

DANCE

DANCE DICTIONARY

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If you're new to dance or coaching dance and you have trouble keeping your terminology straight, check out our Dance Dictionary!

ADAGIO: Any dance to slow music; also, part of the classical pas de deux in ballet.

AIR, EN L': In ballet, a step done off the ground - for instance, tour en l'air, round de jambe en l'air. It is the opposite of par terre.

ALLEGRO: A dance with a fast or moderate tempo.

ALLONGE: In ballet, an elongated line; in particular, the horizontal line of an arabesque with one arm stretched front and the other back.

ARABESQUE: Position on one leg, with the other leg raised straight behind the body.

ASSEMBLE: In ballet, a jump from one to both feet, usually landing in fifth position.

ATTITUDE: In ballet, a pose in which one leg is raised in back or in front with knee bent, usually with one arm raised.

AXEL: A tuck jump turning outward leaving and landing on the same foot.

BALANCE: A step that rocks from one foot to the other, usually in 3/4 time.

BALLET: From the Italian balletto, diminutive of ballo, "dance." Classical theatrical dancing based on the danse d'ecole, the rules and vocabulary that were codified around 1700 in France.

BALL CHANGE: Consisting of 2 steps; rocking on the ball of one foot and stepping on the other.

BALLON: In ballet, the ability of a dancer to remain suspended in air during a jump; elasticity in jumping.

BASIC MOVEMENT: In ballroom dance, a characteristic figure that remains constant.

BATTEMENT: A beating movement of the legs.

PAS DE BOURREE: A series of small, fast steps executed with the feet very close together.

BRISE: In ballet, a jump off one foot that is "broken" by a beating of the legs in the air.

CABRIOLE: In ballet, a leap in which the lower leg beats against the upper one at an angle, before the dancer lands again on the lower leg.

CAMBRE: In ballet, a bend from the waist to the side or to the back.

CHASSE: A sliding step in which one foot "chases" and displaces the other.

PAS DE CHAT: Catlike leap in which one foot follows the other into the air, knees bent; the landing is in the fifth position.

CISEAUZ: A jump in which the legs open in second position in the air, resembling a scissors.

CONTAGION (RIPPLE): The repetition of a movement from one person to the next.

CONTRACTION: A basic movement in the technique of Marth Graham, based on breath inhalation and exhalation.

DEGAGE: In ballet, shifting weight from one foot to the other.

DEVELOPPE: An unfolding of the leg in the air.



ECARTE: In ballet, a position with one leg extended at an oblique angle while the body is also at an oblique angle.

EFFACE: In ballet, a position of the body at an oblique angle and partly hidden.

ENTRECHAT: A ballet movement in which the dancer repeatedly crosses his or her legs in the air.

EPAULEMENT: In ballet, the position of the torso from the waist-up.

FANDANGO: A lively Spanish dance in triple time performed with castanets or tambourines.

FERME: In ballet, a closed position of the feet.

FIVE POSITIONS: In ballet, the basic positions of the feet. First position: feet in a straight line, heels touching. Second position: feet in a straight line, heels apart. Third position: one foot in front of the other, parallel to it, with heel of front foot in hollow instep of back foot. Fourth position: one foot in front of the other, parallel, but apart. Fifth position: One foot in front of the other, parallel, with heel of front foot touching toe of back foot.

FONDU: In ballet, a lowering of the body by bending the knee.

FOUETTE EN TOURNANT: A spectacular movement in which the dancer propels himself or herself around a supporting leg with rapid circular movements of the other leg while remaining in a fixed spot.

GLISSADE: In ballet, a gliding step which usually connects two steps.

EN HAUT: In ballet, a position of the arms above the head.

ISOLATION: A movement separating one part of the body from the other parts (most common are rib isolations).

JETE: Leap from one leg to the other in which one leg is thrown to the side, front, or back.

GRAND JETE: A large leap forward.

MINUET: A slow and graceful dance that is the most popular dance of the eighteenth century, characterized by symmetrical figures and elaborate curtseys and bows.

MORRIS DANCE: An English folk dance that appeared in the fifteenth century, in which dancers wore bells on their legs and characters, included a fool, a boy on a hobby horse, and a man in blackface.

OUVERT: In ballet, an open position of the feet.

PAR TERRE: Steps performed on the floor. It is the opposite of en l'air.



PAS DE DEAUX: A dance for two, usually a woman and a man. In its traditional form, it begins with an entrée and adagio, followed by solo variations for each dancer, and a coda.

PASSE: leg is raised with a bent knee with the foot placed on the opposite leg, just below the patella. This may be either parallel or turned out.

PENCHE: In ballet, leaning forward.

PIQUE: Stepping directly onto the point of a foot.

PIROUETTE: A turn performed on one foot. This turn is done in place.

PLIE: A bending of the knees in any of the five positions. Demi plie: a half bending of the knees, with heels on the floor. Grand plie: a full bending of the knees.

POINT: A position on the tip of the toes.

PORT DE BRAS: In ballet, the positions of the arms.

PROMENADE: In ballet, a slow turn of the body on the whole foot.

RELEVE: In ballet, a rising with a spring movement to point or demi-point.

REVERENCE: A ballet bow or curtsy in which one foot is pointed in front and the body leans forward.

RONDE DE JAMBE: "Round the leg," the working leg draws a circular path. This may be executed on the floor or in an extended position.

SPOTTING: The fixing of the eyes on one spot as long as possible during turns to avoid dizziness and to keep one's orientation.

SWITCH LEAP: Swing one leg forward then back, lifting into a split leap.

TOUR EN L'AIR: A turn while jumping straight up in the air.