

*Free E-Book*  
**Ballroom & Latin  
American Dancing  
Hints & Tips**



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*Thank You for taking the time to visit our site, we look forward to putting you one **step** closer to becoming a better dancer.*

# Brief History of Ballroom Dancing

Ballroom Dancing is when a couple performs any of the various social dances that follow a pattern of predictable steps. Examples of these dances are the tango, waltz, slow foxtrot and quick step. It has an immensely amplified popularity spreading across Europe, the Americas and Asia. Ballroom dancing has had a relatively short but interesting history and has evolved from a recreational activity to a worldwide sporting event.

Ballroom dancing originated in England in the late 18th and early 19th centuries in which these dances, such as the waltz, were performed by the upper and elite classes of society in balls and parties. During the late 19th to the early 20th centuries, it became a trend among the working and middle class where they would go to gatherings and events in public dance halls. In the early 1920s, ballroom dancing competitions started to boom that in 1924, an organization was formed called the Ballroom Branch of the Imperial Society of Teachers of Dancing. The objective of this organization was to standardize and formalize ballroom dancing techniques, sets of steps and music to which it was danced to.

In legitimate Dance Sport competitions and in social events, there are five standard dances. These are the Modern and the Viennese Waltz, the Tango, the Slow Foxtrot and the Quickstep. These dances are standardized and categorized into segregated teaching levels and utilize vocabulary, rhythm and tempo and techniques which are accepted internationally.

Although these dances come from very different backgrounds and have special techniques, aesthetics, rhythms and tempos, they do share common qualities. All ballroom dances, as with all forms of dance, are expressions of feelings, thoughts and emotions. These dances may be stricter than other forms of dance and may limit the range of steps and body movement involved, but it is still one of the best expressions of love, joy and pain between two people.

Also, all ballroom dances are performed by only two people, usually a man and a woman. These dances are performed in a certain position termed as the "Closed Hold". In this position, the couple strictly remains in contact in five different points or places. These five points consists of three hand contacts, one elbow contact and one chest contact.

The first hand contact occurs when the man's left hand holds the lady's right hand. Second is when the lady's left hand is placed at the top of the man's right upper arm. In the tango, the lady's left hand is placed behind the man's arm, not on top of it. The third contact is when the man's right hand is placed under the left shoulder blade on the lady's back. The fourth contact is when the lady's left elbow rests on the man's right elbow and both arms are kept in a horizontal line. The lady's arms are held comfortably by the man's and permit her to follow the man's lead with ease. This also gives the couple the appearance of having a bearing of royalty. This is an important characteristic in the ballroom dances that came from Western Europe because these dances were performed in the royal courts. The last point of contact is where the right area of the chest of one touches the right area of his partner. This closeness allows very little room between the partners' faces thus contributing to the dance's romantic appeal.

# DanceSport Competition Guide

## What to Wear for Your Competition

Ballroom dancing is, to a large extent, as much about appearance as about dancing. It can be, and often is, a very superficial sport, but obviously is still extremely fun. As a ballroom dancer, there are certain expectations regarding your presentation. Often judges depend on appearance – confidence, posture, and how you look – to separate the final six couples. Newcomers, Beginners and Intermediates: the expectations are in accord with your level. Full-out costumes are not necessary and often are not allowed.

So here's what you can do to give yourself as much of a boost as possible:

### MEN

#### ***Standard Ballroom***

**Hair:** Long hair should be pulled back with hair gel, looking neat. Go for a slicker, refined look, with no wisps or strands of hair hanging out. A clean-cut appearance is a must. Goatees, beards, and sideburns are strongly discouraged.

**Shirt:** White or black long-sleeved dress shirt and tie, or even better, tuxedo shirt & black bow tie. Be careful not to wear a shirt that is too loose. Advanced and up wear tuxedo tails especially made for dancing.

**Pants:** Black dress slacks or tux pants. Again, no baggy pants.

**Accessories:** Black vest or buttoned sweater that perpetuates the formal look. No watches. You may also wear a tie or bowtie that tastefully matches your partner's dress (for instance, a dark green bowtie if your partner is wearing a dark green dress etc)

#### ***International Latin American***

**Hair:** Sleek, refined look is again required. Long hair pulled back, shorter hair should be kept down, no spiky hair! Goatees, beards, and sideburns are strongly discouraged.

