

Tap for Beginners

Tap is an exciting form of dance in which dancers wear special shoes equipped with metal taps. Tap dancers use their feet like drums to create rhythmic patterns and timely beats. The term "tap dancing" is derived from the tapping sound produced when the small metal plates on the dancer's shoes touch a hard floor or surface.

Tappers and Hoofers

The most common style of tap dancing is called "classical tap." Classical tap dancers, known as "tappers", use their arms and upper bodies to blend movements of ballet or jazz into their tap routines. On the other hand, "hoofers" are tap dancers that focus on their footwork, using very little upper body or arm movements. Hoofers try to use every part of their shoes to make their feet sound like drums. A popular performance of this style of tap dancing is Riverdance.

Tap Classes

Typical tap classes last about an hour, beginning with a warm-up to stretch the muscles of the legs and feet. Dancers practice a series of basic steps, adding more difficult combinations as they become more proficient. Tap dancing is a vigorous form of dance, requiring a great deal of physical fitness. Many kids as well as adults tap dance for fun and exercise. It builds aerobic fitness as well as muscle control.

Tap Shoes

Tap shoes are available in several different styles. Some dancers prefer flat shoes while some feel more comfortable with a heel. The most popular colours for tap shoes are black, white and beige. The shoes should fit well and be comfortable. Snug-fitting shoes are preferred over loose ones. The taps, two on each shoe, should be the same width as the heels and the toes of the shoe.

Basic Tap Steps

Tap dancing is mastered through lots and lots of practice. Beginning tap dance classes focus on learning single tap steps, then incorporating the steps into series of combinations. A few of the basic tap steps include the brush, flap, shuffle, and ball change. Tap dancers strive to produce clean tap sounds with each step. Tap teachers will roam the studio during classes, listening for extra taps.

Technique

The goal in tap dancing is to produce clear, clean sounds, with various levels of tone. Body weight should be held slightly forward, allowing most of the dancing to be done on the balls of the feet. The knees and ankles should be relaxed at all times. Beginning tap dancers are sometimes told to dance as if they were dancing on a glass floor.