

Helping Those with a Poor Sense of Rhythm

Some people are not even aware that they have problems with rhythm and therefore it is difficult to single them out in a class situation. Teachers could suggest that dancers with the problem might like to come early for a short practice and additional help.

Dancers need to feel relaxed about problems. Try to annul anxiety. Teachers need to take the focus away from the technical details of the steps when teaching rhythm.

Choose dances to suit focusing on the rhythm – simple geography and steady rhythmic music without syncopation. Use non Scottish music in exercises for pas de basque e.g Swedish Masquerade or waltz time.

Give dancers samples of music with a strong beat to take home for listening.

Increase the bass on recorded music or use a metronome and loudspeaker to emphasise the beat.

Use a variety of different bands to give experience of different sounds, lead accordion, lead fiddle, a solo pianist and even the piper.

Sometimes use rhythmic walking to do dances to the music.

Strategies that can be used to help a dancer to hear the rhythm are:

- Clapping, walking, stamping and counting with the music to enable dancers to listen to the music
- Hold hands with partner in lines to get everyone to move together in time or take both of the dancer's hands to transfer your movement into their rhythm.
- Pair dancers, one with good rhythm with one needing assistance
- When breaking down the steps – do it rhythmically at walking pace with slow music
Use words rhythmically with steps:
Strathspey – step, close, step, through – slide the feet along the floor and introduce the hop later
Pas de basque – step, step, step, fish and chips, hot cross buns,. Note beat, beat, beat is often confusing since it is possible to do it with the same foot repeatedly without changing weight
- Encourage dancers to go to the social occasions to dance with different partners
- Teachers could direct dancers to instructional videos on websites such as SCDDDB/Scottish Country Dance Dictionary showing dancers dancing rhythmically and breaking down the steps to reinforce classes.

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