaching skills and methods of today are far more refined than even a decade ago. Many students today will not put up with poor teaching in dance class when they are used to better during the day. They don't consciously know why they feel uneasy, but they may become inattentive, or quit dancing.

Some parents sense when the teacher is not really "teaching" a dance class, but is just demonstrating steps. Some parents will sit and take notes, and then teach the material to their kid at home!

The skills of effective teaching are just as important in dancing as in any other subject to be learned.

6. A LOVE OF BALLET, A LOVE OF YOUR STUDENTS, & A LOVE OF SEEING THEIR PROGRESS

Teaching ballet will be fun and rewarding for you and your students! The philosophy of this book will be that of "child benefit": that a teacher of children feels a responsibility to teach what is beneficial for the students in ordinary life as well as in dance.

Threes are Easy to Teach, Right?

Not necessarily! Threes are easy and fun to teach once you understand where they are coming from, and what their limited abilities really are.

Three and four year olds will have an emotional response to any new situation. Children are not adults. Recognize each as a separate person. Use their name and smile as you greet them.

THEY NEED SECURITY.

1. Some need a touch: light, friendly.
2. Give them a place in class that is theirs: a “spot” to sit and stand on, and to return to between exercises. New? Place them right in front of where mother is sitting.

Use tape, sunshine posters, or other markers for their spots (places) in class. Suggestion: they can take the spot marker home if they dance well in class. Condition them to return to their spots. Use a dance drum to move to, then find places and sit. Do this three or four times to teach them what is expected.

They must not be allowed to sit or stand on another child’s spot. This can cause deep feelings of insecurity. Gently remind them where their spot is. Take the child by the hand and lead him or her to where they should be.

3. The three year old doesn’t interact much

with peers. They relate to the teacher. They are not ready to work with a peer partner. Their dancing friend needs to be a teddy bear or a rag doll.

4. They need to feel safe in class. They need to know that:
 - Other kids won’t harm them;
 - Teacher won’t leave them;
 - Teacher won’t hurt them;
 - Mother or father will come back.

THEY NEED CONSISTENCY.

1. Keep a consistent feeling atmosphere in the dance room. Keep the feelings low-key, happy, calm, not “high.”
2. Have a consistent teaching mood. Be consistently in charge, gently. Never relinquish control to the kids, or to a parent, or to a situation that arises.
3. Build consistent learning skills.
 - Build progress step by step.
 - Recognize progress. Compliment them on strength and skill and on how hard their muscles are working.
 - Repeat main concepts week by week; much practice is still needed on all basic skills! Children love to “know” these things. They can if it is familiar.
4. Be consistent with discipline and rules. Keep order in the classroom.
 - Example: they may get drinks at the

end of class only. Practice it! Leave a few minutes for drinks; then walk them through it.

- It may seem “silly”, but the practice of rules and desired behaviors works. Young children don’t know what to do or not to do just by being “told”. Action helps them to understand and remember. This is one of the reasons they so frequently test rules.

TEACH WITH A POSITIVE ATTITUDE

Use positive reinforcement whenever possible:

1. Praise by name the one that follows instructions immediately. Thank by name those that quickly follow.
2. Ignore wrong behavior unless it is dangerous or disruptive.
3. Thank the class for good behavior. Give attention and praise every so often.
4. Give tangible rewards sparingly. Stickers or pictures to color are good. Try to give them in a way that all of the children get one, such as for attendance, or for passing off a skill you know they can all do.
5. Avoid using “treats” for rewards. The treat will completely override the behavior you want to reward. Regardless of research, those of us who work with children notice that sugar and artificial sweeteners noticeably lower a child’s attention span, ability to think, ability to control feelings, coordination, and strength.

HANDLE BEHAVIOR PROBLEMS WITH COMMON SENSE AND FAIRNESS

1. Teach behavior, don’t punish. Stay calm, this helps you to be in control.
2. You cannot allow hitting or yelling. Remove offender from the activity for the sake of the others and for the lesson to continue; not to “punish” the offender.
3. Mild disruption? Have child sit in a designated place, and watch one exercise, then rejoin class.
4. Don’t threaten. Avoid saying no, can’t, don’t. Avoid using ifs, or asking questions of choice. State the positive “do” whenever possible. When “don’t” is unavoidable, apply it to the classroom situation, such as “Dancers don’t hang on the barre.” Rules must apply to all, not just to the one who is out of line, and they want to know that.
5. Odd or unusual behavior? Mention the incident to the parents.

TEACH WITH WISDOM AND FUN

1. Use big motor muscles. Make no specific demands on small muscles of hands and feet.
2. Ask the possible only: what they can do. They love to please, and feel bad if they can’t do something.

3. They learn through the five senses: seeing, hearing, touching, dancing, feeling, doing.
4. Relate presentations and explanations to their very limited real experiences. Try to see things from their viewpoint.
5. Keep everything simple, short, and concrete (very real).
6. Use concrete examples. Young children can't visualize the unknown or the unfamiliar. They cannot understand abstract ideas.

Examples:

- For and understanding of first position of the arms, hold a real beach ball.
- Smelling a real flower and touching it helps prepare them for picking imaginary ones.
 - Showing a picture and talking about it in simple terms, relating to things they know about, can serve where the real item is impractical.

UNDERSTAND HOW IMMATURE THEY ARE WITH FEELINGS & ATTITUDES

Remember that the emotions of your students are in embryo.

1. Young children do not usually get bored!
 - They may appear “bored” when actually they are frustrated or confused. The words may be beyond their understanding. The movement may look puzzling to them.
 - They may say they are “tired” when they feel frustrated or don't understand something.
2. They must be ready for what is presented:

physically, mentally and emotionally.

3. If they are not able to succeed or understand, confusion and frustration result.
4. If they feel a need for attention, or cannot see your presentation, they may feel rejected or left out.

BEHAVIOR IS LEARNED! FEELINGS ARE LEARNED! ATTITUDES ARE LEARNED!

1. These things can and must be taught. Take advantage of teaching moments. If you do not teach the correct behavior or attitude, the children will randomly learn what they perceive, which is usually incorrect.
2. Children reflect the feelings and attitudes of their parents, and others around them. They really don't have many feelings or attitudes that are uniquely their own. Quite often, they don't really know what they feel, and they really do want to know what they should feel.
3. Children by nature will trust adults to protect them, care for them, and teach them what they need to know. Dance teachers are adults. Take their trust seriously, and respond with your best efforts.

REALIZE YOU WON'T ALWAYS HIT IT PERFECTLY!

1. No one does. Making the effort is important. As you continue to try to empathize with the young ones, and to teach them proper behavior along with dancing skills, you will find it becomes easier. Your responses to them will become more effective.
2. Remember: **They don't know!** Not really. Not deep inside, not forever, not yet. You are there to help. Their being able to tell you a correct answer is not the same as being able to apply it to their behavior! The difference is like the depth of the Grand Canyon.
3. No one can ask more of you than your best, whatever it is at that moment. Your best may change from moment to moment, from day to day.
4. You are there to teach, not to punish. Treat each child with equal respect and consideration.

TYPICAL "ATTENTION GETTERS" TO WATCH OUT FOR:

1. Questions: These can be "bait with a hook inside". They can distract you from what you were about to teach the class.
2. "My other dance teacher did . . ." Another "bait and hook," intended to get you competing with the other teacher.
3. Poking the kid next to them, then looking to see if you noticed.
4. Need to go to the bathroom. Only one child should leave the room at a time. If you have an assistant take them, it avoids problems. If it looks like a habit is forming, mention it to the parent.
5. Messing with visual aids or other equipment.
6. Talking out inappropriately. Enforce your rules firmly, to the whole class. Give everyone attention as you discuss in simple terms that dancers don't do that. This keeps the offender from getting your undivided attention, and is a subtle negative reinforcement of the talking out.



Have fun! Dancers are a real challenge to teach, but you will enjoy the challenge!

Anticipate and Plan For Success!

Anticipating the feelings of your young charges, and the problems they may have, gives you the power to avoid most problems in class. Using these teaching and managing skills is fun because of the joy you feel in seeing it work with children!

Without behavior problems the teaching of the material is fun. It flows much easier and much faster. There is more time for creativity, artistry, and performing.

HAVE YOUR DANCE CLASSROOM READY AHEAD OF TIME.

1. Does it have a clean, neat, appearance? Is it well lit, with attractive furnishings, clean air, and correct temperature? Does it feel like a peaceful and safe environment?
2. Nothing should be out where children can get at it on the sly. Lock cupboards. All supplies and equipment are the “teacher’s property” and off limits to students.
3. Plan where the dancers will sit between exercises: staggered rows, semi-circle, etc., so that each child can see you and your presentations. Use place markers of some kind: colored masking tape, small stickers, or small individual posters. Have name tags on the children until you learn their names.
4. Once class starts, collect any distractions (toys, etc.) the children may have brought with them. (Return these after class.)
5. If they bring a doll or teddy to use in dance class, where do you want these toys resting while not actually being used? Sitting against the wall facing the children is a good place for the toys. The dolls and teddies can be a pretend audience.

GREETING THE STUDENTS

Your greeting of each child can set the mood for class, and create a positive learning atmosphere in the dance room. Sit them in a small circle with you for the first few minutes, so that all can see you, and feel included in your initial attention to the class.

1. Greet each child by name.
2. Smile at them.
3. Make a warm, friendly, brief statement of welcome to each child, such as, “Hi, Mary;” “We’re glad you came, Susie;” “What a pretty dress, Pamela;” etc.
4. If you are at ease, they will be at ease. Guide their attitudes and direct their thinking by having the attitude you want them to have.

They will sense this correct attitude from your:

 - Tone of voice.
 - Inner feelings and expectations.
 - Example (they will copy you).
 - Explanations of the feelings and attitudes that are appropriate.

HELPING THEIR SELF-ESTEEM

Care about each child as an individual, equally. Each child needs to feel loved and accepted.

Remember that children:

- Make many mistakes.
- Feel inadequate.
- Are not skillful.

If we ridicule or tease or otherwise draw attention to their inadequacies, it can damage their self-esteem.

You, as a teacher, can help them grow in maturity and self esteem by responding with:

- Consistency.
- Positive feedback; honest and sincere acceptance and encouragement for each child.

EMOTIONAL AND SOCIAL NEEDS

1. Children need:

- To feel that they are an important part of the class.
- To feel they are successful.
- To feel accepted as they are.
- To feel understood and liked by the teacher.

2. You as the teacher can help by:

- Using their names.
- Expecting their best efforts, within their limitations of age and maturity.
- Building rapport with them, by using eye contact, etc.
- Teaching them to address you by a title implying respect, such as “Mrs. Green” or “Miss Katie”, rather than “Katie”.

LEARNING NEEDS

1. Children need limits to feel secure and safe, so they can be free to learn:

- Appropriate behavior.
- Appropriate language.
- How to take turns.
- How to wait for instructions.
- How to listen to the teacher.
- How to be nice to each other.
- How to get ready for and how to finish an activity.

2. It is the teacher’s job to structure the class and to provide a secure, safe learning environment.

3. It is the teacher’s job to help children learn appropriate behaviors for class along with the lesson material. He or she must realize that children don’t know all of the appropriate social behaviors. It will take years of practice, correct feedback from adults, and much growing for them to learn all they need to know about getting along with others.

These things can help:

- A few simple rules based on safety and courtesy.
- Adequate lesson preparation.
- Positive, friendly instruction in how to treat classmates, and equipment.
- Consistent procedures in starting and finishing the class.
- Consistent procedures in starting and finishing activities.

- Teaching with imagination and creativity; not just showing, but using a wide variety of approaches, involving as many of the children’s learning senses as possible.

PREPARE! MAKE PLANS!

You have less than one hour per week with the class, so make it count:

1. Study the material. Select only a few props and visual aids to use.
2. Know what you want to accomplish with them.
3. Rehearse the activities and presentations ahead of time.
4. Have the music, props, etc., ready, and arranged in the order to be used.

TEACH TO THEIR LEVEL

Plan to reach the needs, abilities and understandings of the students through the dance activities; not just physically, but

mentally, socially, and emotionally. Their needs, abilities, understandings are very different from those of adults.

1. Conduct the class to their level of interest and understanding, not yours.
2. Make the challenges appropriate for their level of physical and mental development. What is challenging but not frustrating to young children may seem overly simple to an adult.
3. Structure each part of the class so as to limit potential problems. Free time or undirected activities are not a good idea for pre-school children.
4. Guide your own inner feelings so that you will radiate what you want your students to feel.

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Ballet Fundamentals for Threes

Skills Appropriate to Their Age Will Build a Strong Foundation For Ballet

I. STARTING THE CLASS

The children start dance class sitting in a small circle with the teacher, or sitting in their places for class. After you greet the children, practice some of the vocabulary used in dancing, or review one thing from last week.

1. LEARNING THE NAMES OF THE PARTS OF THE BODY THAT DANCE (NO MUSIC PROVIDED)

Children sit in circle with teacher, and learn to name parts of the body such as foot, toes, heels, ankle, leg, knees, head, arm, hand, eyes, nose, etc. When they know a few names, they can be asked what they can do in dancing. “Can your legs dance? Yes. What can they do?” This gives them vocabulary, and an understanding of some of the things their muscles can do in dancing.

2. POSITIONS OF THE FEET

They learn feet together or matching feet (parallel), a natural first with a very slight separation of toes, and natural second with feet apart, with toes turned out very slightly. Some knowledge of these positions is needed before they can understand activities that use them, such as “Jump Out, Jump In.”

3. ARM POSITIONS

They learn arms down at the sides, arms reaching front, arms reaching back, arms reaching up, hands on waist, arms make a circle for first, arms make a straight line for second, and using arms softly like bird wings. They should also practice swinging their arms, forward and back, or in circles crossing and going to the sides. Arm swings forward and back should be tried both in unison, and alternating.

Arm positions and movements are used in the mimes, and with some of the other activities. The arm positions and movements build an awareness of where and how their arms can move. This prepares them for the formal ballet positions and port de bras.

II. MOVING IN PLACE, FOR AWARENESS OF SELF, AND A SENSE OF BALANCE.

4. POINT TOGETHER

This involves balancing on one leg while the other one moves. This is more difficult than walking, or standing on two feet. The young child will not be able to follow musical beats, or count how many to do. The teacher should demonstrate the correct tempo, and encourage

towards this ability. Most cannot control their muscles and their balance very well. Teacher can take them by the hand and say, “Do it with me,” to get a more nearly correct speed. Important to note: toes are relaxed, not pointed, at this stage. It is really a relaxed quarter point of the foot, a basic build up to the battement tendu, but not technical, yet.

