

# The CFES Group Exercise Instructor Course Student Resource Manual



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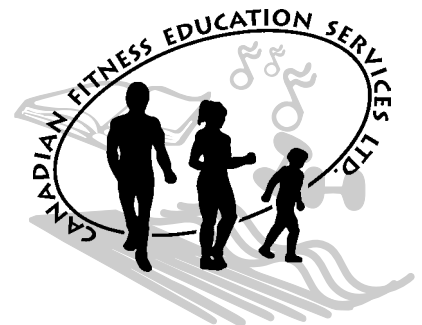
# The Group Exercise Instructor Course

## Chapter 3

### Teaching Group Exercise

In this chapter the reader is expected to recall, explain, identify and compare:

- ⊙ Posture and Exercise Principles
- ⊙ Exercise Ideas for High/Low, Step, Martial Arts and Athletic Conditioning
- ⊙ Adjusting Exercise Intensity
- ⊙ Use of Music
- ⊙ Cueing
- ⊙ Choreography
- ⊙ Scanning, Monitoring and Feedback



# Posture and Exercise Principles

There are a variety of practical teaching skills to learn (and practice) when becoming a group exercise instructor. This chapter will focus on these *foundation leadership skills* — and they include proper exercise technique and demonstration, moving and counting to music, choreographing movement sequences, scanning and monitoring the class and giving effective feedback.

## Posture

### Body Alignment

As with all forms of exercise, group classes must incorporate proper exercise technique and body alignment principles. Correct posture must be demonstrated and clearly instructed at all times, not only in terms of how movements should be done, but also about how they should feel. This helps people become more aware of their own alignment.

By exercising in proper alignment, the amount of external force on the spine and other joints of the body is reduced, thereby reducing the risk of injuries and increasing the effectiveness of the exercise.

Maintaining alignment during exercise also acts to strengthen the postural muscles, the *core muscles*, which helps the entire body become stronger, more stable, and better able to perform. These are the kinds of results that are of tremendous benefit to participants.

Teaching correct body alignment requires us to first assess our own posture and then practice moving and teaching with good form. It's helpful to use a mirror for this.

### Postural Positioning

The following sections describe proper postural alignment in various positions (standing, sitting etc.). These descriptions could also be used as *cues* for describing and teaching postural alignment to participants.

#### Standing

- Aim to lengthen and stabilize the spine.
- Ensure the neck is in line with the spine.
- Relax and drop the shoulders.
- Lift the chest.
- Pull the scapula flat against the back.
- Pull the abdominals in (without contracting the buttocks).
- Ensure the pelvis is in neutral alignment.
- Keep the knees slightly bent.



**Sitting**

Sit tall on the sitting (ischium) bones.  
 Bend the knees as much as necessary.  
 Use the hands for support, as needed.  
 Lift and lengthen the spine.  
 Pull the abdominals in.  
 Relax and drop the shoulders.

**Lying on the Front**

Lengthen the body.  
 Ensure the pelvis is in neutral alignment.  
 Use the hands to provide support under the body.  
 Look towards the floor or mat to lengthen the neck and maintain alignment. Drop the shoulders down (towards the feet).

**Lying on the Back**

Keep the back long.  
 Keep the neck long and the chin slightly dropped.  
 Bend the knees as necessary.  
 Ensure the pelvis is in neutral alignment.  
 Pull the belly in to stabilize and support the lower spine.

**Exercise Demonstration**

- Demonstrate and instruct all movements in proper postural alignment.
- Demonstrate and instruct controlled, precise movements. Avoid using momentum.
- Encourage full range of motion within the normal limits for each joint.
- Encourage proper breathing principle such as exhaling on exertion, focusing on the breath to push through an interval, or to recover from an interval or relaxing the breath during stretching.
- Always choose quality of movement over quantity.
- Always provide options and variations so everyone, regardless of ability or fitness level, can have an effective, enjoyable experience.

