

Dance Glossary

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GLOSSARY

For the purposes of the Dance syllabus the following definitions will apply.

Term	Definition
Accumulation	A choreographic device where new movements are added to existing movements in a successive manner. It generally begins with move 1, then 1 + 2, then 1 + 2 + 3. The word was used by Trisha Brown in 1971 to name a solo dance work based on adding one movement gesture to another, one at a time, and repeating the growing phrase with each new movement. As Trisha Brown's works are so widely known, this word has spread among the dance community and it is used nowadays to talk about a way of creating choreography as a compositional method.
Analysing dance	This may be thought of as identifying the formal structures of dance and looking at the relationships between the components of dance. For example, 'The choreographer manipulated the dancers in space to create shapes and moments of stillness, and interspersed complex movement phrases with sections of improvisation. (Dance Studies Years 11 and 12 Teacher Support Material)
Artistic dance	Dance that is performed primarily to express ideas and/or to entertain an audience. The dance often portrays and interprets aspects of life in order to challenge or confirm the values of the audience. (Dance Studies Years 11 and 12 Teacher Support Material)
Asymmetrical	A shape made by the body that has no line of reflection. An unbalanced proportion in the design of the shape.
Balance	The equal distribution of weight. Harmonious arrangement of parts.
Base of Support	Base of support is a two dimensional area bounded by the points of contact of the body with the ground. The larger the area of the base of support the easier it is to achieve and maintain balance.
Binary	A two part choreographic structure with an A theme and a B theme (AB). The binary form consists of two distinct self-contained sections that share either a character or quality i.e. the same tempo, movement quality, or style.
Body	As an element of dance it encompasses: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> body awareness—this centres on body shapes, body bases, body parts, locomotor and non-locomotor movements body bases—the body parts that support the rest of the body e.g. when standing the feet are the body base body parts—legs, arms, head torso, hands, feet body activity—weight transference, travelling, turning, rising, falling body shapes—curved, straight, open, closed, symmetrical, asymmetrical.
Canon	A choreographic device that reflects the musical form of the same name in which individuals and groups perform the same movement phrase beginning at different times.
Choreography	The art of planning and arranging dance movements into a meaningful whole; the process of building a composition; a finished dance work.
Choreographic devices	Tools of the choreographer used for the creation of dances such as canon, motif, contrast, accumulation, repetition, reversal, retrograde, inversion, fragmentation, and embellishment.
Choreographic intent	The purpose behind the composition or performance of movement.

Term	Definition
Choreographic processes	The fundamentally accepted methods for creating dances.
Choreographic structure	Structures that a choreographer uses in the creation of a dance such as AB (binary), ABA (ternary), rondo (ABACA), theme and variation (A, A1, A2, A3), and narrative.
Components of dance	<p>These may be grouped together in four main categories:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • movement—body, energy, space, time • design concepts—music, poetry, clapping, silence, soundscape, costumes, props, lighting, performance area • dancers—number of dancers, age, gender, size. <p>(Dance Studies Years 11 and 12 Teacher Support Material)</p>
Contemporary dance	Contemporary dance is a broadly inclusive term to describe an approach to dance that draws on modern dance elements, classical ballet, release work and other forms of dance often reflective of the creative innovations of particular dance choreographers and directors. Contemporary dance may also draw on other dance forms including popular dance and forms from other cultures and times. Many contemporary dance pieces reflect explorations of structure and body dynamics in space/time.
Contrast	A choreographic device where dance elements are altered to create oppositions, thus making contrasts such as high/low, big/little.
Culture	The values, attitudes, customs, practices, language and conventions commonly shared by a particular group that forms a part of their identity as a group and contributes towards a sense of shared understanding.
Describing dance	<p>This may be thought of as seeing and identifying the components of the dance. For example, 'The lead dancer moved rapidly across the stage to join a trio of male dancers waiting in a tableau. The stage was large and bare.'</p> <p>(Dance Studies Years 11 and 12 Teacher Support Material)</p>
Elements of dance	<p>The basic (key) components of dance: body, energy, space, time (BEST). These elements can be combined and manipulated to communicate and express meaning through movement.</p> <p>See Body, Energy, Space, Time</p>
Embellishment	A choreographic device where detail is added to the original movement sequence.
Energy	As an element of dance it focuses on the weight and force of power needed to produce and/or manipulate a movement.
Energy Qualities	Shadings in the amount of energy, intensity, or power, subtle variation in the treatment of contrasts. The manner in which energy is applied, continued, or arrested. Energy qualities can be described as: floating, swinging, sudden, smooth, sharp, percussive, vibratory and explosive. By manipulating the energy in a movement the choreographer creates certain qualities e.g. a light free flowing movement may create a dream-like quality, and constrained movement may create an aggressive mood.
Evaluating dance	<p>This may be thought of as making judgements about the dance based on identified criteria. For example 'The contrast of movement and music from one section to the next was quite spectacular, reinforcing the theme of the damage to the changing environment. It made me feel quite disturbed.'</p> <p>(Dance Studies Years 11 and 12 Teacher Support Material)</p>
Experiential anatomy	Understanding how the body reacts to movement. Applying physical skills and understandings of biomechanics and kinesiology in both experiential and theoretical contexts.