5. HEEL TOGETHER

This continues the awareness of the two parts of the foot: toes, and heels. Flexing the ankle gives important practice to the muscles used in demi pli , the opposing muscles to those which point the foot. This helps to maintain a balance of strength in the lower leg.

6. JUMP OUT (TO 2ND) AND IN (TO 1ST)

First, they must be able to jump in place on two feet. Opening one’s feet to the side as you jump is not easy at first. It may take a few weeks before they actually can do this one.

No turnout is used in jumping at age three.

7. DOWN AND UP

Bend knees and reach hands to the floor. Stand up and reach hands up to the sky. This is the beginning of using the entire body in a dance movement. It teaches an understanding of the movement vocabulary: down, and up. It prepares the muscles for the “Curling Up and Stretching Out” exercise.

III. EXERCISES FOR COORDINATION & SPATIAL AWARENESS

8. MAKING SHAPES

Making Shapes is a creative exercise. It is learned sitting in their places. They learn what the word “shape” means. Then they learn about the kinds of shapes we can make with our bodies, arms, legs, etc. This is the first creative exercise in the three-year-old class. Shapes can have geometric and spatial qualities, and can also show feelings such as sad, happy, funny, scary, etc.

9. THE DANCER’S CIRCLE, NO MUSIC.

This is the path dancers follow when doing movements around the room. They travel counterclockwise in a circle. This is an important piece of dance class protocol for them to learn. It allows them to move with considerable freedom of movement, without the class getting out of hand. They will not have much spatial awareness yet, and will need help making and following the circle for most of this first year.

10. MARCHING

This is done around the room, in the Dancer’s Circle. Marching is a special kind of walking. While threes have great difficulty controlling their muscles enough to stay on musical beats with most movements, they might be able to do it while marching! The dynamics of a natural march encourages the feet to go with the music.

Ask them to pick up their feet nice and high, and to swing their arms, and to march with lots of energy.

Arms must be allowed to swing in whatever pattern is natural to each child. Three general patterns are usually seen: (1) both arms swinging together, (2) arms swinging in unison with legs, or (3) arms swinging in opposition to the legs.

It is very normal for threes to change the way they use their arms during an exercise, during a class, and from week to week.

Arms should be relaxed, and should swing as a result of the body movement. Arms swing about waist high, or a little higher, but not above the shoulders.

11. WALKING

Walking to music is not easy. They will not be able to match the musical beats. They CAN learn the musical tempo that is suitable for walking. They can distinguish it from music at a running tempo. Walking is a connecting dance step that is used in dances for young dancers. Walking to music will be developed at each level, gradually becoming the ballet walk with pointed feet.

12. RUNNING

This is for practicing fundamentals, and for learning to recognize a running tempo in music. They learn that they walk to the slower music, and run to the faster tempo. Running is a connecting step used often in dances and creative sequences for young dancers. Imagery such as birds, airplanes, fairies, butterflies and short imaginative stories can be used to give purpose to the runs.

IV. FLOOR EXERCISES

*TO REST LEGS, FOR EXPRESSION,
MUSICAL AWARENESS, & SPECIFIC
USE OF LEGS & FEET*

13. ARM AND HAND MOVEMENTS

They learn that they can express a story or idea with their hands, arms, and faces. This is the beginning of artistic expression and acting skill. At first, the teacher tells the story as they act it out. Later, some of the children might have ideas of their own that can be used by the class.

Once a story is learned, the movement sections can be phrased with the music to help with music awareness in the children, and to give the exercise a finished appearance.

14. DANCING TOES AND DANCING HEELS

Sitting on the floor, legs out in front. Stretch and bend ankles, to show our toes and our heels. This builds an awareness of toes, and heels, and helps the lower leg and ankle muscles to strengthen and coordinate. These are the muscles that are used in jumping, running, etc.



15. KNEE BENDS, SITTING

Children sit on the floor, with legs straight out in front. Threes have a very limited understanding of what their muscles and joints can do. Learning to bend and straighten knees while sitting will make it easier to do knee bends when standing up. Knee bends, both sitting and standing, are a fundamental movement concept for jumping, changing levels, and for demi plié and fondu later on.

16. LEG LIFTS

Sitting, legs out in front, lift one leg about four inches off the floor, then lower it. Use alternate legs. The hands are on the floor near the dancer's hips for support. Do not hold the leg in the air. Dance is movement. Holding a position stresses young joints, and does not teach movement.

This movement prepares the leg muscles for the stretching of the knees, and for the beginnings of turning out. It will help them to use their legs exactly forward of their hips in the gallops. Three year olds will not be able to hold the knees perfectly straight. That is right for them. They need to lift the leg in its natural shape at this age. Do not require the knees to be perfectly straight this first year.

V. BALLET TECHNIQUE: A GENTLE INTRODUCTION FOR THREES

17. KNEE BENDS, STANDING

Start with feet together, hands on waist. The tempo is quicker than a true demi plié: down in one count, up in one count. This matches the muscular needs of the very young dancer.

Muscular development at this age does not provide for a sustained, slow speed.

These knee bends are a simulation of the jumping action of the knees, slowed down somewhat. Saying "Bend, and straight" gives about the right speed. Knee bends will help them to achieve the correct knee action in jumping. This exercise can sometimes be matched to the music.

18. FAST JUMPS, OR BOUNCES ON TWO FEET

This gives the repeated practice needed to get the leg muscles rebounding. Do not expect the feet to point. Much large muscle development and more time for small muscle maturation is needed before feet can be stretched during jumps.

Getting the correct knee action should be the goal for Level 1. Watch for children who use their knees in reverse: bending them in the air and straightening them when they hit the ground. This is not what is needed for ballet.

Sometimes young children get this wrong knee action from jumping on trampolines or mini-tramps. You may need to explain to parents how the knees are supposed to work for ballet, and suggest that they have the children jump on the floor at home, not on the tramp, until they get the knees working right.

19. BIG JUMPS

This encourages the legs to push the dancer higher into the air. It encourages correct use of the knees. It is a difficult skill for little ones. Let them use their arms and bodies, as they naturally will, in attempting to get higher off the floor. Do not expect them to jump on the music yet.

20. HOPS

Hops on one leg develop balance and leg strength. This skill is a very necessary background skill for learning to skip. Hops will be easier and stronger on one leg than the other. Be sure both legs are practiced.

Do not expect them to match musical beats with their hops. The music is background. Hearing the rhythm and feel of the music will encourage their response to the music later.

VI. FLOOR EXERCISES TO REST LEGS, FOR EXPRESSION, COORDINATION, USE OF BODY

21. CURLING UP AND STRETCHING OUT

An introduction to this curling and stretching of the body was given with the “down and up” exercise. It is the beginning of contraction and extension. Children learn that the whole body can learn to dance; that it can do different movements and shapes. The muscles are being prepared for more complex movements later on.

Since the movement is done slowly, and there is no balance problem, it can be done in time to the music. Several imagery ideas are possible. The **class notes** for Level 1 describe two ideas: a seahorse, and a starfish.

This exercise is also a good “quiet” activity to use for calming down a class that is getting too excited. Another idea: have them pretend they are taking a nap on a soft cloud. They change positions as they rest.

22. HEAD MOVEMENTS

Sit, legs folded, hands on knees. Using the head to say “yes” and “no” is already familiar to the children. Now we learn that these movements can be a part of dancing. We isolate the movements, and slow them down. Again, we can match phrases in the music. A new movement can also be introduced:

“maybe”, which is done by inclining the head from side to side. “Put your ear next to your shoulder. Now your other ear next to your other shoulder.”

23. RHYTHM STUDY

Children can learn the simple musical rhythms of 2/4 and 3/4 in isolation. They can clap with the teacher, follow a drum beat, etc.

24. CRAWLING ON HANDS AND KNEES

Although the more technical definition of this movement is “creeping”, children will know it as “crawling”, so use that term with them. They are on hands and knees. Knees should be picked up as they travel, and not dragged on the floor.

Getting the knees picked up uses the abdominal muscles. The crawling movement is one of the best exercises to encourage the child’s natural coordination, and to prepare them for coordinating their arms and legs in classical ballet technique. It also helps in the development of the abdominal muscles.

Pretend games can be used to make the crawling activity interesting. Pretending teaches expression. They are learning to tell a story with movement.

Many classical ballets, such as Swan Lake and Nutcracker tell stories. Do spend some time crawling in all three, four, and five year old classes.

“Pretending teaches expression. They are learning to tell a story with movement.”

VII. CREATIVITY AND EXPRESSION

Several imaginative story sequences are suggested in the classwork section. Others are possible. Remember that threes do not have much background. They need to be guided and led as they explore the movements and feelings used in creating.

VIII. DANCE STEPS

25. ROCKING

Rocking is the beginning of learning the Transfer of Weight, which leads to glissade, and other steps that move. It also prepares the three year old for learning the “Side Close” exercise.

26. STEP TO THE SIDE AND CLOSE YOUR FEET. (STEP TO 2ND, CLOSE TO 1ST)

Moving sideways is not natural to people. Many adults have difficulty with this skill. Young children’s muscles are often very clumsy at first, and they get their feet mixed up.

At three, children do not realize during movement that they have TWO feet, although intellectually they do know this. They are aware of “feet” as something they walk and run on, and on which they put socks and shoes. They still have trouble knowing which foot a shoe goes on. They are not ready to learn rights and lefts in a formal setting.

“Step to the Side and Close Your Feet” helps them to become kinesthetically aware of the fact that they have two feet, one on each side of the body. They discover that they can travel

sideways, to either direction.

“Side Close” is an important basic skill, a very necessary part of a strong foundation for technical ballet. Moving sideways is practiced in some way at each level of pre ballet. It is found in all grades of ballet in various forms and settings. Students need to progress gradually towards the more advanced ballet steps that move sideways: glissade, pas de bourrée, sissonne de côté, etc.

“Side Close” uses the leg muscles in a way that forward movement does not. It contributes to a more all around development of the big leg muscles.

A change of direction is also introduced with this exercise. When they can successfully change directions under the teacher’s guidance, the exercise can be used to help their response to music.

Consistently hearing the musical phrases match their change of direction helps them to become aware of how dancers are supposed to blend with the music.

27. GALLOPING FORWARD

Galloping is done around the Dancer’s Circle. You may notice that some children turn slightly sideways when they gallop forward. This usually means their quadriceps muscles are weaker than some of the auxiliary muscles. The Leg Lift exercise may, in time, help with this problem.

Gallops are like marches in several ways. First, they are builders of natural coordination.

Second, both activities can usually be done to the music by young children where many other movements cannot.

Third, both activities require a development of the big thigh muscles in front.

Fourth, most children find these activities a lot of fun to do, even without any story motivation.

Note that, for threes, we do not worry about which leg is in front, or about changing legs on gallops. Just get some good strong gallops on the stronger or dominant leg this first year of dancing. About half way through the year, you might try to get them to use the other leg part of the time. If they don’t respond, it is because their muscles aren’t ready to do that yet.

For threes, we do not worry about which leg is in front, or about changing legs on gallops.

IX. DANCE SEQUENCES

The Mountain Dance described in the classwork section gives an opportunity to start them on enchainements of only two items at a time. This takes some concentration for a young dancer. Staying on the mountain develops muscular control in the traveling movements. Waiting for turns is an important behavioral learning at this age.

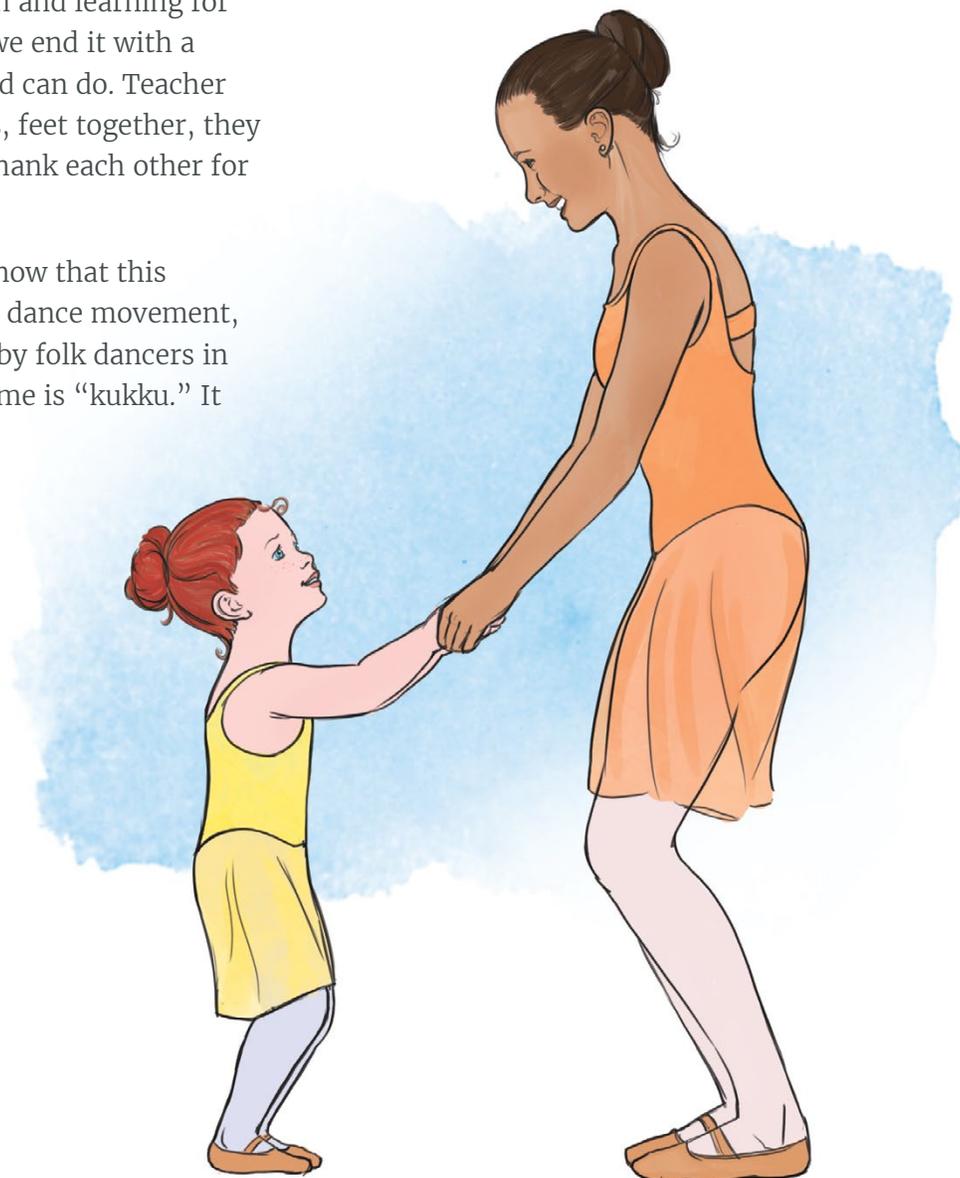
X. DANCES

Several short dances have been included for Level 1. The length is about right for their little memories and attention spans! Longer ones cannot be learned well enough to perform independently.