**Shirt:** Black or white shirt. Dress shirt or club shirt will suffice. Definitely no loose clothing here, you need to show your line in your dancing. Consider wearing a very tight-fitting black T-shirt ("muscle" shirt). Advanced and up wear custom outfits.

**Pants:** Again, fitting black dress slacks. (A narrow cut is complimentary to the dances.) Make sure they allow a free range of motion.

**Accessories:** Belts with shiny accents attract attention to hips, but be careful to not look tacky. No watches.

### WOMEN

#### ***Standard Ballroom***

**Hair:** Long hair should be put up neatly – in a bun, French braid or twist, etc. Use lots of gel/hairspray and bobby pins. Shorter hair should be gelled down. No loose hair.

**Makeup:** Stage makeup – wear more than usual, especially on eyes and lips. Consider fake eyelashes– they really make your eyes pop, and are very affordable/pretty easy to put on.

**Dress:** More formal. You want something that is above your ankles. Be aware that most prom/formal type dresses are too long, and if you want to wear one dancing you must shorten it (to avoid tripping, and to allow judges to see your feet).

Many girls wear a skirt (at least knee-length, preferably mid-calf or longer) & blouse, though this is a casual look and tends to make you look less competitive. The main thing is that you can move easily. Remember your partner steps between your feet! (Advanced dancers wear custom made gowns, often with "wings", feathers, etc.)

**Accessories:** Nice, elegant jewellery – pearls, rhinestone pieces etc that will attract attention.

## ***International Latin American***

**Hair:** Neat & slicked back, tight ponytail/braid, bun or French twist etc.

**Makeup:** Stage makeup. Dramatic is a good adjective, as are bold, daring, and sexy. False eyelashes are a fantastic idea. Accentuate the eyes and lips.

**Dress:** Cocktail/party dress or two piece outfit. Shorter (very short is good, though be aware that showing your actual butt is not considered tasteful in the slightest) skirts with flare or fringe for spinning. Avoid restrictive clothing. Also, black, while convenient and slimming, also tends to drown you in a sea of other people wearing black, so consider wearing colour, as in, pink, red etc. Advanced dancers will wear pre-made or designed Latin dresses with stones etc. Age appropriate!

**Accessories:** Sparkle on the floor! Large glittery earrings/bracelets/necklaces/rings are good. Get creative! Nude, flesh-tone, fishnet stockings can elongate your legs. Overall, be sexy and comfortable.

## **What Are the Judges Looking For?**

Now that you are at the comp, you are looking good, you know what dance is forthcoming and the steps associated, what does it take to succeed? The following is by Dan Radler, L.I.S.T.D. Ballroom and Latin, and a Registered World Class Adjudicator. He is a former North American, United States, and Eastern U.S. Champion, as well as United States Ten-Dance Champion.

The criteria that a judge might choose to consider are actually too numerous to examine individually in the brief time allotted, since at least six couples are being judged simultaneously. Therefore, the judge must rely on the impression each couple makes relative to the others. The experienced judge, having seen and studied dancing at all levels, can quickly assess these factors collectively:

**Posture** - one of the most important aspects. Good posture makes you look elegant and exude confidence. It improves balance and control, and allows your partner to connect well to your body in the smooth dances. One's competition result is often directly proportional to one's postural correctness. "Persistent practice of postural principles promises perfection."

**Timing** - if a couple is not dancing on time with the music, no amount of proficiency in any other aspect can overcome this. The music is boss.

**Line** - by this we mean the length and stretch of the body from head to toe. Attractive and well executed lines, either curved or straight, enhance the shapes of the figures.

**Hold** - the correct and unaffected positioning of the body parts when in closed dancing position. For instance, the line of the man's arms should be unbroken from elbow to elbow. Also, there should be symmetry of the man's and woman's arms coming together to form a circle, which, although changing in size, should remain constant in shape so that the dancers remain in correct body position relative to each other. The silhouette of the couple should always be pleasing.