# High/Low Moves



Heel Front



Tap Wide

## High/Low Moves

Most classes today offer a blend of high and low impact options to suit the whole range of abilities and bodies.

Low Impact movements such as marching or knee lifts without a hop, are those in which one foot remains in contact with the floor at all times. High Impact movements are those which involve a jump or hop (e.g. jumping jacks or knee lifts with a hop). Plyometric movements are explosive, higher impact moves which *tend* to have a sport specific application (e.g. jump squat or a lateral hop).

## Marching and Variations of Marching

March Narrow

March Wide

Shuffle (side to side)

March Touch (step right foot forward, right foot back)

March Side (step right foot wide, right foot narrow)

Cha Cha, Pony, Polka step ("1, 2, 3 step")

Step (step forward, forward, back, back, wide forward, narrow back)

Basic March (forward and back, like stepping) (forward, forward, back, back, narrow)

Travelling March (march forward, back, side to side)

## Tapping and Variations of Tapping

1 ... 2 ... 3 ... tap (on the spot, forward and back, side to side)

Grapevine (side to side, 1/4 turn, diagonal, triangle)

Tap forward

Tap side (side lunge)

Heel front (heel digs)

Tap wide

Tap back (back lunge)

Heel Jacks

Jumping Jacks

Power Jacks

## Step Touch and Variations of Step Touch

Step Touch (step, tap, step, tap)

Double Step Touch (step together, step tap)

Four Steps Each Way

Step Touch (forward and back)

Skating (step touch with both arms swinging side to side)



