# Dance 7–10 Life Skills

## Project overview

Students are to explore their inner self through movement by composing and performing a dance that communicates ideas about their dreams and aspirations. Students can draw from the dance performances they watch and appreciate to inspire their own composition and performance. Students can work individually, in small groups or as a class to structure and perform their composition.

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## Outcomes

A student:

LS.1.1 – demonstrates a range of movement skills

LS.1.2 – uses dance technique to communicate

LS.1.3 – demonstrates an awareness of safe dance practices

LS.2.1 – explores the elements of dance to create movement and communicate ideas

LS.2.2 – explores, selects and sequences movement to express feelings and ideas

LS.3.1 – experiences a variety of dance performances

LS.3.2 – responds to the elements of dance in performance

LS.5.1 – engages in dance activities

[Dance 7–10 Syllabus](https://educationstandards.nsw.edu.au/wps/portal/nesa/k-10/learning-areas/creative-arts/dance-7-10) © 2003 NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA) for and on behalf of the Crown in right of the State of New South Wales.

**Note** – The learning activities outlined are sample ideas and teachers should use their professional judgement to select, sequence and expand on activities that best meet the learning needs and goals of their students.

### Provocations

Students can use any one or a combination of the provocations below to engage with the topic of self.

* Class discussion responding to the question: What makes you, you?
* Provide students with this prompt: Use your face and or body to make a pose that represents your personality. Hold the pose for 5 seconds and then explain why you choose that pose and how it represents your personality.
* Teacher led meditation, students get into a comfortable position and teacher gently talks students through a visualisation process. Students can be guided to use all their senses to imagine a peaceful place and the discovery of a box, book or magical orb that when touched/opened transports students to their future dream life. Students are encouraged to note what it looks and feels like, what activities they are doing there and what the environment is like. After the meditation students can record their visualisation by writing, drawing or voice recording.

### Safe dance practices

#### Safe space

* Discuss what students need to consider about the space they are working in and how to keep themselves and peers safe when warming up, composing and performing. Furniture should be stacked neatly out of the way so students cannot accidently harm themselves, personal space and room for movement should be considered when deciding how many people can work in a space. The ground surface should be even and the types of movement selected should take into consideration the floor covering, for example sliding on carpet may cause friction burn.
* Students may make recommendations of how to make the space safe, such as pointing out equipment that needs to be moved out of the way.
* Students may work collaboratively to safely move small pieces of furniture to create a safe space.

#### Know your body

* Students can get to know their abilities and limitations by working through each part of their body: head, neck, shoulders, arms, hands, torso, back, hips, legs and feet to work out different ways they can move each body part. For example, hands can be outstretched, relaxed or in a fist, the neck may be turned side-to-side, up and down and tilted left or right. Students should be conscious to not overextend themselves and pay attention to their ability to stay balanced to avoid injury.
* Students can conduct movement experiments, such as
* imagining their feet or hips are planted in the ground and are unable to move, see how far their can stretch to the sides, upwards, forwards and backwards
* testing what shapes they can make with their upper body, when the lower body is planted on a single spot
* exploring the ways the body can move in different directions. For example, walking, running, rolling, crawling, tiptoeing and skipping.

#### Warm ups/cool down

* Warm up movements are demonstrated by the teacher or using a video such as the [12 minute warm up routine you should do before your dance classes](https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=S4GXN9tdujs) (duration 13:16 minutes), working through each part of the body and students follow along by copying the movements.
* Play a game of ‘move and freeze’ play a song, students are spaced safely in the space and move until the music stops in random intervals, when the music resumes the students continue to move. The ensure a full body warmed up the teachers can call out a body part students should move such as arms, legs or hips.
* Warm up shapes, teacher calls out shapes students can create individually or in pairs to warm up their bodies. For example, it could be a word that they need to form the shape of each letter or objects such as star, apple, chair and ball.
* Students can follow a cool down video such as [7 minute cool down exercises for kids](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TSaE8EgQT_o) (duration 8:27 minutes).
* Students can go on a teacher led imaginary adventure, such as march through a field, climb a ladder, be a tall antenna on the roof swaying in the wind, grow wings and fly down from the roof, sit down on the ground with your legs outstretched like you are at a picnic, walk your hands down your legs towards your feet like you are reaching for the picnic basket at the edge of the mat, sit up tall ready to eat, have a bite of your favourite food, lay down for an afternoon nap.

