Education Support

American Dance

Precision Dance Choreography Categories

There are seven basic categories of drill team dance: jazz, kick, pom, prop, military, lyrical and novelty-character. Many teams will use other forms of dance such as ballet, modern, tap, folk, aerobics, clogging, drill, and these areas strongly influence the individual style of a team.

General Category Descriptions:

Contemporary: A style that departs from classical dance without losing structure, form, or technique. The choreography should be innovative and fresh, as well as an interpretation of the music itself. Contemporary dance tends to combine the strong and controlled legwork of ballet with modern dances' stress on the torso. This category is designed for routines that incorporate modern elements with both classical and non-classical movement.

Field Routine: Field Routines are designed for a halftime field performance and are typically set and performed to band music. This can be any style or genre of your choice, and sometimes utilizes a prop to increase visual effects on the football field. Some common field props are: Streamers, Hoops/Hooplas, Ladders, Chairs, etc.

Hip Hop: Inspired by street-style dance, Hip hop consists of contemporary upbeat movements that are grounded, sharp, and dynamic. Evolving from Hip Hop culture, movements include a wide array of styles, including breaking, locking, and popping, each with its own distinctive moves and rhythms. Hip hop is characterized by its improvisational nature and emphasis on individuality. Choreography should be set to music that is high energy and fast paced.

Jazz: This style should focus on the technical aspects of "true" jazz, including leaps and turns. Jazz can be quick and sharp yet also fluid and interpretive in style. It does not carry out a theme, utilize a prop nor take the form of robotic, military moves.

Kick: A style executed by a group performing varied kick sequences with proper kick technique, to at least 70% of the music. It is sometimes, but not always, performed in a connected line, and can contain other forms of kicks such as developé, fan, passé, etc. Kick routines can also contain some dance steps but must have the majority of the routine focused towards some type of kick combinations.

Lyrical: This style should incorporate technical dance moves from ballet and fluid jazz, as well as encouraging proper interpretation of the music. Lyrical is sometimes thematic and emotional, but the choreography should be visual and connected throughout. Again, there is precision and energy in its execution and is not to be mistaken with improvisation.

Military: Contains sharp, robotic arm movements, footwork, and visual formations done with military type marching, pivots, and/or flanks. It utilizes sections, groups, and traveling patterns and should contain minimal leaps, turns, etc. The focus should be on precision and placement, making sure none of the movements are "soft" or flowing.

Modern: Theatrical dance that expands beyond traditional ballet or lyrical techniques. Modern has a unique vocabulary that can include partnering, floorwork, and interpretive movements, as well as, contract-release, fall recovery, and creative improvisation techniques. Focusing not on ballet technique but more on the natural pedestrian movements of the body. It allows for aesthetic, free forms of dance and is not restricted to formal dance terms nor moves.

Novelty: This category focuses on a theme carried out through costumes, music and characterizations while maintaining proper dance technique. Props, staging and backdrops may be used to carry out the theme but the prop should not become the primary focus of the routine. Although characterization is a priority in novelty, precision and technique are always most important.

Open: Open category can include styles of dance that do not fall under another category, ex., Folkloric, Ballet, Ballroom, or a combination of 3 or more styles of dance.

Pep Rally/ Game Day: Consists of any routine that was designed for a pep rally or game day performance. Pep Rally routines can be any style or genre of your choice,

maintaining focus on precision and crowd engagement. Pep Rally and Game Day routines should encourage school spirit and can also showcase your school's traditions.

Pom: A pom routine should consist of visual formations and strong visual effects with the use of the poms. It will have lots of arm work and is usually very sharp and energetic in style. Poms should be in hands at least 80% of routine and should be the focus of the visual effect.

Prop: Is a routine with the primary focus utilizing a prop other than a pom. The prop should be the main focus of the routine and must be used during at least 80% of the routine. *Do not confuse a prop with a stage effect or backdrop.*

Show Production: Show Production category will be a themed production that has some staging and props to carry out a theme and can include any style or combination of styles of dance. The dancers must consist only of grade eligible students from your school (no one outside your school).

World Dance: World Dance is the study of diverse cultures while celebrating their heritage through the art form of Dance. Genres can include: Ballet Folklorico, Latin (Salsa, Merengue, Bachata), Regional Cumbia, African Dance, Bollywood, Tango, Swing, Lion Dance, Irish dance, etc. While honoring traditional world dances, dancers will also bring forth a sense of unity within diversity!

In preparation for choreography of any category of dance, the procedures are the same. (1) Music selection and appropriateness is the first consideration, followed by, (2) phrasing your music, (3) determining strong portions of music, (4) placing steps within the phrasing and inflection of the music, (5) determining patterns and their placement in the music, and (6) evaluating choreography.

Your choreography inspiration sources can be limitless. Television, movies, stage productions, musicals, sports and any form of movement can be an influence on a routine. Never limit yourself.