

# Warm Up Exercises



## Getting to know one another

a. Standing in a circle, take it in turns to hear each others names. Go all of the way around circle. The second time, ask the students to put an action/movement to their name (a turn, a jump, a gesture etc). The person saying their name and showing their movement (person A) does so then the whole group repeats it after them. Carry this on around to the next in the circle but after the second student (person B) has shown their movement go back to person A. This continues around the whole circle e.g. person C shows movement then all together do B followed by A. After everyone has had a turn you will find that the names are much clearer and that between all involved, a short sequence of movements has been created!!

b. Play catch with a ball in a circle asking the students to call out the name of the person they are passing the ball too. Once this has been established ask them to begin walking around the room continuing to pass the ball and call out the names. Gradually build up the speed of the exercise to a jog. This forces the pupils to sense the other people around them whilst still remaining focused on the ball.

c. Ask the students to write out their first names with their finger tip into the air. Then ask them to make it bigger. This will automatically make their bodies move in a different way. Try other body parts instead of the index finger e.g. nose, big toe, knees etc. Ask them to do it in a variety of ways e.g. small, as big as possible, as low to the ground as possible etc. Encourage the students to circle the joints through the movements; if the knee is the chosen body part other joints e.g.. the hip will need to move to allow more movement.

## Warm up examples

a. Begin by isolating different body parts, starting at the head working your way down the body e.g. head, neck, shoulder, ribs, hips etc, simply by shaking, circling, stretching and rubbing the body parts. This gives the participants the chance to become more aware of their own bodies.

b. Get the whole group walking around in the space trying not to always follow a circular motion, imagine you have on a pair of 'remote control trainers'. The teacher leading the session has control of the remote. Explore different ways of moving through the space, at different speeds, heights, length of steps (for primary school children use imagery e.g. giant steps and mouse steps etc). The teacher can gradually build up the speed between the instructions. This allows time for the participants to get to know the teacher, and have to rely on following instructions.

c. Continuing on from the name writing in the air (see earlier notes) ask the students to choose a body part. Trying to keep the focus on that body part how would they move through the space. Throughout the exercise the teacher feeds ideas to the students, encouraging the use of different levels and direction.

Develop this by asking the students to get into pairs and to choose a body part each. This can be as abstract as possible e.g. left ear lobe, right shoulder blade. Ask them to join their two chosen body parts, then instruct them to find a way of moving from one side of the room to another – staying connected at all times. This can be developed further by stating that they must go down to the floor, they must include a jump, they must include a turn – all traveling to other end of the room and always staying in contact with their partner.

d. Follow-my-leader can be a fun way of warming up for all ages. In pairs decide who will be the leader first. Begin walking slowly in the space doing small actions with the body and arms - person B obviously copies the movement. Gradually build up the speed and give set instructions, e.g. a roll on the floor, a turn, keeping the body curved etc. Then change over so both people in each couple have the chance to be the leader. This is fun as a whole group too, where the group forms a line, and each person at the front can have 8 or 16 counts to be leader. When the teacher shouts "change", the leader runs to the back and the next person can be leader.

e. Also in pairs try mirroring each others movements, this time remaining on the spot and facing each other at all times. Experiment with how far the torso can twist around from side to side, different balances, movements that move through the different levels.

f. For this next warm up idea enforce that it has to be done as quickly as possible and without talking or shoving each other. Simply tell the group that they have to make certain shapes, they must all get involved as one big group, and they must communicate through other means that is not talking. Begin with simple shapes e.g.. circle, square and triangle. You may see that the students find it difficult at first to organise themselves without using words but they will soon adjust. After basic shapes have been formed use other ideas like a football pitch, a bus, a bowl of spaghetti with meatballs, or Manhattan skyline. This exercise is always interesting to watch as you as the teacher will find that there appear strong leaders within the group – they will set themselves up first and let people adjust around them. If the group find it particularly difficult to do it without talking turn it into a game so that if they speak then they are out.



## Partner and Group Work

As touching and having contact can be difficult for non-dancers it could help to introduce contact work in the warm up e.g. giving weight, pulling, pushing across the floor. Trust exercises with one person in the middle being gently pushed around or similar exercises. In order to push the movements you could make a competition for the students on leaning and making off balances and see who dares to hold it longest.

Here are some example exercises:

a. In pairs explore the idea of counter balances. A counter balance is between two or more people, where all involved are supporting each other e.g. if one person was to let go the whole balance would fall.

In pairs stand with your feet slightly apart, facing the partner; literally with just a few inches between them. Holding onto each other wrists lean away from each other. The body must remain in a straight line at all times (so do not allow the body to either arch or curve). Encourage the students to imagine a diagonal line from head to toe, or the 'V' shape they are making between them.

b. Now standing apart but still facing their partner's, lean towards each other so palms are flat against each others. Again do not allow the body to curve or arch, imagining this time the line that runs from the finger tips down to the feet. The students should feel the giving of weight and trust.

c. Back to back this time simply instruct the students to bend their knees and lower themselves to the ground keeping their back in full contact the whole way down, (it may be easier if they link their arms to begin with). Once they have gone down they must reverse the process without putting their hands on the floor. The only way they will be able to get up is by pushing their weight in towards each other.

d. Now in pairs instruct them to make up their own 3 balances. They must be able to hold the balance for at least four counts. Give them time to discover holding each others weight to find out what works and what doesn't. After a few minutes perhaps ask the pairs to show their 3 counter balances to the rest of the group. It is important that the students get used to showing their own creations, ensuring that the rest of the group watch and remain quiet.

e. To develop this you could suggest that within their pairs they need to find a movement that would get them into each balance. Perhaps suggest that they 'move' for 4 counts and then 'balance' for 4 counts repeating this until all of their balances have been shown. This will then start them creating their own sequences and to get them used to counting timing which is very important. Again give the group the chance to see each couple's sequences.

All of the above can be repeated larger groups and can possibly be used as a warm up to the following:

f. In groups of 8 – 10 stand in a small circle, so that each person is shoulder to shoulder. One person (person A) should stand in the middle and close their eyes (this is optional). Then very slowly person A keeping their feet rooted to the same spot on the floor lean out so that the people in the circle have to take their weight. The people on the outside hand over the weight to someone else either by pushing the person A across

the circle or round the edge. It is important that the people on the outside of the circle have firm bases (e.g. feet quite wide) and bend the knees. This shows the students how to handle other peoples weight in a safe way also showing that everyone involved needs to concentrate at all times. There may be times when person A is being held by two or more people from the outside circle. This should be repeated so that everyone in the group has a turn so they can all feel the exercise. This can be developed by the circle around the edge getting wider so that person A really has to trust and rely on those supporting them.

g. In the same sized groups now encourage the students to actually lift the weight so that person A's feet come off the floor. Experiment with different static lifts always making sure that the person being lifted is put down safely.

h. This can be developed by asking the group to travel across the room so that one person is always off the ground. The person being lifted can change as many times as necessary throughout the journey. You may find that not everyone is lifting at the same time – this is fine. Repeat the exercise trying to make the movement flow as much as possible, encourage the people who are not lifting to move in an appropriate way but still being aware of what is going on in case they are needed for extra support. Depending on the level of the group this could then be repeated with harder rules e.g. 2 people must always be being lifted.