

CHOREOGRAPHY

Choreography is the creative process of making a dance, using the elements of dance, choreographic devices and choreographic structures. There may be some overlap of devices and structures as a dance is created.

Elements of dance

These are the 5 key components of dance movement, see Dance: 5 Elements for more detail.

Body Awareness, Space, Time, Energy and Relationships.

Choreographic Devices and Structures are ways to alter the 5 elements to generate new movement.

Here are some examples to try:

- Pathways** (Space) - pattern created on the floor or in the air as the body moves.
- Quality** (Energy) - ways of using energy, e.g. smooth, sudden, erratic.
- Shadowing** (Relationship) - copying movements behind a leader.
- Symmetry** (Body awareness) - balanced or even in space and time.
- Tempo** (Time) - the speed of movement, or the beat in the music.
- Rhythm** (Time) - Vary rhythm, not the tempo. For example, a gallop instead of walking or running at a rate that matches the tempo of the song



Choreographic Devices

Choreographic devices are specific ways of manipulating movement to generate movement material for dance choreography.

Here are some examples to try:

Additive – including locomotor movements. Examples of locomotor and non-locomotor movements [here](#).

Angles – direction the dancer faces or in which the movement is directed.

Augmentation - making a movement larger in space.

Background – Altering the design of your body from the original position while repeating the motif. Let the rest of the body do something while the motif is still going on. E.g. sit instead of stand. Twisting the body while performing the motif.

Canon - movement exactly repeated by each dancer in turn, as in a Mexican wave. Further detail [here](#)

Combination – combine more than one manipulation at the same time.

Diminishing – making a movement smaller in space

Embellishment - adding detail to a movement, e.g. arm/hand action.

Force – Varying how much energy the dancer exerts. Passionate or strong emotions, use more force. Gentle, soft movements, use less force.

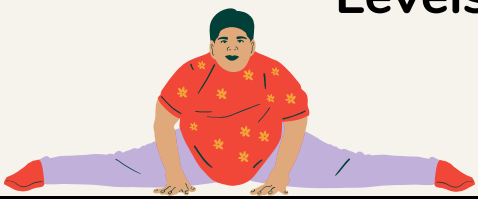
Fragmentation - breaking movement in to separate parts which are then used in a different place or order.

Insertion - putting new material into a movement, e.g. hop, leap, or turn.

Instrumentation - using another part of the body to perform the same movement.

Inversion - turning a movement upside down.

Levels – doing the movement at a high, middle, or low level. Examples of the different levels [here](#).



Motif - a recurring single movement or short phrase of movement which expresses the style and intention of the dance. It can be elaborated upon or developed using any of the techniques listed or others.

Repetition - repeating a movement exactly the same.

Retrograde - doing or performing the movement backwards, like rewinding a film.

Size - Condensing (diminishing) or expanding (augmenting) the size to a small, medium, or large size. Check out examples [here](#).

Suspending - stopping the movement.

Sustaining - continuing the movement.

Choreographic Structures

Choreographic structures are ways of organising movement developed through use of choreographic devices to give form to a dance work.

Here are some examples to try:

Accumulation - successively building on sections of movement, e.g. A, AB, ABC, etc or by adding additional dancers until all are moving in unison.

Binary structure - two movements used in a sequential two-part form.

Canon - one or two themes or motifs are repeated in succession. This can be done in a variety of ways.

Reverting canon - dancers begin individually at the same point in the movement phrase, like when singing a round;

Simple canon - each dancer dances the phrase then keeps still for the others. Can be done with overlapping starts;

Cumulative canon - each dancer joins the lead dancer at various stages and all finish together. Only the first dancer dances the full phrase;

Loose canon - manipulation of the motif. E.g. use of different levels, angles, or space;

Simultaneous canon - dancers do the same motif but start (simultaneously) from different points in it. E.g. dancer 1 dances movements 1-8 in order, dancer 2 starts at movement 2, dancer 3 starts at movement 4, all dance all moves.

Chance - a random structure.

Contrast - When dancers perform movements that are contrasting (opposite) to each other. Examples include:

- one dancer going left while the other goes right;
- one dancer performing a movement quickly while the other does it slowly;
- one dancer staying in one spot while the other moves around;
- one dancer performing a movement with energy while the other does it calmly.

Narrative - a story line.

Rondo - recurring and contrasting sections, e.g. ABACAD.

Staging - Changing the dancers' positions on the stage or the direction they are facing.

Ternary structure - in three parts, e.g. ABA.

Theme and Variation - an original phrase with a variation of speed/space.

Unison - moving at the same time.

developed from:

- A guide to teaching dance part 4 - choreographic devices (2018) www.westendinchools.org
- Choreographic Devices (2023) www.curiouslittlebunny.com
- Dance: Developing Practical Knowledge Chart 2 (2002) www.tki.org.nz/e/arts