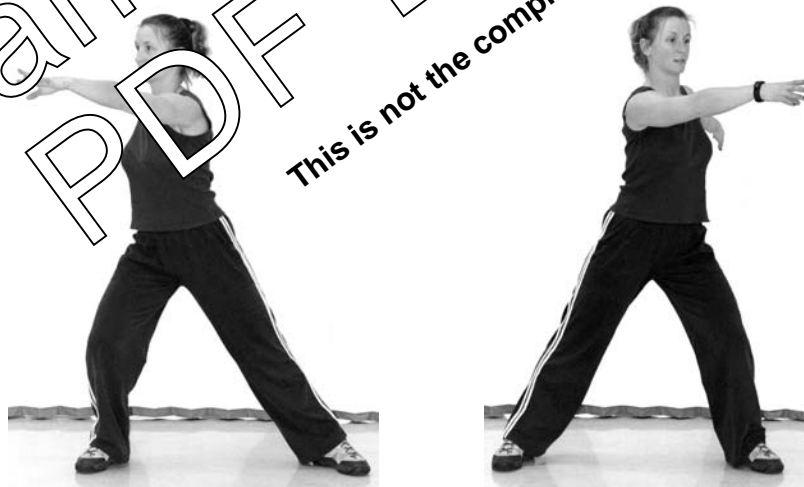
Tap Back

# Upper Body Moves

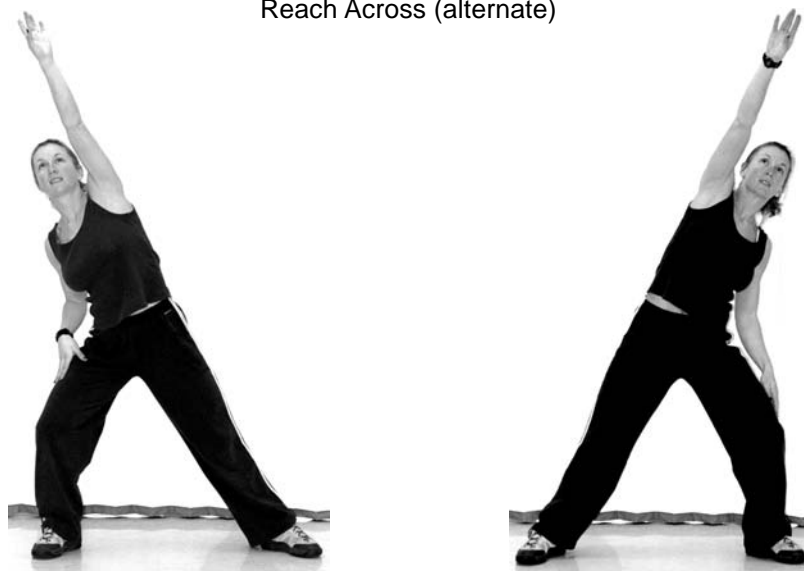
- Arm Circles (front, back)
- Reach Up (alternate)
- Arm Swings (side to side)
- Reach Front (alternate)
- Elbow Circles
- Reach Across (alternate)
- Shoulder Rolls (forward, back, alternating)
- Press Up (both)
- Paddle (figure 8, both arms)
- Press Front (both)
- Pec Squeeze (elbows and forearms)
- Press Side
- Cross Front (cross fore-arms)
- Press Down
- Arm Curl (bend elbows)
- Pull Back (full arm)
- Arm Press (straighten elbows)
- Pull Narrow (elbows in)
- Arm Roll (speed bag)
- Pull Wide (elbows wide)
- Pull Down (from overhead)



Cross Front      Cross Front      Pec Squeeze



Reach Across (alternate)



Reach Up (alternate)

# Step Moves

## Directional Approach

The starting position of a step pattern is called a directional approach and these different approaches allow for movement variations on and around the step. The main approaches are:

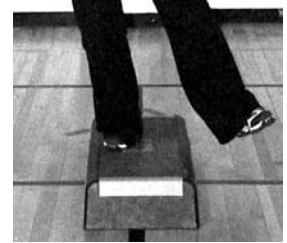
- from the back
- from the side
- from the top
- from a straddle
- from the end



Approach from the Back



Approach from the Side



Approach from the Top



Approach from a Straddle



Approach from the End

## Approach from the Top — Facing End of the Step

**Straddle Down** (down, down, up, up)

**Back Lunges** (tap back) Alternating, doubles, for each leg, eight each leg

**Side Lunges** (tap side) Alternating, doubles, for each leg, eight each leg

**Side Squats** (slower pace)

**Back Lunge** (slower pace)



Side Lunges

Side Squat

Back Lunge

## Travelling Steps

### Corner to Corner

Step in horizontal position, approach from the back. Do any move (e.g. alternating knee lifts) at one end, then the other.

**L-Step** Step knee lift corner to corner. Then add a tap down off each end (up knee down tap off the end, up knee down, down)

**T-Step** (step in vertical position, approach from the end)

Basic up, straddle down, basic up, off the end

**Across the Top** (up up, down tap) Cross the length of the board

**Over the Top** (up up, down tap) Cross the width of the board

**Around the Corner** (up tap, down tap) Repeat as you travel around the corner.

**Around the World** (step knee straddle, step knee down turn, step knee straddle, step knee down turn)

**Diagonal** (up up down tap) Walk diagonally across the length of the board

# Boxing, Martial Arts Moves

## Boxing, Martial Arts Moves

- Boxers Stance
- Punch (front, cross)
- Upper Cut
- Jab (front, side, cross)
- Speedbag
- Block (forearm block, rising block, push/press block)
- Front Kick
- Side Kick
- Back Kick
- Snap Kick
- Front Jump Kick
- Turn Kick (roundhouse kick)



Boxer Stance



Upper Cut



Forearm Block



Jab Front



Speed Bag



Punch

Sample Pages PDF Extract

This is not the complete chapter

# Athletic Conditioning Moves

## Athletic Conditioning Moves

**Lateral Hops** – Hop laterally side to side, adding a jump to a basic Step Touch movement.

**Jump Squats** – Add a jump to a Basic Squat movement.

**Lunges** – Stationary Lunge, Back Lunge (stepping back into the lunge position) or Front Lunge (stepping forward into the lunge position).