**Poise** - in smooth dancing, the stretch of the woman's body upwards and outwards and leftwards into the man's right arm to achieve balance and connection with his frame, as well as to project outward to the audience.

**Togetherness** - the melding of two people's body weights into one, so that leading and following appear effortless, and the dancers are totally in synchronization with each other.

**Musicality and Expression** - the basic characterization of the dance to the particular music being played and the choreographic adherence to musical phrasings and accents; also the use of light and shade to create interest value in response to these accents and phrases. For instance, in foxtrot, the stealing of time from one step to allow another to hover; or a quick speed of turn in an

otherwise slow rumba; or the snap of a head to suddenly freeze and then melt into slowness in tango.

**Presentation** - Does the couple sell their dancing to the audience? Do they dance outwardly, with enthusiasm, exuding their joy of dancing and confidence in their performance? Or do they show strain and introversion?

**Power** - Energy is exciting to watch. I've noticed that, in a jive, it always seems to be the most energetic couple that wins this dance. But the energy must be controlled, not wild. For instance, powerful movement is an asset in waltz or foxtrot, but only if it is channelled into the correct swing of the body, and not just by taking big steps. The lilt of the music must be matched by the action of the body. In a waltz for instance, the dancers' body action must clearly show the influence of the one down beat and two up beats. So the release of power into the beginning of a figure must be controlled and sustained during the rise at the end of the figure.

**Foot and Leg Action** - the stroking of the feet across the floor in foxtrot to achieve smoothness and softness; the deliberate lifting and placing of the feet in tango to achieve a staccato action; the correct bending and straightening of the knees in rumba to create hip motion; the extension of the ankles and the pointing of the toes of the non-supporting foot to enhance the line of figure; the sequential use of the four joints (hip, knee, ankle, and toes) to achieve fullness of action and optimal power; the bending and straightening of knees and ankles in waltz to create rise and fall; the use of inside and outside edges of feet to create style and line -- all fall under this most important of categories.

**Shape** - Shape is the combination of turn and sway to create a look or a position. For instance, in Paso Doble, does the man create the visual appearance of manoeuvring this cape? Does the lady simulate the billowing flow of the cape through space? In foxtrot, does the man use the appropriate shape on outside partner steps to enable body contact to be maintained?

**Lead and Follow** - Does the man lead with his whole body instead of just his arms? Does the lady follow effortlessly or does the man have to assist her?

**Floorcraft** - This refers not only to avoiding bumping into other couples, but the ability to continue dancing without pause when boxed in. It shows the command of the couple over their choreography and the ability of the man to choose and lead figures extrinsic to their usual work when the necessity presents itself.

**Intangibles** - such as how a couple "look" together, whether they "fit" emotionally, their neatness of appearance, costuming, the flow of their choreography, and basically whether they look like "dancers"; all have an affect on a judge's perception and therefore on his markings.

Different judges have different predilections in what they want to see, and weight these factors differently. One judge, for instance, might be especially interested in technique, while another wants to be moved by musicality and expression. While both factors are obviously important and need to be considered, it can result in couples getting widely disparate markings. Couples wondering what a judge saw to give them a particularly high or low mark should know that any one of the many factors listed in this article could be responsible. The use of a heel when a toe is warranted can just as easily hurt you in a judge's eyes as a meticulous closing of feet can help. Because the judge sees each couple for only a few seconds, anything that draws the attention, either positively or negatively, could very well be the deciding factor on how you are marked.

# Dance Floor Etiquette and Floor Craft

All social & competitive activities have rules of etiquette. There are general rules of etiquette that apply to all forms of dancing. These rules will make the dance floor experience enjoyable for everyone.