28. CURTSEY

Dance class is a preparation and learning for eventual performance. So we end it with a curtsey that a three year old can do. Teacher holds both of child's hands, feet together, they both do a knee bend, and thank each other for the class.

It might be of interest to know that this curtsey is a Hungarian folk dance movement, and is often used as a bow by folk dancers in Hungary. Its Hungarian name is "kukku." It isn't just a "baby curtsey!"



SUMMARY OF LEVEL 1

Level 1 contains a list of 28 skills, seven arm positions and movements, three feet positions, and a curtsey that we hope the three year old will successfully take away from their ballet class.

In addition to these skills, they will learn some simple creative story sequences, and some short dances to perform in class, or for a recital. That is a lot for a three year old to learn! Since most of the skills are a part of what nature intends them to learn, most of them should accomplish the class quite well in six to eight months.

MOVING UP TO LEVEL 2

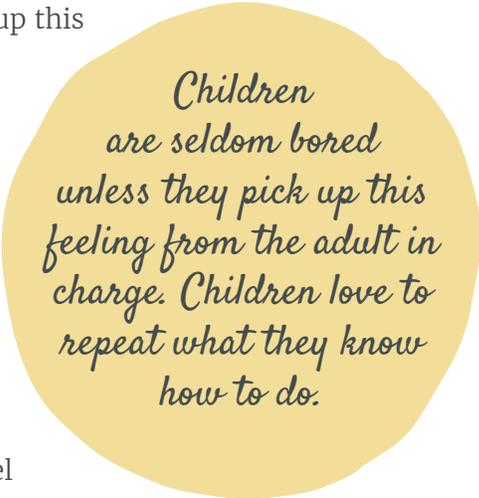
When the teacher feels the class is ready, some items from Level 2 can be introduced. During the first year it is best to not completely leave the Level 1 work, but to simply add the parts of Level 2 that they seem ready for.

Example: When they can do “Point Together” very well, every time, without you, they might be ready to “count to three with your foot,” as a preparation for the “Three Points and Close” in Level 2. When you add the Level 2 version, be sure to retain the Level 1 exercise so the ability to do it that way is not lost. The Level 1 skill needs to eventually match the music. To get this, it must not be completely dropped from the classwork.

Teachers must be careful to see things from the child’s point of view, and to not push them ahead simply because the teacher or parent is bored! Children are seldom bored

unless they pick up this feeling from the adult in charge.

Children LOVE to repeat what they know how to do. Adults become bored with so much repetition, and tend to think the children must feel the same way.



Children are seldom bored unless they pick up this feeling from the adult in charge. Children love to repeat what they know how to do.

Children are very much in tune with feelings and attitudes, and very anxious to please the adults and older siblings in their world. If they say, “That’s boring,” it is because they heard someone else say it. Otherwise, the idea would not have occurred to them. And, it is very unlikely that they have any understanding of what it means!

When making a choice about moving up to a few things from Level 2, look at how their muscles are doing. Do they still need more practice with this skill?

Take pleasure in seeing the small improvements in grace, balance, and musicality that occur from week to week. Put your attention on the CHILD, not on the exercise. The children are never boring!

A NOTE ABOUT SKIPPING

It is not likely that very many of your three year old students will be able to skip yet. It is not included as a part of the expected skills for this level because it is not usual for three year

olds to be ready for good skips. Threes need to work on the hops, jumps, marches, and gallops several months to a year before trying to skip.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF COORDINATION

Give marching and galloping as homework. Have parents help their children to learn to use their muscles. The quadriceps muscles

that learn to move the legs strongly, straight to the front, will produce dancers that can jump very well. Poor quadriceps same use leads to awkward jumps, and a lack of grace in almost all other dance movements as well.

Remind parents to have the children practice the marches and forward gallops. Suggest that they not try to teach the skipping until the marches, gallops, and hops on one leg are all fairly easy for the child to do smoothly and well, using both legs equally, or nearly so.

Level 1 Choreography for Class

This is a complete list of the activities and choreography suggested for Level 1.

It cannot all be done in any one class period. This gives the teacher freedom to arrange different **class plans** for each term. Young children need consistency and repetition. When a new term starts, change some material, but not all. Keep the general format of the class the same.

The musical counts are for the teacher's information. It is not realistic to expect the children to count music as they dance. Musical counts are approximate, because threes and fours lack the muscular control needed to stay

on the beats all of the time. Have them change steps on the phrases. For example, they may have done two or three or seven of a step or movement when four were intended, but if they change on the phrasing, they are learning to listen to and follow the music at their level of ability.

Some exercises are numbered in groups showing the teaching progressions for certain skills. The bold numbers in the left column are the music album tracks, to help in finding the correct music.

I. BEGINNING OF CLASS

Welcome the class and take roll. Greet each one by name. This can be done with children sitting in their individual places or spots in a small circle with the teacher. Sit with them, so you are at their physical level. This helps build rapport. It helps the children to feel secure.

1. Learning parts of the body we use in dancing (no music provided).

While sitting, with teacher's direction and guidance, child is to touch and name parts of their own body: foot, leg, arm, hand, knee, ankle, elbow, toes, heel, fingers, etc.

tr# 1 & 53
♩ 6/8, 2ct/m
1m intro, 8m

2. Positions for the Feet

Threes should use very little turnout for first and second positions. See the "Positions of the Feet" illustrations on [page 69](#). They show the proper amount of turnout for this level. There will be little difference in the placement of feet in "Feet Apart" and in Second Position at this age, so these are in the song as

the same position. They do need to learn, practice, and review:

1-4	Feet Together (parallel).	“Feet Together, hands on waist.
5-8	First Position.	“Toes apart makes 1st, that’s neat!
9-12	Second Position, or Feet Apart.	“Feet apart makes 2nd position,
13-16	Three claps.	“Clap, clap, clap, I can do my feet!”

tr# 2

♩ 6/8, 2cts/m,
2m intro, 16m

3. Arm Positions

They need to learn, practice and review the arm positions used in Level 1 (see p. 70):

	Movements:	Song:
1-4	Arms relaxed, down at sides.	“Arms down at our sides and waiting,
5-8	Lift arms to horizontal, forward.	“Arms in front reaching forward,
1-4	Lean slightly forward, arms reach back.	“Arms in back reaching backward,
5-8	Hands on waist with fingers forward.	“Hands on waist and we standup tall,
1-4	Arms in front, rounded to first position.	“First position’s a circle,
5-8	Open arms to natural 2nd, palms down.	“Arms open sideways for Second,
1-8	Wave arms slowly up and down.	“Arms move so pretty like birds that fly!”

II. EXERCISES FOR AWARENESS OF BODY PARTS, AND A SENSE OF BALANCE.

The children will not be able to control their muscles well enough to follow the musical beats. The teacher must not be concerned about this, but encourage them to follow her lead the best they can. Whichever foot a child uses first should be accepted. Some may not understand how to use both feet at first. Show them, gently place their foot, explain using simple terms at their level. Be patient. Improvement will come in a few weeks.

tr# 3

♩ 2/4, 1ct/m,
4 m intro, 16m

4. Point Together

Start in Feet Together position, arms relaxed at sides, or hands on waist. Use a

natural, relaxed foot, with the ball of the foot and the toes resting on the floor.

1	Reach one foot forward, touch floor with toes.	“Point,
2	Bring this foot back to Feet Together position.	“To-ge-ther,
3-4	Repeat with other foot.	“Point, to-ge-ther,”
5-16	Continue through the music.	

tr# 4 5. Heel Together

♩ 2/4, 2cts/m,
2 m intro, 8m
Start in Feet Together position, arms relaxed. Hands can be on waist, if preferred.

1	Reach right foot forward, touch floor with heel.	“Heel,
2	Bring right foot back to Feet Together position.	“To-ge-ther,
3-4	Repeat with other foot.	“Heel, to-ge-ther.”
5-16	Continue through the music.	

tr# 5 6.a. Feet Apart, Feet Together

♩ 2/4, 2cts/m,
2 m intro, 8m
Start Feet Together or in First Position, arms relaxed. Move one foot out to 2nd, then move it back to Feet Together. The words “out” and “in” can be used instead of “apart” and “together.”

& 1-2	Move one foot apart (out to 2nd Position), stay.	“Feet Apart!”
& 3-4	Move foot back Together (to 1st Position), stay.	“Feet Together!”
& 5-16	Continue through the music.	

tr# 6 6.b. Jump Apart, Jump Together

♩ 2/4, 2cts/m,
2 m intro, 16m
The second beat of the measure is silent for the slow jumps. For all 3 exercises, move foot or jump into the air on the upbeats, and “arrive” on the main musical beats.

&1-2	Jump feet apart (or to Second Position), stay.	“Jump apart!”
&3-4	Jump Feet Together, stay.	“Jump Together!”
&5-16	Continue through the first half of the music.	

tr# 7 6.c. Jump Apart, Jump Together at 2 speeds

♩ 2/4, 2cts/m,
2 m intro, 16m

&1 Jump Apart Together 4 times, as in (6.b.).

&2 Jump Feet Together, stay.

&3-16 Continue through the music.

tr# 8 7.a. Down and Up

♩ 3/4, 1ct/m,
2 m intro, 16m

Start Feet Together, arms relaxed. (“Up” can be done with a little jump.)

1-2 Bend knees, reach hands to the floor. “Touch the floor. This is down.

3-4 Stand up and reach hands up high. “Reach up high. This is up.

5-6 Touch floor. “Now we’re down. Down we stay!

7-8 Reach up. “Now we’re up. Up we stay.”

9-16 Repeat. (Repeat words.)

tr# 9 7.b. Down and Up at 2 speeds

♩ 2/4, 2cts/m,
2 m intro, 16m

1-2 Bend knees, reach hands to the floor. “Touch the floor. This is down.

3-4 Stand up and reach hands up high. “Reach up high. This is up.

5-6 Touch floor. “Now we’re down. Down we stay!

7-8 Reach up. “Now we’re up. Up we stay.”

9-14 Repeat counts 1-6. (Repeat words.)

15-16 Stay. “Up and ready to go faster!

1-8 Four downs and ups faster. (Say “down” and “up”.)

9-11 Stay up, bow (bend forward, arms back). “And stay and bow!”

III. FOR AWARENESS OF SPACE, THEIR PLACE IN SPACE, & COORDINATION.

tr# 10/11
♩ 4/4, 4cts/m,
2 m intro, 12m

8. Making Shapes

They start sitting on their spots. Talk to them about what a “shape” is. Round and straight are a good place to start. Show the shapes with your arms. Ask them to try it with you. Compliment their efforts. Shapes can be geometric, or can express feelings such as sad, happy, funny, scary, etc. After a few lessons, try it with the music.

1-4 Sit and get ready to make the shape (or, walk, run, etc.).

5-12 Jump to Feet Together, stay.

1-36 Continue through the music.

tr# 12/54
♩ 3/4, 1ct/m,
2 m intro, 16m

9. The Dancer’s Circle*

This is the circular path they are to follow in doing steps around the room, counterclockwise. They will not have much spatial awareness yet, and will need help making and following the circle for most of this first year. Threes are good at following, but not at leading. Mark the circle on the floor in some way. A piece of colored tape for each dancer to stand on will help them to keep their spacing as well. (Use a color that is different from their “place spots.”)

1-2 Walk to the next spot on the circle (Six, or any number of steps).

3-4 Wait on that spot.

5-16 Continue through the music.

*For all movements done in a circle or across the floor, teach the concept that “dancers don’t bump.” Use encouragement and logical consequences to reinforce this rule. Compliance with this rule is essential for their safety and good feelings.

tr# 13/55
♩ 4/4, 4cts/m,
2 m intro, 16m

10. Marching

Marches are done naturally, on the whole foot, swinging arms energetically, but not above shoulders. Arms can swing freely in any pattern. They need to lift the knees up high to where the thighs are horizontal or nearly so. Some may not be strong enough, but encourage them to try. Most will be able to march on the music after a few lessons.

1-64

64 Marches on the Dancer's Circle.



tr# 14
♩ 4/4, 4cts/m,
2 m intro, 12m

11. Walking

For Level 1, use a natural walk. Have them walk around the Dancer's Circle. They will not likely have the control to stay on the music. But they can learn that music of this tempo or speed is for walking. To vary the exercise, use imagery or a suggestion of a story. One idea: walk around a small imaginary pond and name the things that you "see" in the pond: fish, frogs, dragonflies, etc.

1-48

About 48 walks on the Dancer's Circle, or as arranged by the teacher.

tr# 15
♪ 4/8, 4cts/m,
2 m intro, 16m

12. Running

Use a natural run. When they have learned to recognize the musical tempo for running, explain that when we run for dancing we take smaller, faster steps because the stage is smaller than a park or playground.

They can use their arms naturally, or get a feeling of dancing by using their arms as birds, butterflies, etc. Imagery adds interest to the activity, while they are getting the feel of running to music. Their muscles need practice with a continuous, controlled run.

Scarves, ribbons, short streamers, or fairy wands are fun, if used safely. The runs do not need to match the musical beats.

1-64

Run on the Dancer's Circle using arm movements or props as arranged by the teacher.