**Lunge to Kick** – Keep the same foot behind in a lunge position and bring that leg forward into a kick after each lunge.

**Skating** – Swing both arms together, side to side, while travelling forward in a Step Touch (like a speed skater).

**Shuffles** – Keep feet wide apart and shuffle laterally side to side or travel quickly (mini sprints) forward and back.

**Squats** – Regular squat with feet in various positions.

**Rising squats** – Hold low position for 3 counts and rise on 1, return low for 3, rise on 1.

**Lunge Jumps** – From lunge position, jump to switch feet, bringing the other foot forward.

**Basketball Shot** – From Step Touch move, turn to face sideways and perform a basketball shot with the arms as you step to that direction.

**Skipping** – Use a rope or imaginary rope to perform basic skipping or various skipping patterns (arms in reverse, cross-overs, side to side hopping, low kick, 1, 2, 3 kick).

# Exercise Intensity

## Varying the Intensity of a Move

With the different fitness levels and physical conditions of the participants, it's absolutely necessary to provide intensity options throughout the class. This allows people to choose a level of intensity that best suits their needs and ultimately creates a situation where people of varying abilities can all work out together.

To vary exercise intensity, consider manipulating the following variables:

**Size of the Movement** — Make bigger movements (e.g., larger moves, bigger steps, higher kicks) to increase intensity and smaller movements to decrease intensity.

**Lever Length** — Lengthen the arm or leg lever (by straightening the knee or elbow) to increase intensity. Shorten the levers to decrease intensity.

**Speed of Movement** — Increase the amount of propulsive moves and do faster moves to increase intensity. If the focus is on strengthening, then moving slower is more intense.

**Resistance Level** — Increase the amount of weight or the thickness of tube/band to increase intensity and decrease to make it easier.

**Step Height** — Increase the step height to increase intensity.

**Tension Level** — Increase the bike tension to increase intensity.

**Arm Moves** — Increase the amount and intensity of arm movements to make it harder. Decrease or drop the arm moves to make it easier.

**Impact** — Add bouncing, hopping or jumping to increase intensity or stay low impact to make it easier.

**Repetitions** — Do more repetitions of any move to increase intensity or fewer repetitions to make it easier.

**Body Position** — Lower the body position to increase intensity and stand taller to make it easier.

# Choosing and Using the Right Music

## Moving to Music

Great music is one of the most significant aspects of a successful group exercise class. Music is motivating! It has the power to get people moving and keep them moving. It can create a specific mood, from high energy to complete relaxation. It provides a regular counting mechanism for cueing and by using different styles, it creates variety and interest.

Choosing the right music for your class is never easy and can be time consuming, but the right music can really make the difference between an average class and an exceptional one!

## Choosing and Using the Right Music

- Look for professionally made, high quality CD's.
- Use music you enjoy. Your enthusiasm will be contagious.
- Use music appropriate for the participants in the class (their background and age).
- Pay attention to quality sound equipment.
- Play music before and after the class starts to set a comfortable atmosphere.
- Ensure music is loaded up and ready to go. Have back up music.
- The music volume should be loud enough to be motivating, but soft enough that participants can hear the instructions clearly.
- When changing music, fade one song out (volume) and fade the next song in.
- Ask regularly for feedback on the music.
- Use music that is even 32-count pacing or phrasing.
- Use music that is the right tempo for the activity.

### Tempo Guidelines (recommended music pacing)

Running .....	160 - 175 bpm (beats per minute)
Cardio/High Impact .....	145 - 160 bpm
Cardio/Low Impact .....	135 - 145 bpm
High / Low Warm-Up .....	130 - 135 bpm
Step .....	124 - 128 bpm
Boxing / Martial Arts .....	130 - 140 bpm
Muscle Conditioning .....	100 - 130 bpm
Stretch and Relaxation .....	less than 120 bpm

## Working with Music

Working with music is a new experience for some people. The following information is designed to give you a basic understanding of music composition and terminology.