## Before the Dance

- Please practice good hygiene. Offensive body odours and bad breath are frowned upon on the dance floor. Many dance aficionados will go so far as to avoid eating certain strong foods on the days they are planning to dance. At the very least, a good shower, deodorant, and a swig of mouthwash will ensure that you dance the night away without offending your partner.
- Clothing will vary by the type of event – formal, semi-formal, dressy casual – but can also vary by the type of dance. You may choose to wear western wear for country line dancing, or dark themed clothing for Tango. This is not required but if you are a novice it is great way to get accepted into a new dance community.
- Avoid big accessories that can get caught in your partner's clothing or, worse, scratch or bruise someone.
- It is advisable to avoid tennis shoes or any rubber soled, spongy type shoe. These shoes tend to stick to the floor (as they are intended to); if you are executing spins and turns, you can injure an ankle or knee.
- Remember that dancing will require a partner. It is not pleasant to touch someone's damp, sticky skin, so avoid sleeveless shirts and dresses.
- Women or men with long hair should consider wearing it up or in a ponytail to avoid hitting a partner in the face during a spin or having your partner's hand get caught in it.

## At the Dance

- Before you hit the dance floor, you will need a partner. It is considered rude to dance with the same partner all night, even if it happens to be your spouse! If you came with a partner it is generally accepted that they shall have the first and last dance. It is also considered rude to dance more than two songs in a row with the same person.
- When asking someone to dance, you should do so politely and accept a refusal just as politely. These days it is acceptable for men and women to ask someone to dance. If you are on the receiving end of an invitation, remember that it is rude to turn down a dance with someone and then accept an invitation from another partner during the same song.
- Once a song is over, men should escort women back to their seats or to wherever they were standing prior to the dance. If someone has just finished dancing, wait until they are completely off the dance floor before inviting them back out again. Do not pounce on someone as they are leaving the dance floor.
- Do not block access to the dance floor by standing and talking or moving chairs into pathways. Dance spaces are usually crowded so be considerate of others' space.
- Social dances are categorized into two types – progressive and semi-progressive dances. Progressive dances travel around the floor, like most Ballroom dances. Semi-progressive dances are typically danced in one spot or move slightly as in most Latin American dances. Dancers move counter-clockwise around the floor, following a Line of Dance.
- Avoid hitting other couples, even if they are in the area you want to dance in. Learn and use Floor Craft. Floor Craft is your knowledge of using basic steps, in any dance, to navigate around couples, change direction or alter routines for smaller floors.
- If you accidentally bump into another couple, apologize to them at that moment and do your best not to do it again!

By following these simple rules of dance etiquette, you are sure to have a great time dancing the night away.

# Posture

## How to Develop Your Posture

- 1) Know what good posture is. Most people think that to "stand up straight" means tensing your back to heave your chest 'in and up', and pulling your head back in to your chest. This is not so. The spine has two natural curves that you need to maintain called the 'double C' or 'S' curves, these are the curves found from the base of your head to your shoulders and the curve from the upper back to the base of the spine. When standing straight up, make sure that your weight is evenly distributed on your feet. You might feel like you are leaning forward, and look stupid, but you don't.
- 2) Using a mirror, align your ears, shoulders, and hips. Proper alignment places your ears loosely above your shoulders, above your hips. Again, these points make a straight line, but the spine itself curves in a slight 'S'. You'll find that this doesn't hurt at all. If you do experience pain, look at your side view in a mirror to see if you're forcing your back into an unnatural position. If so, stop it!
- 3) Do exercises that strengthen the muscles across your upper back and shoulders. These do not have to be strenuous! Try the following, with or without hand weights:
  - *Align your ears over your shoulders. Raise both arms straight up, alongside your ears. Remember to keep your ears aligned! Bend forearms toward shoulders to touch your shoulder blades. Do 10 repetitions with both arms, then alternate 10 reps for each arm singularly.*
  - *Align ears with shoulders. Raise both arms out to sides at shoulder height. Hold for a slow count of ten. Slowly lower arms to sides, counting ten as you lower. Slowly raise arms back to shoulder height, counting to ten as you raise arms. Do ten reps, constantly checking your alignment! If ten reps are too many to start, do as many as you can. You should at least feel a slight fatigue in the shoulder muscles.*
  - *Be a penguin. While you wait for a web page to load, toast to pop, or the microwave to beep, place elbows at your side, and touch your shoulders with your hands. Keeping your hands on your shoulders and your ears aligned, raise both elbows (count one, two) and lower them back to your waist (count one, two). Do as many reps as your wait allows. You'll be surprised how much exercise fits into 30 seconds.*
- 4) Do stretches. This can greatly help if you find that you have a sore back or neck after a while.
- 5) Tilt (stretch) your head in all four directions over your shoulders (forward, back, left, right), and gently massage your neck. Avoid rolling in a circle, as it may cause further strain. On your hands and knees, curl your back upwards, like a cat, and then the opposite. Think about being able to place a bowl in the hollow of your back.
- 6) Repeat the exercises a few times each day. Doing them in the morning helps your body stretch out the muscle lethargy of sleep, and periodically throughout the day helps raise your energy level without a heavy workout.
- 7) Take Ballet and Yoga classes