Term	Definition
Fall and recovery	The process in movement yielding to and resisting gravity. A theory invented by modern dance pioneer Doris Humphrey.
Focus	Conscious attention toward a certain point; with eyes, body parts, or the direction in which the dancer faces. Focus is not just confined to the eyes. It also involves the use of the whole body focus to communicate the intention of the dance.
Form	Form emphasises the nature of the relationships between the components of the dance. The components are put together in different ways to create the form. (Dance Studies Years 11 and 12 Teacher Support Material)
Fragmentation	A choreographic device where only a part of the movement sequence/motif is manipulated. A movement is broken down into smaller units.
Genre	A specific category of dance that has a tradition or history and is identifiable by specific characteristics, social and cultural contexts (e.g. classical ballet, jazz, contemporary, tap).
Historical context	The historical context focuses on when the dance was made. The relevant developments in that era may influence the dance. (Dance Studies Years 11 and 12 Teacher Support Material)
Improvisation	Improvisational structures permit the dancer elements of freedom and creativity in making movement and dances. The dancer can employ any number of compositional strategies and creative responses to pursue an outcome where the result is not fully known, for example a floor plan which is 'scored' but in which the movement is unknown; or the reverse, where the movement is designed but the floor plan is open and the dancer is given the freedom to make the spacial decisions. Other decisions might affect the timing, the choice of music, in fact any elements of BEST.
Interpreting dance	This may be thought of as translating, reading or making sense of the dance work. For example, 'the shapes were sharp and awkward, and although the dancers were together they conveyed the image of pain, loneliness and isolation'. (Dance Studies Years 11 and 12 Teacher Support Material)
Inversion	A choreographic device used in creating choreography that produces variations on a movement phrase. Inverting the movement phrase would mean executing it as if 'looking in a mirror'. A forward step becomes a backward step; movement sideways remain in a lateral plane. Ballroom dance makes use of this compositional method constantly when facing each other.
Kinesiology	The study of the activity of muscles, and the functioning, mechanics and structures of the body parts involved in movement. Mechanics refers to the effect that energy and other forces have upon the body.
Levels	The altitude of a movement in relation to its distance from the floor. The height of the dance floor. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low: close to the floor with the intention downwards. • Medium: the level of everyday walking. • High: any movement done with elevation, not necessarily a jump. It implies a lifting of the chest and an upward focus.
Locomotor Movement	Travelling movements through space involving a change in location of the body in space. (The basic locomotor steps are walk, run, jump; irregular rhythmic combinations are skip, slide, and gallop.)