**Beats** — Most music is composed in 4/4 time, which means there is a regular, repeating count of (1, 2, 3, 4), (1, 2, 3, 4). Within those regular beats, there can be any number of different rhythms and sounds, but it is the steady beat that the instructor must learn to hear and to use for counting and cueing.

# Cueing

## Cueing

Cueing is the way the fitness leader communicates “what, where, how and when” to the participants. This is done verbally with spoken instructions, directions, counting and encouragement and non-verbally with hand signals, pointing, counting with fingers, nodding with the head, and smiling.

### When to Cue:

- To change to a new exercise
- To change directions
- To teach body alignment
- To teach an exercise
- To offer feedback or progress
- To motivate the class
- To take a break
- To offer modifications to exercises
- To change floor position (e.g. going from standing to sitting)
- Whenever the instructor wants to communicate information to the class

### Verbal Cueing

Your voice is one of your greatest assets for effective teaching and, if used properly, it will describe and cue exercises, guide the class through exercise routines, motivate, encourage and educate the participants. To be effective, you must first assess your vocal strengths and weaknesses.

Assess the quality of your voice. How well can you project it? How loud is it? How high or low is the pitch? How much expression can you infuse into it? How does it sound to others? Often our voices sound very different to us than to someone else. To illustrate this point, try taping your own voice and listen to it.

Every voice can become more effective, with training and practice. Try modifying your voice by lowering the pitch, speaking more slowly, enunciating more clearly, speaking directly at the class and standing away from the music source. You may be surprised how much better you sound with these simple techniques. (**Note:** Avoid yelling or straining to be heard. This can result in throat or vocal cord injury. If you feel that you cannot change your voice by yourself, you can seek the professional advice of a qualified voice instructor.)

If you have access to a microphone, take advantage of it; your voice will be saved from strain, and the class will be able to hear you much better.

Choose a style of speaking which is comfortable and natural for you. Practice talking while moving. Develop a consistent language (names of moves) so your class will understand your instructions.

Use the music to complement your voice, not compete with it. Listen to the music and decide when you can best give your cues. If possible, do so during a musical bridge or in a quieter part of the song. Keep the volume of the music low enough so you can be heard.

# Cueing

## Words that Work

Choose simple words that describe what you want people to do:

### Instructional Cues

press	place	pull	push
march	punch	reach	lift
bend	add arms	breathe	exhale
inhale	relax	hold	extend

### Intensity Cues

strong	7 out of 10	fast	slow
speeds 10-80 mph	low impact	high impact	soft
for more/less challenge		Level 1, 2, 3	

### Postural Cues

stretch up	lengthen spine	stand tall	lift chest
chin in	shoulders relaxed	neutral pelvis	strong arms
knees bent	knees over toes		

### Modification Cues

take it easy if you need to	walk, march or tap if you're tired
legs only	smaller steps

### Directional/Formational Cues

1/4 turn	face front	up	down
forward	back	diagonal	circle

### Motivation

Use an encouraging, energetic tone of voice to motivate the group to continue doing their best!

“Are you ready for a terrific workout today?!”	“A little harder”
“A little lower”	“Make it bigger”
“You can do it”	“Keep going”
“We're almost there”	“Just two more”
	“Almost done”
	“You're doing great!”
	“Give me your best ... 8, 7, 6...”

### Other Sounds

Clapping the hands or snapping the fingers to the beat is motivating for people and it helps them keep time with the movements.

Giving a timely “grunt” or “whoop” or “yeah” can also be fun and encouraging.

## Counting

Learning how to count with the music takes considerable practice. Spend time working with music and practicing different counting methods, then use a variety of methods throughout your class.