## SITTING

- 1) Sit in an office chair.
- 2) Align your back with the back of the office chair. Avoid slouching or leaning forward, especially when tired from sitting in the office chair for long periods. Keep your shoulders straight.
- 3) Flex your arms at a 75- to 90-degree angle at the elbows. You may have to adjust the office chair.
- 4) Make sure your neck, back, and heels are all aligned.
- 5) Keep both feet flat on the floor. If there's a problem with feet reaching the floor comfortably, a footrest can be used along with the office chair.



## **STANDING**

- 1) Stand with weight mostly on the balls of the feet, not with weight on the heels. Avoid locking your knees.
- 2) Keep feet slightly apart, about shoulder-width.
- 3) Let arms hang naturally down the sides of the body.
- 4) Tuck the chin in a little to keep the head level. Be sure the head is square on top of the neck and spine, not pushed out forward
- 5) Stand straight and tall, with shoulders upright.
- 6) Stand against a wall with shoulders and bottom touching wall. In this position, the back of the head should also touch the wall - if it does not, the head is carried too far forward (anterior head carriage).

## **WALKING**

- 1) Keep the head up and eyes looking straight ahead. Avoid pushing your head forward.
- 2) Keep shoulders properly aligned with the rest of the body.

## **DRIVING**

- 1) Sit with the back firmly against the seat for proper back support. The seat should be a proper distance from the pedals and steering wheel to avoid leaning forward or reaching.
- 2) The headrest should support the middle of the head to keep it upright. Tilt the headrest forward if possible to make sure that the head-to-headrest distance is not more than four inches.

## **SLEEPING**

- 1) Use a firm mattress for proper back support, but remember that individual preference is very important.
- 2) Try to sleep on your back. Sleeping on the side will damage your posture after enough repetitions. Sleeping on your back will help straighten your shoulders, and it is usually more comfortable for the back than sleeping on the stomach.
- 3) Use a pillow to provide proper support and alignment for the head and shoulders.
- 4) Consider putting a rolled-up towel under the neck and a pillow under the knees to better support the spine.
- 5) If sleeping on the side, a relatively flat pillow placed between the legs will help keep the spine aligned and straight.

# Health & Fitness Benefits of Dancing

## Research

If you secretly chase across your living room when you're home alone, cha-cha with your significant other, or compete in Dance Sport you're in luck! Not only is dancing an exceptional way to let loose and have fun, but it also provides some terrific benefits for your health. In fact, Mayo Clinic researchers reported that social dancing helps to:

- Reduce stress
- Increase energy
- Improve strength
- Increase muscle tone and coordination

It really doesn't matter what style of dance you choose, the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute (NHLBI) says that dancing can:

- Lower your risk of coronary heart disease
- Decrease blood pressure
- Help you manage your weight
- Strengthen the bones of your legs and hips

Dancing is a unique form of exercise because it provides the heart-healthy benefits of an aerobic exercise while also allowing you to engage in a social activity. This is especially stimulating to the mind, and one 21-year study published in the *New England Journal of Medicine* even found dancing can reduce the risk of Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia in the elderly.

In the study, participants over the age of 75 who engaged in reading, dancing and playing musical instruments and board games once a week had a 7 percent lower risk of dementia compared to those who did not. Those who engaged in these activities at least 11 days a month had a 63 percent lower risk!