#### Safe movement

* Explain to students they need to be mindful of each other when they are warming up, cooling down and dancing. Get students to spread out in the space to work out how much room they all need to keep a safe distance apart and be mindful of the other people and objects in the space when they are moving.
* Get students to test their spacing carefully by reaching their arms and legs out in a range of directions to make sure they cannot reach others.

### Elements of dance

The [Dance 7–10 Syllabus](https://educationstandards.nsw.edu.au/wps/portal/nesa/k-10/learning-areas/creative-arts/dance-7-10) (2003) has information about the elements of dance on pages 16 and 17. You may also find the departments [elements of dance resources](https://education.nsw.gov.au/teaching-and-learning/curriculum/creative-arts/planning-programming-and-assessing-creative-arts-7-10/dance-7-10#Elements2) useful.

Table - Elements od dance activities

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Element | Activities | Sample vocabulary |
| Space | **Shape*** Individually create shapes where your body takes up as much and as little space as possible.
* Use your body to create geometric shapes such as a circle, triangle and star.
* Work with a partner to create the shapes of letters and objects such as your initials, your favourite possession, a vase and/or a book.
* Make a list of emotions and feelings, in small groups consider the ways your body can make shapes to represent each emotion/feeling such as happy, excited, confused, freedom, trapped.
 | ClosedOpenWideNarrowSmall |
| Space | **Levels**The teacher uses masking tape on a wall to show the 3 main levels dancers can perform in, high, medium and low. The tape levels can be approximately average head height for high level, average knee height for low level and the space in-between the high and low level is the medium level. * As a class explore the positions and movements students can perform to have some or most of their body in each of the levels. For example, students could be working in a high level by:
* reaching their arms upwards and standing on their tippy toes
* leaping or jumping
* Students could work at a medium level by:
* reaching forwards or to the sides
* standing upright or hunched
* Students can work at a low level by:
* sitting or laying down
* rolling or crawling
* Create a movement sequence of 8–16 counts in each level to represent layers of yourself. Use low level to represent your inner self, your thoughts and feelings, a medium level to represent how you feel when you are around new people/ strangers and a high level to represent yourself when you are with close friends and family.
 | HighMediumLow  |
| Space | **Directions*** Starting in the middle of the space, ask students to move in a range of directions such as forwards, backwards, left, right, diagonally to the front left or right corner, diagonally to the back left or right corner.
* Create a meaning for each direction, for example forwards can mean the students agree or like it, backwards can mean they disagree or do not like it. Teacher gives prompts and students respond by moving in the direction with the signed meaning. Prompts could include:
* eating ice-cream on a hot day
* being called a nick name
* spilling food on your clothes
 | ForwardsBackwardsLeftRightDiagonal  |
| Space | **Pathways**Pathways can be created by combining a range of directions onto a sequence. * In small groups students can create a pathway by selecting a starting place and marking 3 different places in the allocated performance space with an ‘x’. Students can sequence the 3 places and mark out a pathway from the starting point to the places in order using chalk or masking tape. Students can move along the pathway by walking, tip toeing, skipping or crawling.
 | Zig-zagCurveDirectionWanderingCurlingSwirling |
| Space | **Floor patterns*** This activity follows on from the pathways activity above. Label the 3 ‘x’s’ a, b and c. Move from the starting point to a in a zigzag pattern, move from a and b in a swirling floor pattern, move from b to c in a curved line
* Squiggle challenge. Each student takes a turn to draw a squiggle using a continuous line and shares it with the performer. The performer translates the squiggle into a floor pattern and moves their body in the directions and patterns of the continuous line squiggle. The audience member tries to draw what they think the squiggle looks like based on the floor pattern performed by the performer. Audience members share their drawings with the student who drew the original squiggle line before switching roles and repeating until everyone has had a turn in each role.
 | Zig-zagCurveDirectionWanderingCurlingSwirling |
| Space | **Relationships*** In pairs students learn about and practice proximity to other dancers by moving to represent relationships such as close but not touching, an arm distance apart, far apart, close with one person high level and the other low level.
* Write a list of body parts on separate paper slips such as head, right shoulder, left elbow, right hip, left leg, right foot. On the board write ‘near’, ‘touches’, and ‘far away from’. Draw out 2 body part slips and select one of the options on the board for students to create as examples of body relationships, such as ‘right hand is far away from left foot’. Repeat with different combinations of body parts and relationships to one another.
* Students work in pairs to complete a mirroring activity, taking turns as the leader.
 | CloseApartNearTouchingSide-by-side |
| Time | **Use of metre*** Students clap along to the beat in music to find the reoccurring pattern of beats
 |  |
| Time | **Tempo*** Teacher selects some music with different tempos. Students clap or march in time with the different tempos.
* Students create a set of movements that they perform to a faster tempo and then modify to fit a slower tempo.
 | Fast Slow |
| Time | **Accent*** Teacher teaches the class a set of movements to 8 counts of music placing emphasis on one of the movements by making it a strong gesture that stands out from the other movements in the sequence. Students perform the sequence using the accent.
* Students work in pairs to create a sequence of 8 to 16 counts and include an accent. Perform for other students in the class and ask audience to identify the accent after watching the performance.
 |  |
| Time | **Stillness*** Students create a sequence of movements that included stillness.
* Students brainstorm why stillness is effective in communicating ideas in dance.
 |  |
| Dynamics | **Weight*** Teacher teaches the students a sequence of movements and asks them to identify where their weight is in each movement and how is shifts between movements.
* Students create movements representing different weights such as a candle slowly melting and feather floating to the ground.
* Students can embody emotions and feelings with different weights by creating a movement that shows the heaviness of grief or sadness, and the lightness of thrill and excitement.
 |  |
| Dynamics | **Force*** Students imagine there is an invisible boulder next to them, they enact slowly move it away from where they are standing.
* Students imagine something they really want is tied to the end of a long rope, they pull the imaginary rope towards themselves quickly to try and capture the thing they want.
 |  |