- counting the rhythm of a movement
- counting up
- counting down
- counting sets
- counting sets
- counting time

### Counting the Rhythm of a Movement

- a *con* or polka would be (1, 2, 3), (1, 2, 3)
- a mambo would be (1, 2, 3, 4), (1, 2, 3, 4)
- a mambo *cha cha* would be (1, 2, 123), (1 2, 123)

### Counting Up

The move is verbalized within the eight-count, (e.g. “Knee and two and three and four and five and six and seven and eight.”)

- The move is verbalized within the slower, four-count, (e.g. “Mambo Right and two ... and three ... and four ...”

### Counting Down

- Counting movements within the eight-count, “8 side taps and 6 and 5 and 4 and 3 and 2 and 1.”
- Counting movements within the four-count, “Heel Curl back and 3 and 2 and 1.”

### Cueing a Change Between Moves

**Method One – Cue the change, then count down to the change.**

- “Change to knees up in 4 ... 3.. 2 and 1.”
- “Changing to a grapevine in 4 ... 3 ... 2 and 1.”

**Method Two – Start the count down, cue the change, then change.**

- “4 ... 3 ... change to heel curls ... and change
- “8 more and press front ... and 4, 3, 2, 1)
- “4 ... 3 ... 2 ... knees-up”.

**Method Three – Cue the change without counting.**

It is also possible to change moves without counting at all. This requires a good connection with the music and, although this is a little less formal, it works well with more advanced participants and as a way to cue a pattern after the moves and sequence have been learned and are now being repeated.

For example:

- “One more each way. Ready and change.”
- “Moving to a mambo after next set of taps. Ready and change.”
- “Take it to a step touch and step touch.”
- “Two more sets of eight, four more sets of kicks.”
- “30 seconds left ... last 15”

# Cueing

## Non-Verbal Cueing

One of the challenges with verbal cueing is that the instructor's voice isn't always clearly heard by all participants. This may be due to the music volume, the positioning of the instructor, the voice of the instructor or due to the fact that some participants have hearing difficulties. Regardless of the reason, we need to look at ways of supplementing the verbal cues to make the directions clear and easy to follow. We do this with non-verbal communication.

Non-verbal cues are the visual cues and other audible sounds used to lead and motivate the class. They include hand signals, pointing, counting with fingers, nodding with the head, clapping, snapping, etc. They can be very effective on their own or used together with verbal cues.

Remember: *A picture is worth a thousand words.*

### Hand Signals

When using hand signals it is important to teach the class what your hand cues mean and use them consistently. Hold your hand high above your head so it can be seen. Try to use the same hand as your lead foot.

Following are some of the most commonly used hand signals:

- Watch the Change, Watch me Now
- Adding-on (circle a finger in the air)
- Adding arms (cross arms and tap fingers on opposite arms)
- Hold the move
- From the top (place hand on head)
- Point in Direction of Movement
- Count Down with fingers
- Show number of reps with fingers



Watch Me Now

### Facial Expressions

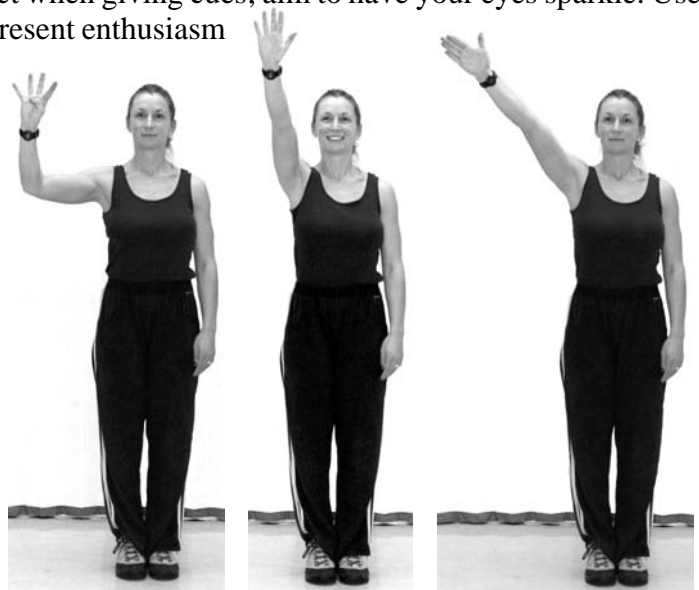
Make warm eye contact when giving cues; aim to have your eyes sparkle. Use facial expressions to present enthusiasm and energy.