Interestingly, dancing was the only physical activity out of 11 in the study that was associated with a lower risk of dementia. Said Joe Verghese, a neurologist at Albert Einstein College of Medicine and a lead researcher of the study, "This is perhaps because dance music engages the dancer's mind." Verghese says dancing may be a triple benefit for the brain. Not only does the physical aspect of dancing increase blood flow to the brain, but also the social aspect of the activity leads to less stress, depression and loneliness. Further, dancing requires memorizing steps and working with a partner, both of which provide mental challenges that are crucial for brain health.

## How 'Good' of a Workout is Dancing?

The amount of benefit you get from dancing depends on, like most exercises, the type of dancing you're doing, how strenuous it is, the duration and your skill level. Says exercise physiologist Catherine Cram, MS, of Comprehensive Fitness Consulting in Middleton, Wisconsin, "Once someone gets to the point where they're getting their heart rate up, they're actually getting a terrific workout. Dance is a weight-bearing activity, which builds bones. It's also "wonderful" for your upper body and strength."

Plus, dancing requires using muscles that you may not even know you had. "If you're dancing the foxtrot, you're taking long, sweeping steps backwards. That's very different than walking forward on a treadmill or taking a jog around the neighbourhood...Ballroom dancing works the backs of the thighs and buttock muscles differently from many other types of exercise," says Ken Richards, professional dancer and spokesman for USA Dance, the national governing body of DanceSport (competitive ballroom dancing).

## **Dancing Off Those Calories**

How many calories will you burn while dancing? That depends on the type of dancing. Here's a range of some of the most popular varieties, based on a 150-pound person, per hour:

- Swing dancing: 235 calories/hour
- Ballroom dancing: 265 calories/hour
- Ballet: 300 calories/hour
- Belly dancing: 380 calories/hour
- Salsa dancing: 420+ calories/hour

## **Ballroom & Latin American Dancing Benefits**

- Conditions the body
- Helps keep the heart in shape
- Builds and increases stamina
- Develops the circulatory system
- Strengthens and tones legs and body
- Increases flexibility and balance
- Helps with weight loss
- Relieves stress

## **Salsa Dancing Benefits**

- Builds endurance and stamina
- Helps with weight loss
- Relieves stress
- Helps you release toxins via sweating
- May help lower blood pressure and improve cholesterol levels
- Can lead to a reduced heart rate over time

Physical benefits aside, dancing has a way of brightening up a person's day, says ballroom owner and operator Karen Tebeau.

# Injuries

## Injury Responses

The body will initially respond to injury with a physiological response. Localised tissue damage causes mechanical and chemical changes in the tissue. This is often followed by heat, redness, swelling and pain. Ignoring these early warning signs by continuing to dance can result in further damage to the tissue, increasing the severity of the injury and prolonging the recovery time (and the return to dance activity).

It is often difficult for the dancer to know whether it is ok to continue dancing. Pain is the result of both sensory and emotional experiences and is associated with tissue damage or the probability that damage will occur. It serves as a warning sign for the body to withdraw from the painful stimulus, e.g. continued dancing, and therefore serves to protect the injured body part.

## Pain

Pain can be experienced in many different ways. A description of pain can help to determine what structure may be involved (*this is a guideline only*):

- Ache inflammatory
- Sharp mechanical
- Deep bony, joint, referred e.g. neck referring to the shoulder
- Superficial muscular
- Throbbing vascular
- Neural constant, pins and needles, numbness, sharp shooting

In general, pain that should not be ignored is that which occurs with an acute (traumatic) injury, pain that recurs during dance activity, gets worse and is still apparent after the activity ceases, night pain, or any pain that you are worried about. Other types of pain, e.g. delayed onset of muscle soreness or residual muscle pain which occurs 24/48 hours after unaccustomed bouts of intense dance activity, may respond to continued gentle dance activity, gentle stretching, and/or correct warm up and warm down procedures.

## Injury Management

Immediate management can reduce the severity of an injury and therefore shorten the time away from dance. There are three main phases of Injury Management:

- Initial Injury Phase: *Week 1*

In this phase a combination of Rest, Ice, Compression and Elevation is applied. Additionally, early intervention by a medical professional regarding diagnosis, treatment and management advice is appropriate.