### Composing activities

#### Dream life

Students create a narrative about a day in their dream life. It should have 3 parts, the beginning could represent their reaction to arriving in their dream life, the middle could represent something trying to pull them back into their everyday life and the ending could represent students breaking free and what it feels like to be in their dream life.

Students complete a table with ideas to represent each part of their narrative to inspire the composition they will create. Students consider how space, time and dynamics can be used to communicate the ideas in their narrative to the audience through movement to music.

Table - Elements of dance scaffold

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Part of the narrative and dance | Space* Shapes
* Levels
* Pathways
* Directions
* Floor patterns
* Relationships
 | Time* Tempo
* Accent
* Stillness
 | Dynamics* Weight
* Force
* Quality of movement
 |
| Beginning  |  |  |  |
| Middle |  |  |  |
| End |  |  |  |

Students are given or select a piece of music and compose 8 to 16 counts of movement for each part of their narrative. Students can use their completed elements of dance scaffold to compose their dance.

#### This is me

Students create a brainstorm with lots of ideas about who they are, what they like and dislike. They could include things that are important to them, how they like to spend their spare time and what they hope for in the future.

Students select 3 to 5 items from their brainstorm to use as stimulus for their composition.

Students can use the questions below to help expand their ideas into movements.

Space

* What shapes represent the things you like?
* What level represents how you feel?
* Can you imagine one of the things you do not like on the stage, what direction do you have to move to get away from it?
* What pathways can you create moving from one idea to the next?
* How can you use relationships between parts of your body or you and an imaginary object to communicate your ideas?