### Sounds

Clapping and snapping can help the class stay on beat and motivated.

### Body Language

Body language is a more subtle method of cueing which may be used to accentuate strong movements, display an emotion,



Count Down

Hold the Move

Direction of Movement

## Choreography

**C**horeography is the basic planning, sequencing, and arrangement of movements and exercises in the class. Since there are many ways to design a class, the style of choreography can vary from very open and unstructured to intricately sequenced routines. The choice of how an instructor choreographs and teaches will depend on the instructor's ability, personal style and preference, the participants' abilities, interests and preferences, and the type or format of the class.

In general the choreography should be varied, incorporating a balance between moving on the spot and moving through space (travelling). It should blend both higher intensity and lower intensity moves and it should incorporate different modifications to create variety.

### Less Structured Choreography

#### Freestyle

When aerobics first became popular in the early eighties, the cardio component was about 15-30 minutes. Freestyle choreography, simply going from one move to another in no particular order, was a common method of teaching. This *linear* method is easy for participants to follow, requiring little concentration or coordination.

#### **How to Teach Freestyle:**

- Introduce a leg move
- Add the arms
- Demonstrate any impact modifications (higher or lower impact)
- Add variety by travelling, changing the tempo or style
- Change the leg move ... (cont.)

For instructors, this method allows a great deal of flexibility and requires little or no memorization. The problem with it, however, is that it doesn't ensure that a balance of movements, exercises, repetitions or target muscles are incorporated in the class. It can also be stressful to teach because there isn't a clear *plan*. Once you run out of moves, for example, you need to start repeating some of what's already been done (which makes it apparent to participants that there is no plan). This method, therefore, is not highly recommended.

### Circuit Training

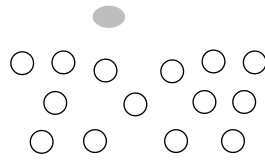
Circuits are a fun way to provide effective choreography, with very little sequencing or structure. Circuits can be comprised of straight cardio, straight resistance or a combination of both.

### Station Circuits

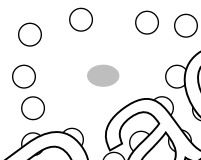
Circuits can be done with actual exercise stations comprised of cardio exercises, or an alternating pattern of cardio and resistance exercises (and the class moves individually or in pairs through the stations performing a specified time (e.g. 45 – 60 seconds, at each station).

# Choreographic Formations

Scatter Front



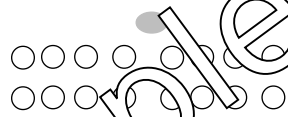
Scatter Circle



Semi Circle



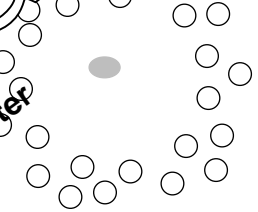
Horizontal Lines Front



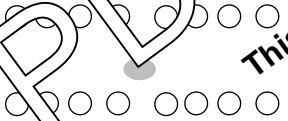
Single Circle



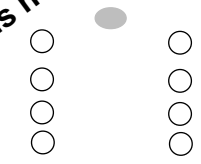
Circle



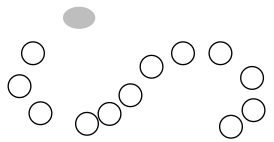
Horizontal Lines Center



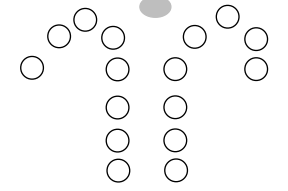
Vertical Lines Front



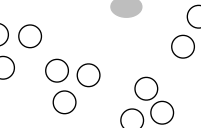
Serpentine



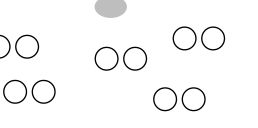
Fountain



Stations



Partners



Sample Pages  
PDF Extract  
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# Choreography

## Formations

Formations are the way the instructor and participants are positioned in a pattern or in a class. Different formations can be used to facilitate larger numbers of people, certain movement sequences, or simply to create variety and interest.