IV. FLOOR EXERCISES, TO REST LEGS, FOR EXPRESSION, FOR MUSICAL AWARENESS, & FOR SPECIFIC USE OF LEGS, FEET, ARMS, HANDS

Exercises 13.a., b., and c. are for expression. They are done sitting in places. Talk about which movements to include before starting. Get their ideas too. Have them show you. Two ideas are given. Many others are possible. Keep the story short, and not too complicated. Include facial expressions. Once a story is learned it can be phrased with the music. This helps to build music awareness in the children, and gives the exercise a finished appearance.





tr# 16

♪ 3/4, 3cts/m,
2m intro, 16m

13.a. Picking Flowers

1-48 Break each flower off carefully, smell it, put it in the vase or basket.
When all are picked, pick up the vase and smell them all.
Smile and nod to show that they smell good.

tr# 17

♪ 6/8, 2cts/m,
2m intro, 16m

13.b. Setting the Table

1-32 First put the plates on the table, then the silverware, and glasses. Let them tell you what needs to be put on their imaginary tables. When all is ready, it's time to eat.

tr# 18

♪ 2/4, 2cts/m,
2m intro, 16m

13.c. Creating Your Own Story

1-32 Teacher and students can create other fun stories to tell with hands, heads, arms. Or, use music of your own choosing.

tr# 19/56

♪ 4/4, 2cts/m,
2m intro, 8m

14. Dancing Toes, Dancing Heels

This is for flexibility and strength in the ankles and feet. Start sitting with legs straight out in front. Place hands on the floor near hips to give stability. On the last 8 counts, the feet move back and forth quickly, one foot flexing as the other one is stretched.

1-4	Stretch ankles, show toes to the teacher, and say,	“Dancing Toes.”
5-8	Flex ankles, pulling toes up and say,	“Dancing Heels”
9-24	Continue through the music.	
25-32	Move feet faster and sing,	“We’re going to have some dancing fun today!”

tr# 20/57

♪ 3/4, 1ct/m,
2m intro, 6m

15. Bending Knees

Start sitting, legs straight out in front. Place hands on the floor near hips to give stability. Use both knees because it is a preparation for knee bends and demi pliés. Feet are flat on the floor, not pointed. Later, to help hops on one foot, do one leg at a time, alternating legs.

- | | |
|------|---|
| 1 | Bend knees and slide feet up close to hips. Hug knees with both arms. Hold. |
| 2 | Slide feet out again and straighten legs, hands on floor for support. Sit tall. |
| 3-16 | Repeat through the music. |

tr# 21

♩ 3/4, 1ct/m,
2m intro, 16m

16.a. Lifting Legs

Start sitting, hands braced on the floor, legs straight out in front. Threes will not have perfectly straight legs. That is correct for them. They should not pull up the kneecaps at this age. They need the less specific, general movement development for several more years.

- | | |
|------|---|
| 1 | Lift the first leg a few inches off the floor. |
| 2 | Lower to the floor. |
| 3-16 | Repeat with the other leg, then continue through the music. |

tr# 22/58

♩ 3/4, 1ct/m,
2m intro, 16m

16.b. Two Exercises Together

This is a combination of 15 and 16.a.: half of 15 is done, then half of 16.a.

- | | |
|------|---|
| 1-8 | Bend and straighten the knees 4 times. |
| 9-16 | Lift and lower one leg at a time, 4 times (R, L, R, L). |

16.c. Short Talking Time

Take a few minutes to talk to them, because their legs have worked hard and will need a short rest before standing to do the knee bends and jumps. Compliment their efforts, talk about ballet, review ideas you want them to remember, etc.

V. “BALLET TECHNIQUE”

This section is a gentle but sound beginning for technical ballet. The “Feet Together” (parallel) position is used at this level. No turnout is used for age three. (Exception: a few children may find the parallel position uncomfortable, due to individual differences in structure. Allow these children to separate their toes to their natural walking position.) Muscles and joints need a lot of development in the natural alignment before the stress of turning out can be safely handled.

tr# 23

♩ 2/4, 2cts/m,
2m intro, 8m

17. Knee Bends

This is a demi plié with feet together (parallel). Start standing on spots, with hands on waist, fingers forward. Knee bends can usually be done in time with the music after a few weeks. Have them say or sing, “Bend, and straight” with each

knee bend. The tempo is faster than you might expect. Short legs and immature muscles need this faster speed. It is more comfortable for them. The quicker speed also helps them to learn to use their knees correctly when jumping.

- 1 Bend knees, keeping body somewhat upright. This is hard for threes.
- 2 Straighten knees.
- 3-16 Repeat through the music. This gives 8 knee bends, or demi pliés.

tr# 24
 ♪ 2/4, 2cts/m,
 2m intro, 8m

18. Fast Jumps

Start standing on spots, feet together, hands on waist, fingers forward. They will not be able to stay with the musical beats. That is all right. Fast jumps are small. There is not time for them to think about knees. This exercise is for feeling and rhythm.

- 1-16 Approximately 16 continuous jumps in place.
 Hands can be on waist, or arms left free for balance.

tr# 25
 ♪ 6/8, 2cts/m,
 4m intro, 8m

19. Big Jumps

Big jumps are slower. The object is to get as high off the floor as they can. They will need to use their arms to help them get off the floor. Hopefully this exercise will help them learn to use their knees correctly while jumping. Explain and show how the knees should work. It's OK at this very young age to let them use their bodies and arms to get higher into the air.

- Intro: 1-4 Bend knees, ready to jump. Most will lean forward a bit. This is OK at this level.
- & Jump into the air.
- 1-2 Land and stay.
- &3-16 Continue through the music, doing approximately 8 big jumps.

tr# 26
 ♪ 2/4, 4ct/m,
 2m intro, 8m

20.a. Learning to Hop

Young children will have trouble with balance at first. Help each one in turn. Hold both hands while the child hops. The music should help them to feel the rhythm and tempo of the hops, even if they cannot stay with it yet. The rest of the class could say or sing the verse while waiting their turn. When they can hop on their own, use 20.b.

- 1-12 About 12 hops on R foot. "Hop, hop, hop on one foot.
 "Hold teachers hand for help.

13-16 Rest and change feet.

1-12 About 12 hops on L foot. “Hop, hop, hop on the other foot.
“Look I can do it myself”

13-16 Rest on both feet.

tr# 27/59

♩ 2/4, 2cts/m,
2m intro, 16m

20.b. Hopping on One Foot

1-4 About 4 hops on the first foot. “Hop, hop, hop, hop,

5-8 Rest on two feet, lift other foot. “Both feet down, lift the other foot.”

9-16 Repeat on the other foot. (Repeat song)

17-32 Repeat all, change last line to: “Both feet down, now we’re done.”

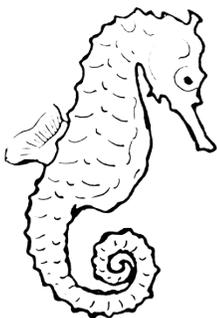
VI. FLOOR EXERCISES, FOR REST, EXPRESSION, MUSIC RHYTHMS, COORDINATION

tr# 28

♩ 4/4, 4cts/m,
2m intro, 16m

21. Seahorse, or Starfish

This exercise is a curling up and stretching out of the body. It is one of the few that specifically involve the torso in a dance exercise. It encourages the use of the muscles in the back and the abdominal muscles. Start sitting on the floor. The first instructions are for a Seahorse.



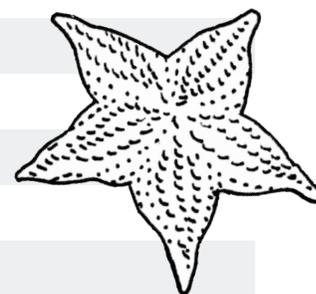
1-8 Curl up, hug knees, head on knees, “resting.”

9-16 Roll onto back, stretch arms up and legs down to a straight line.

1-8 Curl up again, in sitting position as at the beginning.

9-16 Roll onto back, stretching arms up and legs down.

1-32 Continue through the music.



For a Starfish: roll onto the back and stretch to a “star shape” with arms, legs and head reaching out in 5 directions. Curl up as above. The curling up can also be done lying on side, and changing from side to side.

tr# 29
♪ 6/8, 2cts/m,
2m intro, 24m

22. Our Heads Can Dance!

Using the head to say “yes” and “no” is already familiar to the children. A new movement is introduced: “maybe”, which is done by inclining the head from side to side. “Put your ear next to your shoulder. Now put your other ear next to your other shoulder”. These movements are a part of dancing. Children can follow the music because balance is not involved.

Start sitting, legs folded, hands on knees: “Our heads can dance, too. First we say ‘no’ with our head.”

1-4 Turn head to right, then to left saying “no” without words.

5-14 Continue through the music.

5-16 Bring head front (look at teacher) and smile!

Now we say “yes” with our head.

1-4 Look up, look down, saying “yes” without words.

5-14 Continue.

5-16 Bring head front (look at teacher) and smile!

Our heads can say “maybe.”

1-4 Lean head right, then left.

5-14 Continue.

5-16 Bring head front (look at teacher) and smile!

23. Music Study (no music provided)

Children can be introduced to the musical rhythms, 2/4 and 3/4, by slapping hands on the floor, on legs, clapping, etc. Sit with legs folded and hands on knees to begin. It helps if each beat of the measure is in a different place. Example: for 2 beats, slap the floor, then slap your knees. The floor makes a louder sound, giving the “loud, soft” quality to the sounds they hear. It also feels harder to the hands. For 3 beats, slap the floor, slap knees, clap hands.

Have them follow you. Keep a steady rhythm at a speed they can easily handle. You can try different speeds, but don’t mix the speeds, as this will confuse them. Stop and start again at the different speed. Some teachers like to use a tambourine or dance drum in teaching rhythm.

tr# 30/60
♪ 2/4, 2cts/m,
2m intro, 16m

24. The Lost Ball (Crawling)

“Let’s pretend we have lost our ball. We are going to crawl on the floor, and look under the chairs, and behind the sofa to see if we can find it.” The story can be expanded later to include finding the imaginary ball, standing up and tossing it in the air and catching it. Maybe it gets lost again, so the crawling and searching will

have to be repeated.

Start on hands and knees. The music is background, or the story can be phrased to it.

1-32 Crawl on hands and knees, acting out the story of the lost ball.

Other pretend games can be used to make the crawling activity interesting. Do spend some time crawling in all three, four, and five year-old classes. Crawling on hands and knees builds coordination and helps the abdominal muscles to strengthen. When they have learned a story that they like, it can be phrased to the music to build musical awareness.

VII. CREATIVITY SECTION, MIMES.

Pretending is fun, especially if teacher gives us some ideas first! Choose one sequence to learn first. After a few weeks, add another.

tr# 31/61

♩ 4/4, 2cts/m,
2m intro, 15m

A. Balloons

Beginning on the Dancer's Circle.

1-4 Breathe in, lifting arms at sides, blowing up the balloon.

5-8 Run and breathe out, like the air coming out of a balloon.

9-10 Come to a stop, ready to repeat.

11-30 Repeat through the music, three times in all.

tr# 32

♩ 4/4, 4cts/m,
2m intro, 12m

B. The Rabbit

Begin sitting on spots.

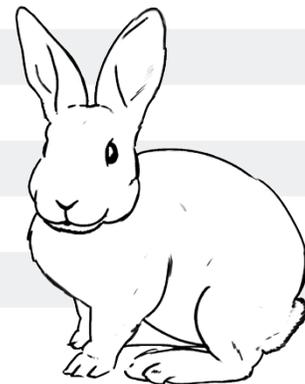
Intro: 1-8 Imaginary rabbit comes up to dancer.

1-4 Pick up the rabbit, hug him (her).

5-8 Pet him (her).

1-8 Repeat hugs and pets.

1-4 Feed a carrot to the rabbit.



- 5-8 Pet the rabbit.
- 1-8 Rabbit hops away
- 1-8 Follow the rabbit. Dancer gets up and jumps on two feet, following.
- 1-8 Wave goodbye to the rabbit, and watch him (her) go.

*Other steps are possible: walk, hops on one foot, etc.

tr# 33/62

♩ 4/4, 4cts/m,
2m intro, 16m

C. Icicles

Grow into an icicle shape (with good posture!), then melt (relaxation). Start on the floor, curled into a ball, sitting on the feet.

- 1-8 Lift head, sit up on feet, up on knees, stand.
- 1-4 Arms grow up to a point—stand as tall as you can.
- 5-8 Twirl around in place, being a happy icicle!
- 1-8 Two slow point together as water begins to drip.
- 1-8 Arms collapse, they are melting.
- 1-8 Two heel together for bigger drips.
- 1-8 Head and upper body relaxes, bending forward from waist.
- 1-8 Melt down to the floor, as at the beginning. Be as small as you can.
- 1-8 Hold.

tr# 34/63
♩ 4/4, 2cts/m,
20m intro, chord

D. Rain Splash

- | | |
|-----|---|
| 1-8 | Look up, reach up, bring hands down, to show that it is raining. Repeat |
| 1-2 | Make a small splash with one foot in the water, lift it out and close feet. |
| 3-4 | Repeat with other foot (or same foot). |
| 5-8 | Bend down and splash with hands. |
| 1-4 | 8 stamps through the puddle, splashing the water up high (marching). |
| 5-8 | It gets in your face. Brush it off. |
| 1-8 | Twirl around, with arms out to 2nd. |
| 1-4 | 8 stamps. |
| 5-6 | Bend down, hands scooping up some water. |
| 7-8 | Throw water up with hands, and smile. Hold pose. |



VIII. DANCE STEPS

These steps are harder. Save them for a few weeks into the year. Teach one item for several weeks before adding another. Take more time to lead up to these steps, and more time to move from the simple steps to the short stories.

tr# 35/64

♩ 6/8, 2cts/m,
2m intro, 20m

25. Rocking My Doll

This prepares for movements to the side. Show them how to stand with feet apart, in a parallel or natural second position. Some will need help placing their feet. Cradle a teddy or a doll, real or imaginary, in the arms. A scarf can be folded for a pretend doll. Rock the doll slowly from side to side with the music. The bigger rocks help them learn to shift weight from foot to foot.

1-8	4 little rocks, 4 big rocks.
9-16	4 little rocks, 4 big rocks.
1-8	4 little rocks, 4 big rocks.
1-4	4 slow walks forward.
1-6	Kneel & place doll on floor. Pretend to cover doll.
7-8	Mime “shh!”
1-4	Lie down next to doll.

tr# 36

♩ 6/8, 2cts/m,
2m intro, 8m
Intro 8m, 1m coda

26.a. Step to the Side, Close Your Feet

“Side, Close”, or “Step to the Side and Close your Feet” is for learning to move sideways while facing front. It is a preparation for side gallops in Level 2, and for all other sideways moving steps later on. Children will need careful structure.

Moving to the side is not a natural skill. They will need time to learn to use their muscles in this way. It may take several weeks for them to find the balance and coordination needed to do this movement well.

This activity also presents the concept of reversing directions halfway through the music. This will be new and challenging to the children. Realize that they will not understand this idea at first. It will take awhile for them to successfully change directions even with the teacher’s help. Save this exercise for the second or third term.

Hold hands with the children in a circle. Reverse direction on the repeat of the

music. With threes and fours it is a good idea to have them hold a doll or teddy between each child to avoid squeezed fingers and unhappy feelings.