Time

* What tempo best suits the ideas you are communicating? For example, faster and upbeat, slower and more considered.
* Where should the emphasis be? What is an important point you want to accent for the audience?
* Is stillness or a pause helpful to communicate your idea? When is the best place for it? What position will your body be in?

Dynamics

* How can representing a weight or lightness in your body help communicate your ideas?
* How can you control the weight and force (push or pull) you are feeling to communicate your ideas?

Students compose 8 to 16 counts of movement for each item of their brainstorm and then combine them into one dance. Students can use the ideas in their answers to help make compositional choices.

### Performing activities

1. Students practise performing their composition for a peer. Peers could be asked to provide feedback on how one of the elements of dance is used and share the ideas that were communicated to them as audience member.
2. Students could reflect on their composition through the reflection questions below:
3. What works well in the composition?
4. Which parts clearly communicate your ideas?
5. Which parts need to be refined? How can they be improved?
6. Have you used space, time, and dynamics techniques?
7. Are there any techniques missing that could be included to improve the dance?

Students can apply their reflection feedback to their composition and performance.

### Appreciation activities

Recognise the elements of dance which make the performance engaging to watch. This can be achieved with a scaffold where students identify the elements as they are performed. Students may pause a recording of a performance to explain and discuss the elements of dance they recognise and why it makes the performance engaging.

Recognise how different meanings are conveyed through performance and compositional choices. Students may watch their peers and other performers and interpret the meaning conveyed through the choices of the performer and/ or composer.

Students may watch performances and interpret the main ideas communicated through a dance performance through discussion, writing or voice recording.

### Collaborate

1. Students work collaboratively to organise and sequence their compositions into a complete dance.
2. Students teach each other their compositions to the same piece of music.
3. In small groups students develop transitions from one composition to the next. This may involve locomotor movements to move to a different configuration or non-locomotor movements to shift the positioning of the body.
4. The whole class performs the dance for an audience. The performance may be live or recorded and shared with members of the school community such as other students, staff or parents and carers.

#### Sample filmed dance performances

Note – this is not an exhaustive list and recommended resources are suggestions only. These suggestions imply no endorsement by the New South Wales Department of Education, of any composer or artist. When selecting works for teaching and learning, teachers are to refer to the advice in the [Controversial Issues in Schools Policy](https://education.nsw.gov.au/policy-library/policies/pd-2002-0045).

Please note – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are advised that these resource links may contain the names and images of deceased persons.

[This Is Me - The Greatest Showman, Keala Settle (Dance Video)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RMP6nMDjnKc) (3:23 minutes)

[BROLGA Bangarra Dance Theatre Education Resource](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zxnra4q1ElA) (4:25 minutes)

[The Greatest Dancer - Andrew](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n4lZaze8qW0) (excerpt 3:14 – 5:00 minutes)

## References

[Dance 7–10 Syllabus](https://educationstandards.nsw.edu.au/wps/portal/nesa/k-10/learning-areas/creative-arts/dance-7-10) © NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA) for and on behalf of the Crown in right of the State of New South Wales, 2003.

375 Dance studio (2021) [12 minute warm up routine you should do before your dance classes](https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=S4GXN9tdujs) [video] accessed 23/11/2023.

Bangarra Dance thetre (2013) [BROLGA Bangarra Dance Theatre Education Resource](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zxnra4q1ElA) [video] accessed 23/11/2023.

Brian Esperon (2017) [This Is Me - The Greatest Showman, Keala Settle (Dance Video)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RMP6nMDjnKc)  [video] accessed 23/11/2023.

BBC (2019) [The Greatest Dancer - Andrew](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n4lZaze8qW0) [video] accessed 27/11/2023.

Little sports (2022) [7 minute cool down exercises for kids](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TSaE8EgQT_o) [video] accessed 23/11/2023.

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