Term	Definition
Motif (movement idea)	A movement or gesture or short movement phrase which has the potential to be developed in the dance/work. A movement motif functions as choreographic device within the choreography. It can contain the essence for the completed piece and is usually repeated with integrity and manipulated throughout the dance.
Movement Phrase	Two or more movement ideas (motifs) linked together. A series of movements linked together to make a distinctive pattern.
Movement Sequence	A series of movements, longer than a phrase but shorter than a section of a dance.
Musicality	The music elements of a dance performance. Attention and sensitivity to the musical ear while creating or performing.
Narrative	A choreographic structure that follows a specific story line and intends to convey specific information through that story.
Neutral alignment	Reflecting the strongest and most balanced alignment of the spine including the three curves of the spine that appears naturally in a healthy spine: at the neck, the thoracic region and the lumbar/pelvic region. Neutral alignment also reflects correct alignment of the ears, shoulders, hips, knees and ankles to create a line directly down the side of the body from the ears down through to the feet of the dancer. A further imaginary line, also of great assistance in establishing and achieving neutral alignment, runs down the centre of the body looking from the front and corresponds to the median plane which divides the body into equal right and left halves.
Non- Locomotor Movement	Movement occurring above a stationary base; movement of the body around its own axis (Also called axial movement, it includes bending, stretching, pushing, pulling, bouncing, swinging, shaking and twisting.)
Parallel	Feet in anatomical position, knees in line with arches of feet and directly under hip joint, fist width apart, 'train tracks'.
Performance persona	Being cognisant of choreographic intent and how to convey a sense of 'character' (including emotion, mood, tone and/ or atmosphere) through the sustained use of body, facial expression and gesture.
Personal Style	A distinctive or individualistic manner of expressing an idea. The dancer is capable of communicating a sense of physical and/or emotional connection to the movement material. Rather than 'presenting' they have a tangible sense of presence and awareness and embodiment (that includes other dancers in the space and an audience?) This quality may be influenced by body structure, type of training, prior dance experiences, personality and individual BEST preferences.
Placement	A balanced alignment of the body, hips, torso, limbs, head, knees, rib cage.
Repetition	A choreographic device whereby a movement or motif are repeated exactly for emphasis or to gain interest.
Retrograde	Another of the choreographic devices used in creating dance compositions that produce variations on a movement phrase. The movement phrase is performed backwards, as if rewinding a video. This can be a challenging device because of the way in which the human body is constructed and may require some physical compromises and creative decision making on the part of the dancer. For example, rewinding video.
Reversal	The performance of the movements of a motif or sequence in reverse order (but not in a backwards direction). For example, 8,7,6,5,4,3,2,1.
Ritual dance	Dance that is primarily performed in religious or other rites, and reflects specific cultural customs.

Term	Definition
Rondo	A choreographic structure of three or more themes with an alternating return to the main theme (ABACADA).
Social dance	Dance that is primarily performed for the enjoyment of participants. (Dance Studies Years 11 and 12 Teacher Support Material)
Social context	A dance work that refers to the society or culture in which it is made and that reflects the dynamics within that society or culture. Such things as lifestyle, socio-economic status, employment, race may influence or be reflected in the dance work.
Style	Within the broad categorisation of genre it is possible to draw further distinctions between constituent groups and identify them as particular styles. For example, ballet (genre) may be identified as romantic, classical or modern in style. More specific styles may relate to the country or origin or the company or community by whom the dance is performed. Choreographers also have their own distinctive styles (which may change and develop over time). (Dance Studies Years 11 and 12 Teacher Support Material)
Symmetrical	A shape made by the body that has a line of reflection (mirror line). A balanced, even design.
Technologies	Equipment used to help create, present, explain, document, view, interpret, analyse, or learn about dance works, including dance props (e.g. scarf, chair), electronic media (e.g. video computers), and production technologies (e.g. lighting, costume, sound).
Ternary	A three-part choreographic structure in which the second section contrasts with the first section (ABA). The third section is a restatement of the first section in a condensed, abbreviated, or extended form.
Theme and Variation	A choreographic structure in which a dance phrase or section of a dance is followed by subsequent phrases or sections that are variations of the original usually for the sake of variety (A, A1, A2, A3).
Turned out	Term used to describe a dance position in which you stand with your legs and feet facing outwards. Your feet may be either together or apart. Rotation of the thigh bone in the hip socket. All rotations are functional and should occur at the hip. The lower leg and foot remain aligned with the femur.
Unison	Two or more people performing the same movement at the same time.
Warm down (cool down)	Following dancing, the dancer should allow the body to gradually warm down (cool down). Abruptly stopping vigorous activity causes pooling of the blood, sluggish circulation which hampers removal of waste products, cramping, soreness and even fainting. Light activity and stretching after the dance class is recommended.
Warm-up	Activities that raise the core body temperature and loosen the muscles before dancing. Movements designed to raise the core body temperature and bring the mind into focus for the activities to follow.