1-4	Step right foot to right side (2nd position)	“One foot moves away,”
5-8	Close left foot to right foot (feet together or first).	“The other foot follows.”
9-16	Continue through the music. (4 step, closes in all.)	
	The Introduction repeats so the children can get ready to change their direction.	
1-16	4 step closes to the left.	(Repeat words.)
17-18	Hold bear or doll up high in front.	

tr# 37

♩ 6/8, 2cts/m,
2m intro, 16m
Intro 16m, 1 m coda

26.b. Side, Close

1	Step foot to the right side (2nd position).	“Here we go,
2	Close left foot to the right foot (feet together).	
3	Step right foot to right.	“To the side,
4	Close left foot to right.	
5-6	Step, Close to the R.	“Holding hands,
7-8	Step, Close to the R.	“Side by side
9-16	Continue through the music, 8 step closes in all.	“First one foot, “Then the other, “Step and close, “To the side.”
(1)	There is a slight pause (1ct) so children can be ready to go to the left.	
1-16	8 step closes to the left.	(Repeat words.)
17-18	Hold bear or doll up high in front.	

tr# 38

♩ 6/8, 2cts/m,
2m intro, 24m

27.a. Galloping

This is done around the Dancer’s Circle. Most threes can learn to gallop after seeing others do it. Demonstrate, take their hand and help them balance as they try, but “let nature take its course” as to exactly how they use their muscles. Threes and fours will strongly prefer galloping with the dominant, stronger leg in front. Later in the year, try to get them to gallop with the weaker leg in front at least part of the time. Music is background for the gallops, but they will probably

be galloping on the music most of the time.

1-48 Gallops around the Dancer's Circle.

tr# 39/65
♩ 6/8, 2cts/m,
2m intro, 32m

27.b. My Pony

“Pretend you have a pony. Get on your pony. Hold the reins in front, and gallop your pony. Your pony is slowing down because he is tired. Feed your pony an apple so he will have more energy.”

“He feels better, so gallop again. Do some really big gallops. Get up high off the floor. Your pony is jumping over some rocks. We are getting close to home, so gallop smaller, now. Pull on the pony's reins to slow him down. Take him into the barn so he can rest.”

Intro: 1-4 Get on your pony.

1-24 Gallop.

1-8 Pony is tired. Feed pony an apple so he will have some energy.

1-24 Gallop again.

1-8 You are home. Slow down, lead your pony into the barn.

IX. DANCE SEQUENCES

tr# 40/66
♩ 4/8, 2cts/m,
2m intro, 32m

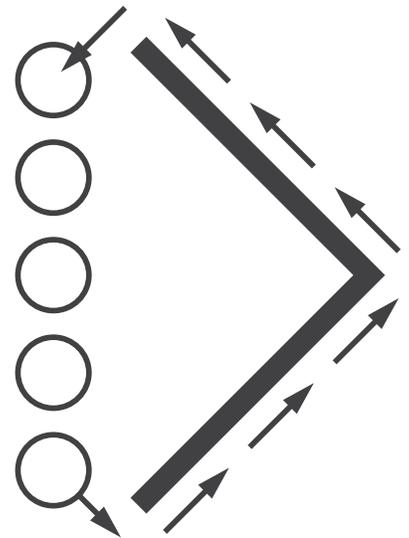
E. The Mountain Dance

Enchainements of two movements can be remembered by most children at this level. Make the two sides of a mountain on the floor with colored tape; each side is about four or five feet long at about a 90° angle.

Have the children sit in a row facing the bottom of the mountain, waiting their turn on the mountain.

To introduce it, take the first child by the hand and lead her to the mountain. Tell her to walk up this side of the mountain, and walk down the other side. Walk with her if needed.

When she finishes, show her where to sit while the others take their turns. Once they get the idea of the



mountain, add the music as background. It is good training for their ears, and makes the exercise more fun. Use only ONE movement version on any one day. Each child moves freely through the music. Repeat the music as needed.

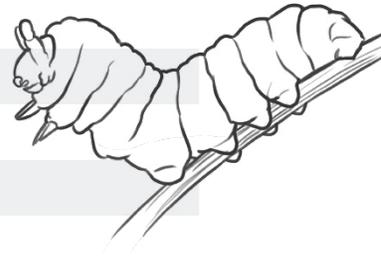
- a. Walk up the mountain, walk down the mountain.
- b. Walk up the mountain, run down the mountain.
- c. Jump (on two feet) up the mountain, walk down the mountain.
- d. Hop (on one foot) up the mountain, walk down down the mountain.

tr# 41
 ♪ 6/8, 2cts/m,
 2m intro, 22m

F. The Caterpillar

Crawling activities encourage coordination. Start curled up on the floor, pretending to be a sleeping caterpillar.

- 1-4 The sleeping caterpillar wakes up.
- 1-8 The caterpillar crawls, looking for a tasty leaf to eat.
- 1-8 Caterpillar finds a leaf to eat, and stops to chew on it.
- 1-16 Repeat the crawling and eating.
- 1-8 Find a place to curl up and go to sleep or to spin a cocoon.

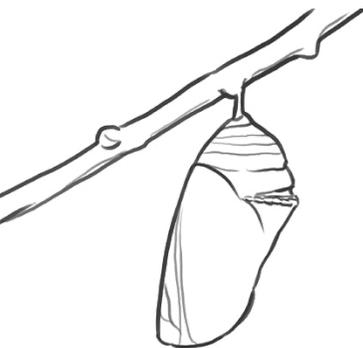


tr# 42
 ♪ 2/4, 2cts/m,
 2m intro, 20m

G. The Chrysalis or Cocoon

Start curled up on the floor, as if asleep inside of a cocoon.

- 1-4 Begin to wake up, eyes flutter.
- 5-8 Several small wiggles of the body.
- 1-8 Push against the cocoon, trying to get out.
- 1-4 The cocoon breaks open, push it away. Carefully stand and spread wings.
- 1-12 Slowly wave wings up to 2nd and down again to dry them. (Could walk slowly forward, or turn in place while drying wings.)
- 1-2 Hold wings out in 2nd.
- 3-4 Do a knee bend (demi pli ) with arms lowering.
- 5-6 Straighten.
- 7-8 Lift arms to 2nd to show wings.



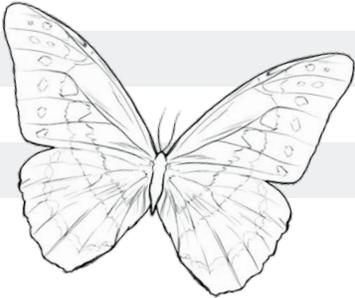
tr# 43/67

♩ 6/8, 2cts/m,
1m intro, 24m

H. The Butterfly

Start standing in places on the Dancer's Circle, arms down and relaxed.
Movements are intended to be phrased with the music, not counted exactly.

- 1-2 Lift wings to 2nd.
- 3-8 Flutter wings gently, getting ready to fly.
- 1-8 Fly around the garden, smelling the flowers.
- 1-4 Choose a pretty flower to sit on, (kneel).
- 5-8 Rest, lifting arms (wings) up, palms together, (like a butterfly would rest).
- 1-2 Stand, arms 2nd.
- 3-8 Flutter wings gently, getting ready to fly.
- 1-8 Fly around the garden smelling the flowers.
- 1-4 Choose a pretty flower to sit on, (kneel).
- 5-8 End with arms (wings) up, palms together.



tr# 44/68

♩ 4/4, 2cts/m,
2m intro, 20m
1m coda

I. Teddy Bears

Start sitting in 2nd, arms out in 2nd.



- 1-4 Hug knees, return to 2nd.
- 1-8 Heel Togethers, 4 intended.
- 5-8 Hug knees, stand, hands on waist.
- 1-8 Jump Apart, Jump Together, 4 times.
- 1-16 Repeat Heel Togethers and Jumps.
- 1-2 4 fast claps. Bow.

tr# 45/46/69

♩ 2/4, 2cts/m,
2m intro,
12m song

2m intro,
16m dance,
2m song

J. Pretty Little Bird!

Poem and choreography by Jennifer Barnhurst, used by permission.

Sing: "Hop, Hop, Hop, Pretty Little Bird,
"See me fly now, Way up high now,
"Turn and spin and, Reach the sky now.
"Hop, Hop, Hop, Pretty little Bird!"

Dance: 1-4 Hops on one foot.



5-8	Face audience, one foot forward, lift arms diagonally up at sides. (This is one “bird pose;” others are possible.)
5-6	Stop, arms in 2nd, turn around once.
7-8	Reach up to the sky, looking up.
1-8	Repeat the run, turn, reach.
1-4	Hops on one foot.
5-8	Bird Pose, hold.
Sing:	“Pretty Little Bird!”

tr# 47

♩ 4/4, 4cts/m,
2m intro, 10m

K.a. Dancing Dolls

Start standing on spots, in first position, hands holding skirt.

1-8	Point together, 4 intended.
9-16	Slowly turn in place, holding skirt out.
1-8	Point together, 4 intended.
9-16	Slowly turn in place, holding skirt out.
1-8	Kneel, sit on feet, reach arms forward & smile!

tr# 48/70

♩ 2/4, 2cts/m,
2m intro, 28m

K.b. Dancing Dolls, a longer dance

1-8	Point together. 4 intended.
9-16	Slowly turn in place, holding skirt out.
1-8	Point together, 4 intended.
9-16	Slowly turn in place, holding skirt out.
1-8	4 side closes to the right.
9-16	4 side closes to the left.
1-8	Arms forward, arms up, arms open, bring hands to sides of face & smile!

tr# 49/71

♩ 3/4, 1ct/m,
2m intro, 16m +6/8,
2cts/m, 16m

L. Ice Skates, or Rollerblades

1-4	Put on your skates.
5-8	Carefully stand up, hold arms out for balance (2nd position.)
1-8	Skate slowly; you are learning how (slide feet on floor, from foot to foot).

- 1-20 Skate faster now, you know how!
- 1-2 Sit quickly, as if you had fallen.
- 3-6 Look surprised.
- 7-8 You get an idea, to pretend you intended to sit down on the ice (ground).
- 1-4 Sit in a graceful pose. One arm up high, and smile!

tr# 50/72

♩ 2/4, 2cts/m,
2m intro, 24m, cord

M. Toy Drums

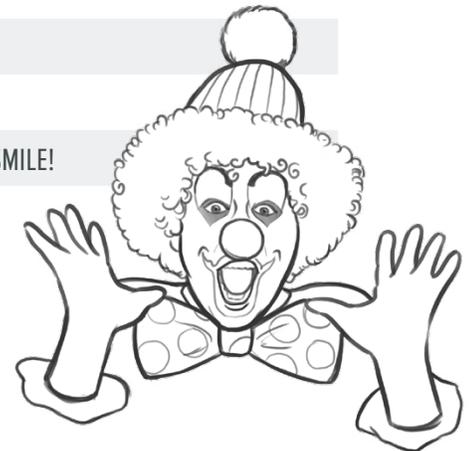
- 1-8 Beat on imaginary drum.
- 1-8 Little fast walks forward (like a mechanical doll).
- 1-16 Repeat drum beats and fast walks.
- 1-16 Hold drumsticks crossed in front (above the drum) and do 3 or 4 marching turns.
- chord Reach arms back & bend forward for bow, or do the Level 1 curtsy.
- 1-4 Sit in a graceful pose. One arm up high, and smile!

tr# 51/73

♩ 6/8, 2cts/m,
2m intro, 28m

N. Clowns Are Fun!

- 1-4 Standing, wave at audience.
- 1-2 Squat down with hands on floor, hold.
- 3-4 Jump up with hands up and out, hold. (Down & Up exercise.)
- 5-16 Repeat the down and up movements, 4 times in all.
- 1-16 Heel Together 8 times.
- 1-8 In 2nd do eight “clown rocks,” with hands held up.
- 1-4 Wave at audience
- 1-2 Squat down with hands on floor.
- 3 Scoot feet back (into a “pushup” position).
- 4-6 Lie down, roll over once, ending on stomach again.
- 7-8 Elbows on floor; chin in hands. Bend knees to lift feet & SMILE!



tr# 52
♩ 3/4, 1ct/m,
1m intro, 4m

X. CURTSEY OR BOW

Teacher or a helper holds both of child's hands. Both do a knee bend, and thank each other for the class. This is done one at a time. Children sit until their turn comes. Later, the class can do it all together with hands on waist, and the teacher leading. Use the music when the class is ready.

- 1 Hands on waist, bend knees.
- 2 Straighten.
- 3 Reach arms towards audience and smile.
- 4 Hold.



NOTE TO TEACHERS

Sometimes the musical timing given for an exercise or dance may not feel quite right for your class. Please feel free to adjust the choreography and timing to suit the musical and artistic needs of your particular class of three and four year olds! Each class will be different in exactly how they respond to an idea or to a piece of music.

*Teach
the child;
the material is a
flexible tool.*

Teachers of these very young dancers need to be flexible, and to remember that the child's happy feelings in class, and eventual artistic development as a dancer are much more important than the exactness of the written instructions for an exercise or dance!

PERFORMING

Recital arrangements can be created from groups of the dance sequences, such as:

1. A Butterfly Story: F, G, and H.
CD: 41, 42, 43/67.
2. Toys That Dance: I, K, M, N. CD: 44/68, 47, 48/70, 50/72, 51/73.
3. Winter: C,L, I (as a snowman), and H (as a snowflake)
CD: 33/62, 49/71, 44/68, 43/67.

Different children can be assigned to do each little dance while the others sit in places, or the entire class can do two or three of

the dances as a set. Changing a prop, or a single costume piece adds to the effect for performances.

RECORDED MUSIC

The first recording section contains the entire list of musical selections played on piano.

Clapping sounds have been included in a few places to help the children clap in the right places in the music. Following this basic section some items are repeated with other instruments and special effects. These can be used to give additional variety to classwork or performances.