Sample formations (*see previous page for complete list*):  
 Instructor at front of room, facing students.  
 Instructor and students at one end of the room.  
 Circle formation (participants form a circle, instructor in center).  
 Line formations (lines facing each other, facing front, facing sides etc.);  
 U-formation (participants form a semicircle, instructor at the front).

## Directions of Movement

Travelling in different directions is another way to keep the choreography varied and interesting and in certain cases safer, because you avoid too much repetitive movement on the foot.

Movements can be done:

On the Spot

Forward, Back

Side to Side

Square Shape (forward, side, back, side)

Around in a Circle

In a U-shape (forward, back, side, forward, back, side)

On the Diagonal

In a Triangle (side, diagonal front, diagonal back, side)

## Creating Variety in Choreography

**Arms** — Use a variety of arm moves, in different planes of direction.

**Levers** — Use a variety of lever lengths (in both the arm and leg movements).

**Range of Motion** — Vary the range of motion in both the arm and leg movements.

**Tempo** — Vary the tempo of moves, slowing them down (half time – quarter time) or speeding them up (single time, double time).

**Repetition** — Vary from alternating legs to single leg repetitions. Do increasing and decreasing reps of moves.

**Complexity** — Give more complex options for more experienced participants, for example a mambo pivot instead of a mambo.

**Sports or Games** — Incorporate movements like skiing, skating, jumping rope.

**Style** — Add a Latin, funk or any dance style to a move.

# Scanning, Monitoring and Feedback

## Scanning and Monitoring

Teaching is only one aspect of instruction. It's also necessary to constantly monitor the class to know whether or not they are following the movements, doing them correctly and whether or not they are enjoying the experience!

Scanning is making eye contact with every person in the class on a regular basis. It involves constantly moving through the class and forth to keep connecting with each person throughout the class. The purpose of scanning is to:

- a) *Give and receive eye contact.*

This helps us maintain a personal connection with the group.

- b) *Monitor the intensity of the exercises.*

We can see how hard people are working by observing their facial expressions, seeing how much they are sweating and whether or not they are slowing down or flagging. Open dialogue is another way to check in, "How does that feel?" "Can we do eight more?"

- c) *Monitor participants' ability to follow the choreography or movement sequence.*

Some routines are more complex than others. If people are struggling to follow, it's important to repeat directional cues or simplify the sequence to avoid causing frustration.

- d) *Check that participants are demonstrating proper exercise technique.*

It's common to observe problems with exercise technique. An instructor may notice problems that are common to the group, or specific to an individual. These problems require corrective feedback to ensure exercise safety and effectiveness.

## Feedback

If an instructor notices problems that are common to the group, general feedback can be given to reiterate the proper exercise technique or movement sequence.

When problems are specific to an individual, however, sensitivity is required to provide the necessary feedback without embarrassing the person. This can be done by moving yourself closer to the individual so they can better see and hear you, by giving direct eye contact to that individual while giving a general reminder to the group or by approaching the individual and giving specific, corrective information "now try lifting the upper body a bit more. That's it, good".

Feedback shouldn't just be used to correct technique, however, it should also be given to reinforce what people are doing right. When we observe people demonstrating proper technique, we can reinforce this by saying specifically what they are doing well, for example ... "good control", "nice breathing", "good pacing" etc. People really enjoy being praised. It makes them feel good about themselves and it reinforces proper exercise technique at the same time!