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Music List

Track	Number	Title	Track	Number	Title
1/53	2.	Positions for the Feet	27/59	20.b.	Hopping on One Foot
2	3.	Arm Positions	28	21.	Seahorse or Starfish
3	4.	Point Together	29	22.	Our Heads Can Dance
4	5.	Heel Together	30/60	24.	The Lost Ball (crawling)
5	6.a.	Feet Apart, Feet Together	31/61	A.	Balloons
6	6.b.	Jump Apart, Jump Together	32	B.	The Rabbit
7	6.c.	Jump Apart, Jump Tog. at 2 speeds	33/62	C.	Icicles
8	7.a.	Down and Up	34/63	D.	Rain Splash
9	7.b.	Down and Up at 2 speeds	35/64	25.	Rocking My Doll
10	8.a	Making Shapes	36	26.a.	Step to the Side, Close Your Feet
11	8.b.	Making Shapes, played faster	37	26.b.	Side, Close
12/54	9.	The Dancer's Circle	38	27.a.	Galloping
13/55	10.	Marching	39/65	27.b.	My Pony
14	11.	Walking	40/66	E.	Mountain Dance
15	12.	Running	41	F.	The Caterpillar
16	13.a	Picking Flowers	42	G.	The Chrysalis, or Cocoon
17	13. b.	Setting the Table	43/67	H.	The Butterfly
18	13. c.	Creating Your Own Story	44/68	I.	Teddy Bears
19/56	14.	Dancing Toes and Dancing Heels	45	J.	Pretty Little Bird! (piano only)
20/57	15.	Bending Knees	46/6	J.	Pretty Little Bird! (with flute)
21	16.a.	Lifting Legs	47	K.a.	Dancing Dolls
22/58	16.b.	Two Exercises Together	48/70	K.b.	Dancing Dolls, a longer dance
23	17.	Knee Bends	49/71	L.	Ice Skates or Rollerblades
24	18.	Fast Jumps	50/72	M.	Toy Drums
25	19.	Big Jumps	51/73	N.	Clowns Are Fun!
26	20.a.	Learning to Hop	52	28.	Curtsey or Bow

LEVEL 1 — FIRST TERM

	tr#	I. Beginning of Class
	↓	Welcome, roll, greeting each child by name
	—	1. Parts of the body we use in dancing
1/53		2. Positions for the Feet
2		3. Arm Positions
		II. Exercises for awareness of body parts, and a sense of balance.
3		4. Point Together
4		5. Heel Together
8		7.a. Down and Up
		III. For awareness of space, their place in space, and coordination.
12/54		9. The Dancer's Circle
13/55		10. Marching
14		11. Walking
		IV. Floor Exercises, to rest legs, for expression, music, muscle use
16		13.a. Picking Flowers
19/56		14. Dancing Toes, Dancing Heels
20/57		15. Bending Knees
		V. "Ballet Technique"
23		17. Knee Bends (parallel demi pliés)
24		18. Fast Jumps
		VI. Floor Exercises, for rest, expression, musical rhythms, coordination
29		22. Our Heads Can Dance
—		23. Music Study, 2/4 rhythm
30/60		34. The Lost Ball
		VII. Creativity and Mimes

- 31 A. Balloons
32 B. The Rabbit

VIII. Dance Steps

- 35/64 25. Rocking My Doll
38 27. Galloping

IX. Dance Sequences

- 40/66 E. The Mountain Dance
41 F. The Caterpillar
47 K.a. Dancing Dolls

52 X. Curtsey or Bow for Level 1

USING THE TERM LISTS:

These lists are suggestions only. Not all items can be done in every class. Adjust the lists to suit the needs of your class. It will be different each year. You can use different creative and dance sequences, and different versions of some of the basic activities from year to year. This helps to prevent "teacher burnout." These lists may be too long for some classes. Again, design your lessons to meet both your own personal teaching style, and the needs and abilities of the children you are working with. The last term will need to be devoted mostly to review, and recital preparation.

LEVEL 1 — THIRD TERM

tr#



I. Beginning of Class

Welcome, roll, greeting each child by name

2 3. Arm positions

II. Exercises for awareness of self, and a sense of balance.

3 4. Point Together

4 5. Heel Together

6 6.b. Jump Apart, Jump Together

9 7.b. Down and Up at 2 speeds

III. For awareness of space, their place in space, and coordination.

10 8. Making Shapes, walking between shapes.

13/55 10. Marching

14 11. Walking

15 12. Running

IV. Floor Exercises, to rest legs, for expression, for music, isolations.

16/17/18 13. A mime they know, and one new one

19/56 14. Dancing Toes, Dancing Heels

20/57 15. Bending Knees, one at a time (for use of muscles in hopping)

22/58 16.b. Two Exercises Together

V. "Ballet Technique"

23 17. Knee Bends

24 18. Fast Jumps

25 19. Big Jumps

27/59 20.b. Hopping on One Foot

VI. Floor Exercises, for rest, expression, music rhythms, coordination

28 21. Starfish

29 22. Our Heads Can Dance

— 23. Music Study

30 24. A crawling activity created by the teacher, or The Lost Ball

VII. Creativity and Mimes.

31/61 A. Balloons

33/62 C. Icicles

VIII. Dance Steps

25. Rocking My Doll

35/64 26.b. Side, Close

37 27.b. My Pony

39/65 Be sure to teach or review as individual items the various steps that will be in their recital dance.

IX. Dance Sequences

40/66 E. The Mountain Dance

44/68 I. Teddy Bears

45/46/69 J. Pretty Little Bird!

52 X. Curtsey or Bow for Level 1

LEVEL 1 — FOURTH TERM

tr#
↓

I. Beginning of Class

Welcome, roll, greet each child by name

- 1 2. Positions for the Feet
- 2 3. Arm positions

II. Exercises for awareness of body parts, and a sense of balance.

- 3 4. Point Together
- 4 5. Heel Together
- 7 6.b. Jump Out and In, 2 speeds
- 9 7.b. Down and Up, 2 speeds

III. For awareness of space, their place in space, and coordination.

- 10 8. Making Shape
- 13/55 9. Marching
- 14 10. Walking
- 15 11. Running

IV. Floor Exercises, to rest legs, for expression, for muscle use.

- 16/17/18 13. Their favorite mimes
- 19/56 14. Dancing Toes, Dancing Heels
- 21 16.a. Lifting Legs

V. “Ballet Technique”

- 23 17. Knee Bends
- 24 18. Fast Jumps
- 25 19. Big Jumps
- 27/59 20. Hopping on One Foot

VI. Floor Exercises, to rest legs, expression, music rhythms, coordination

- 28 21. Seahorse or Starfish
- 23. Music Study, using rhythm instruments with the 2/4 and 3/4 rhythms

VII. Creativity Section and Mimes.

- 31/61 A. Balloons
- 32 B. The Rabbit

VIII. Dance Steps

- 35/64 25. Rocking My Doll
- 37 26.b. Side, Close
- 38/39/55 27. Galloping, or My Pony

IX. Dance Sequences

- 40/66 E. Mountain Dance
- choose · One or two more that they already know and enjoy doing.
- choose · Their Recital Dance for this year. This should be the only new item for them to learn during this term. For best retention, rehearse it near the beginning of class, and at the end. Teach it in small parts. If it does not have a story line, make one up (keep it simple—it can be silly) as children this age need a simple story in order to put steps and movements into a sequence.

52 X. Curtsey or Bow for Level 1

III. Managing Children's Behavior

CHILD DEVELOPMENT CHARACTERISTICS.....	54
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Child Development Characteristics

EIGHTEEN MONTHS

Physical Characteristics: Walks, climbs, crawls, runs. Enjoys pushing and pulling. Takes things apart, but not too good at putting together. Tires easily. Not well coordinated, not potty trained.

Mental Ability: Uses meaningless sounds, some beginning language. Likes “mine” and “no”. Likes stories short, needs pictures to maintain attention. Curious. Thinks only in concrete terms of what can be seen now, or touched, or felt, or heard. No sense of time sequence or passage of time.

Social/Emotional Skills: Plays alone. May watch others, or play in parallel. Self-centered. Cannot share. Cries easily. Moods change quickly.

TWO YEARS

Physical Characteristics: Active. Irritable and restless when tired. Jumps, walks, runs. Can clap hands and kick a ball. Large muscles developing rapidly. Can handle large crayons, but not buttons or zippers.

Mental Ability: Thinking is simple, direct, and in the present tense only. Does not comprehend abstract ideas. Attention span of about two minutes. Curious, likes to explore. Enjoys repetition. Can put two or three words together into short sentences or phrases. Likes simple puzzles, texture books, toys that stack or go together easily. Can use simple art materials. Learns simple songs. Likes short stories.

Social Skills: Still needs to play mostly alone. Likes playing near others, but not able to share. Will argue over toys when with others. Appeals to adults to get what he wants from other children.

Emotional Maturity: No regard for time. Dependant on adults. Loving and affectionate. Likes mother to be near. Likes holding hands, sitting on laps, etc. Shows anger and frustration (tantrums) to let you know how he feels. Moods swing quickly. Wants independence, but cannot be left alone.

TWO AND A HALF YEARS

Physical Characteristics: Marches, jumps, runs, claps. Tries most motor skills, but falls often, especially when running. Tires easily, but doesn't want to take naps. Dresses self and likes to feed self. Can get things out. Putting things back is hard.

Mental Ability: Uses sentences, often run on. Likes conversations with others. Talks a lot. Still thinks in the present tense. Likes some make-believe, but usually prefers things that could be real. Likes singing, stories, arts and crafts, finger plays.

Social Skills: Is beginning to learn to share and take turns somewhat, if guided and supervised. Will play a short time with others. Is bossy. Feelings easily hurt. May cry easily.

Emotional Maturity: Makes fewer negative responses. Some ability to control emotional outbreaks. Can make only simple, limited choices between two items. Says “no” quite

often—but doesn't always mean no, it's just easier to say! Assertive, stubborn, demanding. Wants things his way. Is becoming aware of himself as a person. Can be frightened by make-believe creatures, and situations.

THREE YEARS OLD, READY FOR DANCE CLASS

Physical Characteristics: Can walk and run, but coordination is not well developed. Needs much practice at these basic skills. Large muscle development is important at this age. Small muscle development is barely starting.

Should be able to begin learning hops on one foot with assistance, forward gallops (non-technical), jumps in place on two feet, marching. Some may be able to skip, especially as they near their fourth birthday. Skipping is an advanced coordination that should not be forced on threes. It can be shown, and the child helped if they are close to learning it. Tires quickly when running, galloping, etc.

Likes using hands, but doesn't have much small muscle development yet.

Mental Abilities: Has a very short attention span. Cannot deal with abstract ideas. Is curious, inquisitive, asks questions and makes comments that are off the subject. Is not able to sort ideas into categories. That is why their comments wander from the subject.

“Skipping is an advanced coordination that should not be forced on threes.”

Loves to pretend and imagine. Likes musical, dramatic, and movement activities. Language is developing rapidly, and many inaccuracies of understanding are present. Likes to talk and learn new words. Wants to know what they mean. Often develops misunderstandings of meanings of words, phrases, and basic concepts.

Has difficulty understanding the passage of time. Thinks of everything as being here and now, in the present tense.

Is imitative. Learns by absorbing feelings and attitudes from those around him or her, and by copying their actions.

Social Skills: Is self-centered. Will work beside but not cooperatively with others, especially peers. Sharing and taking turns are a very difficult idea. A child needs to securely “own” something before they feel safe in “sharing” it.

Happily plays and works alone. Beginning to play with others, but not much cooperative play yet. Best not to require partner activities in dance class.

With careful guidance can do some group work. Can work well with a doll or teddy bear as a partner. (Likes to use imagination at this age!)

Likes to be close to adults they trust. Needs security.

Emotional Maturity: Is very anxious to please adults, as this is necessary for survival, and for getting what they need and want from these adults.

May strike out emotionally or physically at situations and persons whom the child sees as threatening, or causing troublesome feelings, fears, or anxieties.

New dance room with unfamiliar space and furnishings, new teacher, new kids, unfamiliar sounds, uncertain expectations, etc., could trigger such a response! An emotional response to anything new is common for threes.

Cries easily. Dance teachers should not feel they are “to blame” if a three year old cries. Be matter-of-fact and calm. Reassure the

child. Ex.: “I want my mommy!”, “It’s OK, she will be here in a few minutes. Sit by me until she comes.” Distraction from the fear, and calm reassurance that all is well should help.

An emotional response to anything new is common for threes.

Is developing some self-reliance and independence; is willing to be separated from mother for short periods of time. Is beginning to realize that he or she really is a separate individual, and that he or she can take care of himself or herself in some ways. This is why threes can usually come to dance class successfully, but under threes seldom succeed for very long in this setting.

Implications For Teaching In The Ballet Class

Physical Implications: Use many activities that encourage large muscle development along natural lines. Use props that are easy to hold: no small or intricate items.

Avoid small muscle use with feet, and do limited use with hands. Finger plays and mimes need to be simple, easy, and involve use of arms and facial expression as well as hands.

Give a short rest for legs every 5-6 minutes. Do not try to discipline their bodies to move exactly on the musical beats. They don't have enough muscular control to do this. Notice that quick movements may be less controlled, but are easier and less tiring for young children to do.

Intellectual Implications: Use a wide variety of teaching approaches: story ideas, imitation, following a leader, imagery. Alternate quiet and lively types of activities.

Use a few visual aids, but not too many. One or two per class is enough. Present ideas in short simple sentences. Do not use questions which require choices for answers.

Make time for some short talking of children to teacher, but keep it brief. Don't take what they say too seriously, as they often get

incorrect impressions of happenings and things, and repeat untruths not realizing that they are doing so.

Help them to learn the correct words for the things they are learning and doing in class. Teach parts of body names, opposites, comparing sizes, speeds, colors, simple counting. Use repetition in small doses to reinforce ideas.

“Guide and structure the activities carefully to avoid disruptive behavior.”

Social Implications: Structure the idea of learning to share and take turns. Be patient. Don't make them wait too long, or too often. They do have limits of comfort in this area!

Encourage cooperation between members of the class, but do not expect any smooth “partner” type activities. Learning to space, make lines, make circles, are possible but challenging. Guide and structure the activities carefully to avoid disruptive behavior. Do not hesitate to stop the class, or to change your plans if things are not going well.

Emotional Implications: Give approval by facial expression, nodding head, and simple one-word encouragements. Let them know you like them. Emphasize the things that “make us happy”. Doing it right, doing it well, being courteous, etc. Remember, you can create the correct emotional responses in the

children at this age. They don't have locked in feelings about things in the same way that adults do. You can teach them to enjoy an activity.

Often their objections come out because they are copying someone else, or they do not know what response you want them to make. Keep the atmosphere warm, friendly, accepting.

Develop independent action in the dance class. Show, do with them, repeat, then say: "Your turn! I get to watch!" And do it. Or ask them, "Can you do it without me, now?"

Most threes will be excited to show some autonomy and quickly say, "yes" even if they really can't. Give a small amount of help if they become frustrated.

Compliment their efforts, and the small amount that they were able to do without your help. You might tell them they are getting older and smarter and stronger each week.

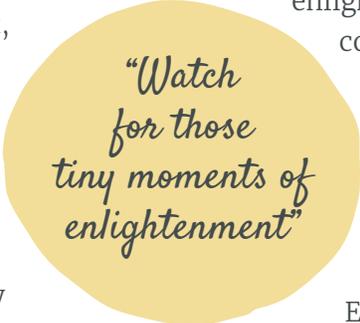
Enjoy Your Class!

A good dose of calm, unruffled common sense solves most problems. Hopefully you will

never need to really "discipline" any of your very young dancers, but will be able to distract their attention to the correct expectations by momentarily recognizing their feelings, and calmly guiding them towards the behavior that you want. Success in pleasing you will give them a greater sense of security, success, and independence.

Watch for those tiny moments of enlightenment; those tiny little bits of coordination improvement; those tiny improvements in ability to maintain appropriate behavior; those tiny bits of things remembered and enjoyed by your young students.

Enjoy their progress—the lesson material is not challenging to you, so look for your challenge and enjoyment in the gradual progress, and in the happiness and fun of your students. See these things in terms of their very limited abilities and be happy with them for every tiny bit of progress.



*“Watch
for those
tiny moments of
enlightenment”*

Thoughts on Teaching Threes

1. Use simple locomotor movements, and “dance” movements that alternate feet each time rather than repeating on the same foot. Avoid standing on one leg any length of time.
2. Use a slightly faster tempo than you would for older children—short legs like faster movements.
3. Provide for security in the class: lots of familiar movements and exercises; a special “spot” or “place” in class for each student, perhaps with their name.
4. Do teach them to know the parts of their bodies by name: foot, toe, heel, ankle, knee, etc.
5. Do teach them creative movement concepts: high, low; happy, sad; big, small; up, down; etc., expression of ideas, animals, etc.
6. Do teach them slow, simple, even rhythms (not compound): One, two; and One, two, three. Use clapping, a dance drum, a tambourine, etc.
7. Speak to them in simple, declarative sentences, no questions, and no conditional statements.
8. Allow them to sit on their “spots” between each exercise. Small legs tire quickly. This habit of always returning to their own “place” will help greatly with class discipline!
9. Keep the class moving. As they “rest” a few seconds between activities, you will be explaining the next activity, or complimenting them on how well they performed the last one.
10. Remember that threes and fours should NOT be asked to differentiate between right and left as they move. Accept either foot.
11. Remember that they are not socially mature enough to dance with partners. Use teddy bears or dolls for “partners” at this age. “Make your teddy bear jump. Now you jump. Hold your bear’s hands and jump with him.”
12. Remember that they do not understand half of the words that they can use. Never assume they “know” anything! Ideas that may seem familiar and obvious to you are often a mystery to them. Explain and show everything. Relate new ideas to what they already know, or are familiar with.
13. Keep your statements positive. Explain clearly what you expect in terms of behavior. SMILE! And they will smile with you.
14. Remember that three year olds cannot remember very many items in sequence; two items is a lot of memory for them. If you will use only three or four sections, or movements to a dance, and keep the

dance to about a minute long, you will find that your threes and fours can perform on stage without prompting.

15. Tell them what you want them to do. Never ask them. They are not mature enough to make that decision, and will often say “no” out of frustration. Occasionally you can give limited choices: “Shall we walk or hop to this music?” Rather than “What shall we do on this music?”. Or say, “This music sounds like walking music. Walk in a circle for me.” This last instruction can be used if you have previously taught them where to walk in the “Dancer’s Circle.”

16. When doing movements in a circle, appoint a leader. This helps keep the class in order.

17. Threes and most fours do not have the muscular control or sense of balance necessary to stay on musical beats very well, so choreograph with this in mind. Use a simple movement that can be repeated,

changing feet, for an entire phrase or section of music. When the music changes, change the movement. Use locomotor movements in their dances. They need to move freely part of the time.

18. Let them dance FOR YOU, once they have learned a movement. (Do not always do it for them!) Develop their independence and confidence with movement.

19. Remember that their tiny bones ligaments, and growth plates are still VERY SOFT and need to be allowed to grow and develop naturally for quite a few years before doing any technique or turnout or forceful stretching.

20. Three year olds must not be asked to coordinate arm and leg movements. When feet move, arms must be free to move naturally, so that the basic coordination patterns can develop naturally. When you want them to use their arms, have them stand still.

Happy muscles means happy kids, which means happy parents, which means students who stay!

Letter from a Young Dancer To-Be



Dear Dance Teacher,

Hi! I'm three, and I'm here to dance! Please treat me gently, because my "person" is just beginning to unfold, kind of like a rosebud ready to open.

I need nourishment, and safe structure, and a lot of understanding patience from my new dance teacher! But I EXPECT that she will love me, because Mom does. I'm a little scared to leave Mom, and maybe a little or maybe a LOT scared of this strange new place I don't know about yet, and all these strange people! But I am as anxious to please as a "friendly puppy"!

I really don't know exactly what "dancing" is all about, yet. I'm here because Mom seems to feel it is a good thing for me, and I pretty much trust her feelings at this point in my life. Remember, I just started talking a year or so ago, and I don't know what everything means just yet. So if I don't do what you ask, or get scared when you ask me a question, maybe it's because I don't really know what all those big words mean. I still use feelings more than words in trying to understand life.

So, hello teacher! Let's Dance! (Whatever that is. I hope it's fun!)

Signed, "3"

P. S. Teach me what my young soft muscles and joints feel comfortable doing. Treat me like a valuable person. Remember I am NOT AN ADULT, and can't figure things out like an adult could, or move as well just yet. But I promise I'll do my very best for you, and try hard to learn all that you and Mom (or Dad) want me to.

IV. The Dancing Needs of Children

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Posture

FOR AGE THREE TO FOUR, GOOD POSTURE CONSISTS OF:

1. Being able to stand without falling down.
2. Standing with weight even on both feet, and feet parallel or nearly so.
3. Head centered over shoulders, and held erect.
4. Arms relaxed at sides.
5. Shoulders and hips level and square, or nearly so.
6. Knees natural. Somewhat relaxed, nearly straight but not “pulled up.”
7. Tummy and seat muscles at ease.

Most posture errors at this age are developmental. They will disappear as the child grows and the muscles controlling balance and symmetry strengthen. It is important that specific posture alignments not be corrected by the dance teacher at this age.

Encourage symmetry in appearance and action. Ask students to stand tall and even. Use many activities that use the two sides of the body equally. Encourage the child to learn to use both legs in such things as hopping and galloping. Do not require perfection, just correct effort.

Realize that sometimes the child’s muscles just don’t do what is asked of them. And, sometimes the child has not discovered how to get his or her muscles to do some things.

Children can be asked to “stand tall”, and to “reach up high” to encourage an awareness of posture.

Good posture is like a lovely rose growing in the garden. Our legs are like the roots. They reach down into the ground to hold the rose bush in place. Our head is like the lovely rose that grows up towards the sky.

POSTURE CORRECTIONS MUST WAIT UNTIL THE CHILD IS OLDER

1. Pulling in the stomach should not be attempted by children under seven as the spine is too short in comparison to the viscera. If forced, it will cause incorrect muscle development in the lower back.
2. Tucking the seat in. Again, this will cause incorrect muscle development in the lower back.
3. Pulling up the knees. This will cause an overdevelopment of the thigh muscles, and a weakening of the hamstrings and knee joints. This can also cause the knees to become more sway backed.

Save the technical corrections for later.

Let them move!

Let them have fun!

Let them grow!

Music and Memory

The skills of moving in time to music, and of being able to remember the order of steps in a dance develop gradually in young children.

Children age three and four can hear the phrases (sentences) in music, and learn to change exercises or steps on the musical phrases. They cannot stay on musical beats, because they lack the fine muscle and balance control that this requires.

They can remember a series of two items, or two dance sequences, but not more, unless there is a story line to help. At four, they can learn to identify the introductions in music. Threes can identify fast and slow music, and can learn to start and stop with the music.

If the dance has a simple story line, the memory is much improved for all ages.

Keep the steps or sections of the dance very simple, something that can be “danced through the music”. Use the class exercises whenever possible. Familiar movements are more easily remembered.

Age four can sometimes match the rhythm of the melody, and can remember slightly longer sequences than age threes. Most fours can remember up to three items in a series. They will be able to discern higher and lower tones, and reproduce simple rhythms by clapping.

Fours are still not fully able to follow musical beats very well, but can sometimes march, clap, or gallop in time to the music for short sequences.

It is surprising to many adults to learn that walking is one of the hardest movements to match to musical beats.

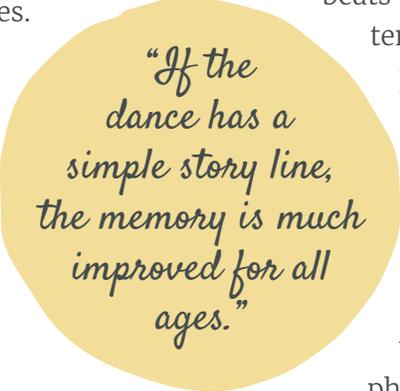
The musical tempo needs to be the natural walking speed of the child if you want them to be on the music.

Children age five are ready to match musical beats on most movements when the tempo is comfortable for their physical development. Fives will also have an increased memory for dances: three or four items in a sequence; longer for story dances.

If the recital dances are in line with the memory, musical, and physical abilities of the children, prompting from the wings or from the front row will not be needed. Threes and fours may still need the moral support and reassurance of being able to see their teacher as they dance, but they will be able to perform their dance unassisted!

Dance teachers need to know how to count music correctly, and to know the basics of music: rhythm, meter, pitch. A few months of lessons from a good music teacher, either vocal or instrumental, is the best way to learn the musical skills that you need.

Practicing with a metronome might help teachers who have difficulty keeping a steady tempo when clapping or using a dance drum. A metronome could be used in class to help children become aware of tempo, and a steady rhythm.



“If the dance has a simple story line, the memory is much improved for all ages.”

Choreographing For Little Ones

By the use of simple story lines, imagery, and imitation, the teacher can create an infinite number of dances for young dancers that fit within their developmental abilities.

Check any purchased routines that you plan to use against the guidelines of symmetrical development. Adjust the movements that do not fit the child's level. All age threes and fours should do most of their work at the fundamental movement level.

Balance is not well developed. Performing to the beats in music requires good control of muscles, and of the body's balance against gravity. Young children have not matured to this point.

Threes, and most fours cannot control how many times their feet do a movement. Their ability to count is purely intellectual, not muscular, at this level.

Threes can hear the changes in the phrases of music, and can learn to change steps when the music changes. Choreograph to their abilities.

Sequential memory at this level is quite limited. Memory for pure movement will be one or possibly two items at a time.

Their memory for a series of familiar movements that are fun to do may be two or three items. Movement sequences that tell a story are remembered much more easily. If a dance has even a suggestion of a story to it the ease of remembering increases considerably.

CHOREOGRAPHIC GUIDELINES

1. Use a story line to the dance. Keep it very simple: three or four parts to the story, each of which suggest a type of movement, and/or a simple mime.
2. Change movements with the changes and/or phrases in the music. The children won't count the music, but they can hear when it changes, or seems to "take a breath."
3. Let them move about the stage part of the time, rather than trying to keep them in a line facing front. (Which they are not too good at doing just yet!)
4. If you want them well spaced, and in lines, put pieces of colored tape on the floor where each dancer is to stand. They have little if any kinesthetic ability to space themselves at this age, and very little awareness of sharing space with others.
5. When they are to change formation, as from line to circle, be sure you choose a good leader who will lead them into the next formation and movements. Use a child from an older class if necessary.

"Choreograph to their abilities."

6. If, after two weeks, the children cannot perform a dance step, it is probably too hard for them from their point of reference. Simplify it, or drop it until later in the year.

Dances that are within the actual ability of the class can be performed by them without any prompting from the sidelines. However, this makes their performance dance quite short. One way to overcome this is to create a “ballet scene” of 3 or 4 young classes, having each perform as the others sit in places on the stage. Then all stand and do a very simple “finale” for the miniature ballet scene.

Bluebirds could be performed in a scene containing Flowers, Trees, Squirrels, Rabbits, etc. Each group would need to sit in an assigned place while the other groups performed. As a finale, all could stand & do side gallops with partners around a circle, come forward for a final bow, and skip off with partners.

Threes and fours can be paired with fives and sixes, for the finale. Young ones are usually very willing to dance with an older child.

This type of “mini ballet” is well liked by parents & kids. It does require classes to meet together the last few weeks for rehearsals, but the professional appearance of the result is well worth the extra time spent.

Following is a sample recital dance at about the right level of difficulty for this level:

BLUEBIRD DANCE

♪ Suggest a 2/4 or a 6/8 with 2 cts. per measure.

First Phrase (8 m.) Run onto the stage and fly in a circle, end in the “nest”, a small circle facing in. (Mark their places with colored floor tape.)

Second phrase (8 m.) Knee bends in the nest as they wait for mother bird to come and feed them. They can pretend to eat what she brings them.

Third phrase (4 m.) Fly out and sit on the tree branch (a straight line facing audience. Mark this with a 2nd color of tape).

Fourth phrase (4 m.) Points together as they balance on the tree branch, wings folded (Hands on waist).

Fifth phrase (8 m.)

2m Flap wings.

2m Bow.

4m Fly to nest and sit while another class dances, or fly off stage.

Coordination

Coordination is closely related to posture. Good coordination is also built upon a solid foundation of symmetry and balance in the muscles. Body symmetry involves the muscles learning to work in harmony with gravity rather than struggling against it. It is the basis for all physical skill development. It is essential for good ballet posture and technique later on.

At age three and four, the child needs to spend a great deal of time creating the solid symmetrical base needed for freedom of movement and refined coordination later on.

Coordination is strengthened and encouraged by doing lots of natural movement activities. The development of symmetry in coordination is found in two areas of fundamental movement:

1. Both sides of the body being used identically: Jumps on two feet, parallel knee bends, arm swings, etc.
2. Both sides of the body used identically, but in sequence, as in walking, running, marching, etc.

The child's arms need to swing freely during all locomotor and dance movements. Arms must not be choreographed with legs at this age. Choreographing beyond the child's current stage of development can interfere with the muscular system finding its own natural balance against gravity.

According to some authorities, forcing children to learn movement patterns beyond

their level of development can upset or delay the development of handedness, and the balanced use of the two sides of the brain. They feel that allowing the child to develop muscular and postural symmetry in the natural way permits the two sides of the brain to develop more equally.

When children are performing “mime” or hand gestures, they should be standing still. When they are using their feet and legs, their arms should be allowed to swing freely.

Hands can be placed on the waist for some movements, but should not be confined there for the entire class. In running, the use of arms as “wings”, where they are moving freely, in unison or differently, is OK—so long as it is not taught as a structured pattern.

In teaching physical skills to young children:

Let nature take its course; let children grow and strengthen according to the pattern nature has intended.

The design for good posture and good coordination is built into the growth process. Give the children correct guidance and encouragement, and let it happen.

V. Teaching Materials

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PRINTABLE RESOURCES.....	71

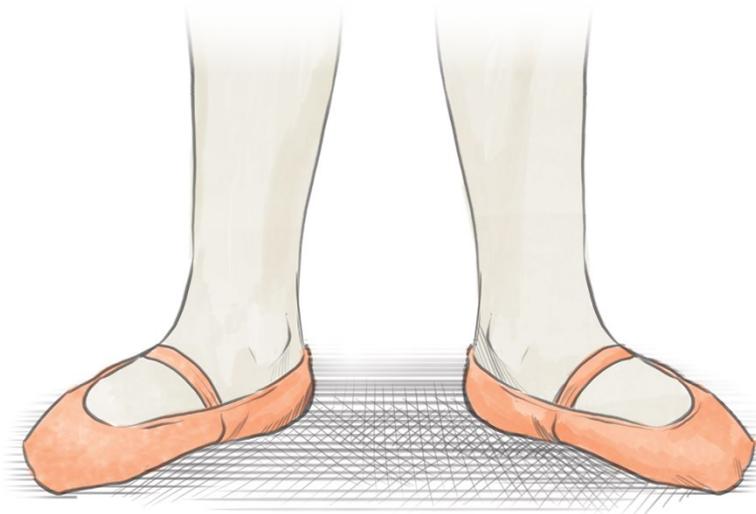
Positions of the Feet for Level One



PARALLEL OR FEET TOGETHER



FIRST POSITION

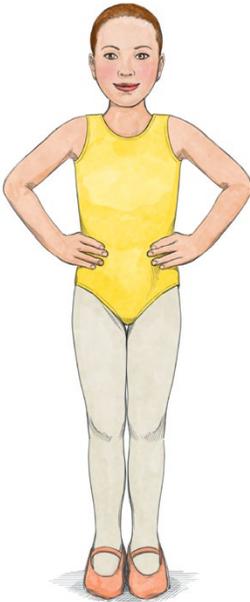


SECOND POSITION

Positions of the Arms for Level One



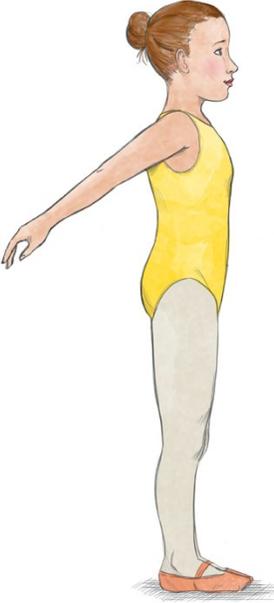
ARMS DOWN



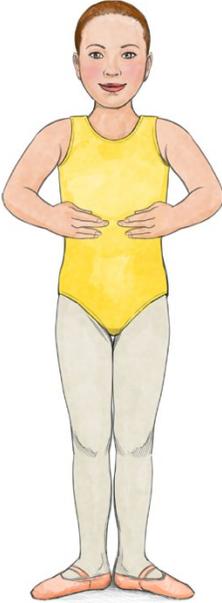
HANDS ON WAIST



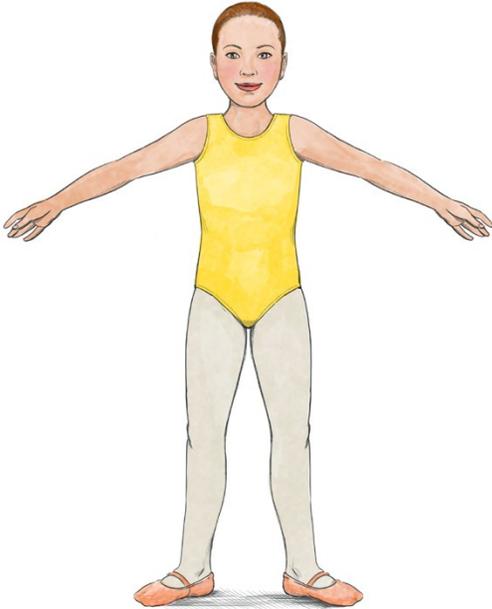
ARMS FORWARD



ARMS BACK



FIRST POSITION



SECOND POSITION

Bluebird

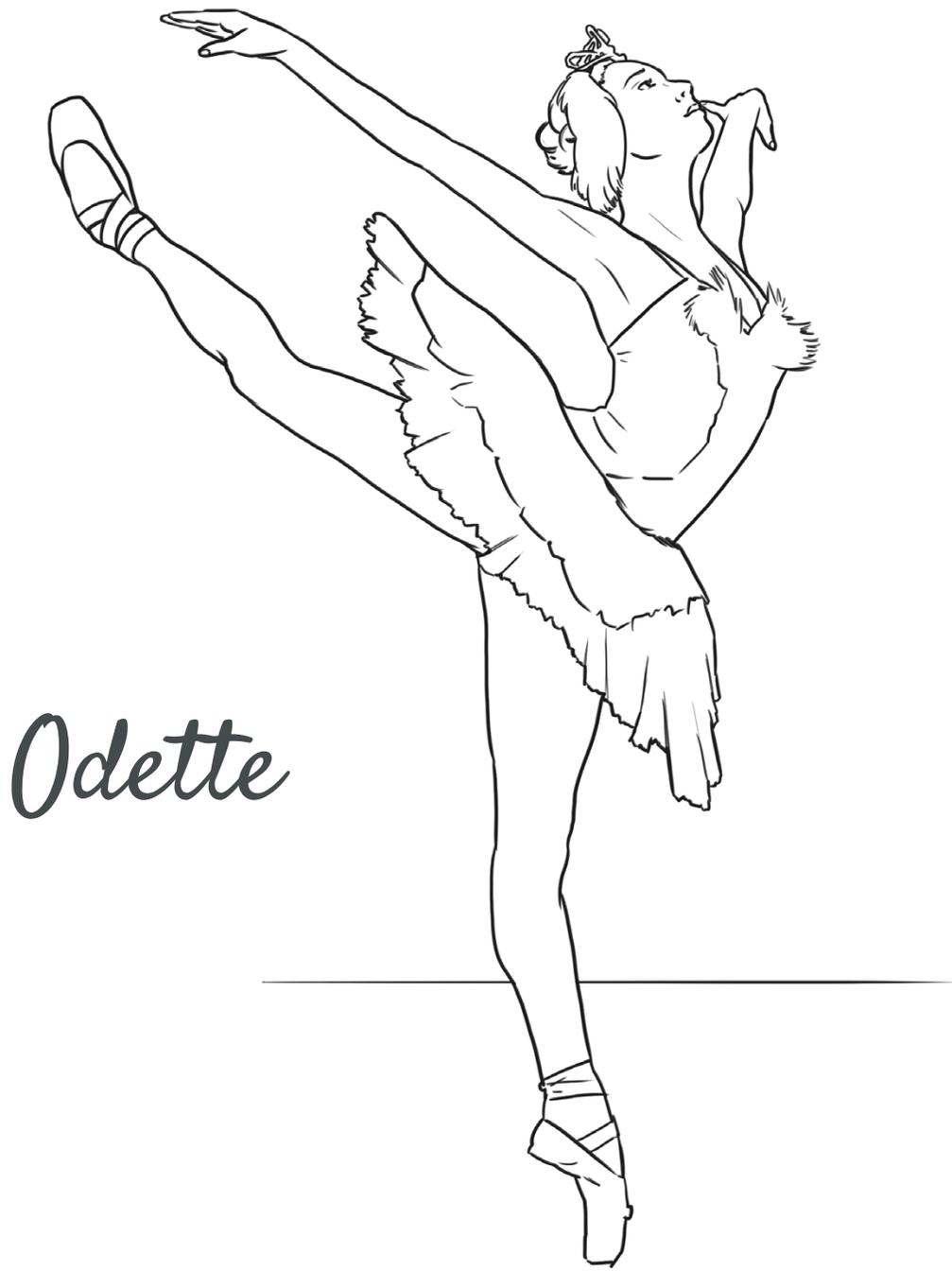




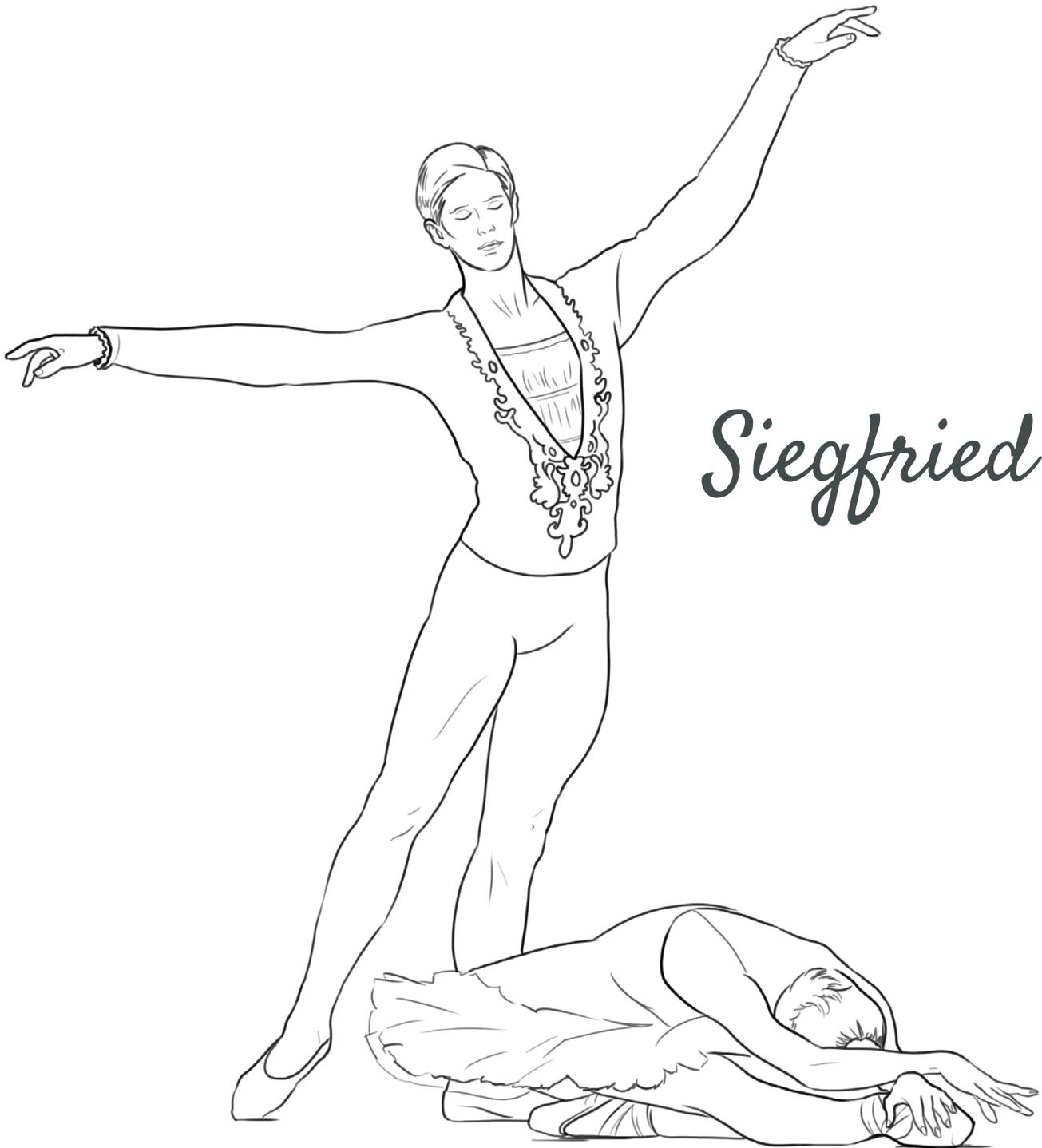
The Nutcracker

White Cat & Puss in Boots





Odette



Siegfried



I Practiced!

QUARTER _____

NAME _____

TEACHER _____

CLASS _____

ACTIVITY

INITIALS



TEACHER SIGNATURE _____



I Practiced!

QUARTER _____

NAME _____

TEACHER _____

CLASS _____

ACTIVITY

INITIALS



TEACHER SIGNATURE _____

CREATE YOUR OWN

tutu



IDEAS:

roses | sparkles | jewels | snowflakes | flowers | stars | ribbon



CERTIFICATE *of* PROMOTION

Student Name

has successfully Completed

Ballet Arts Level 1

and is hereby promoted to

Ballet Arts Level 2

Date

Teacher



CERTIFICATE *of* PROMOTION

Student Name

has successfully Completed

Ballet Arts Level 1

and is hereby promoted to

Ballet Arts Level 2

Date

Teacher

STUDENT PROGRESS

Ballet Arts Level 1

NAME _____

TEACHER _____

CLASS _____

		GOOD — With Help	VERY GOOD — Alone or With Class	EXCELLENT — Musical & Expressive
SELF AWARENESS & BALANCE	POINT TOGETHER			
	HEEL TOGETHER			
	DOWN AND UP			
SPACIAL AWARENESS & COORDINATION	MARCHING			
	WALK, RUN (TEMPO)			
	CRAWLING			
EXPRESSION & USE OF SPECIFIC MUSCLES	ARM & HAND MIME			
	DANCING TOES, HEELS			
	CURLING, STRETCHING			
BALLET TECHNIQUE	POSITIONS FOR THE FEET			
	DEMI PLIÉS			
	FAST JUMPS			
	HOPS ON ONE LEG			
DANCE STEPS	ROCKING			
	DANCE SEQUENCE			
PERFORMING	GALLOPING			
	CREATIVE SEQUENCE			
	CURTSEY			

ASSESSMENT



Name



Name



Name



Name





Name _____



Name _____



Name _____



Name _____



Thank You

Thanks for using *Ballet Arts for Young Children: Level 1!*

FEEDBACK

We need your assistance in helping ballet instructors teach ballet well. Bring your ideas to us by filling out our [online form](#) or by emailing us at theballetsource@gmail.com

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