- Early Rehabilitation Phase: *Weeks 2-6*

Functional treatment and supervised exercise plans are appropriate during this phase.

- Ongoing Rehabilitation/Prevention Phase: *Week 6 & Ongoing*

Load control and continued rehabilitation important at this stage to allow the dancer to return to full pain free dance activity. The most common time that injury recurs, is when the dancer feels 80-100% normal.

Of these we are going to concentrate in particular on the initial phase of injury as this is when you, the dancer, will begin management of your injury.

## The 'R I C E D' Guideline

First contact treatment from time of injury up to 48/72 hours should consist of:

### **R I C E D** Rest Ice Compression Elevation Diagnosis

**Rest:** To protect the injured part from further injury you should **stop dancing** immediately. Functional rest can occur once a diagnosis is made, i.e. avoid activities which stress the injured tissue, other activities are allowed.

**Ice:** Ice should be applied preferably within 5-10 minutes of the injury occurring, and be kept on for 20 minutes to get the best physiological effect. The ice should then be reapplied every 2-3 hours for the first 48 hours. Ice is used to cool the tissue (cold induced analgesia, pain relief) and to reduce swelling, muscle spasm and bleeding.

Tips on applying ice:

- *Never apply ice directly to the skin as this can cause an ice burn. Ice pack, frozen peas, ice cubes or gel packs wrapped in a damp towel or ice cubes in an insulated ice bag are best. If you do not have a towel, use damp clothing.*
- *Rub some massage cream onto the skin, e.g. bees' wax, to act as a sealant and reduce the risk of ice burn if you do not have clothing or a towel. **Do not** use deep heat, tiger balm or liniment as a sealant.*
- *If possible, try to remove ballet stockings or leggings before icing. Do not remove clothing if this is too painful or if a more serious injury is suspected.*
- *Find a comfortable position and make sure the ice pack contours aswell as possible to the affected body part to get maximum benefit.*

**Compression:** This is used with ice to reduce swelling, e.g. bandaging, strapping, tubi grip, or air splinting. It should be sufficiently tight to limit the formation of swelling in the tissue but not to compromise blood flow to the area. Always check the skin colour below the compression, e.g. for an ankle injury check toenail colour it should go white if squeezed but normal pink colour should return in a few seconds if no compromise.

**Elevation:** This also reduces swelling and stops bleeding. Ideally the limb needs to be elevated above the level of the heart. Gentle exercise of the limb in a pain free range, e.g. ankle point and flex, will help to stimulate the muscle pump action aiding venous blood return and lymphatic drainage.

**Diagnosis:** If the pain or swelling gets worse, if you are unsure about what you have done or if you are unsure about how to manage the injury, consult a medical professional such as a doctor, physiotherapist or osteopath for advice. In particular, to exclude serious injury, e.g. fracture, ask about appropriate pain medication and which treatment would be most beneficial.

## **The 'H A R M' Factors**

In addition to applying the RICED principle, it is also important to avoid the 'H A R M' factors in the first 48-72 hours following injury.

### **H A R M** Heat Alcohol Running Massage

**Heat:** A common mistake dancers make is to heat rather than ice an injured area. As described earlier, initial icing is important in reducing swelling, muscle spasm and/or bleeding. Heat will increase bleeding at the injured site and will also increase swelling. This means you should avoid hot water bottles, heat packs, hot showers/baths and liniments, e.g. deep heat.

**Alcohol:** Drinking alcohol will increase bleeding and swelling at the injured site and this will ultimately delay the healing process. In addition, it can mask the pain of your injury and its severity causing you to damage the injured area further.

**Running/Dancing:** Continuing to dance with an injury can increase its severity through further bleeding and tissue damage. Stop dancing immediately upon injury, and only return to dance activity after discussion with a medical professional.

**Massage:** Again, a common mistake that dancers make is to massage the injured area immediately after the injury has occurred. Massage in the first 48-72 hours will increase bleeding and swelling and delay the healing process.

Applying the RICED and HARM principles as soon as an injury occurs will help relieve initial symptoms, speed recovery and ultimately shorten your time away from dance.

# Resources

Brief History of Ballroom Dancing: Michael Russell

Dance Sport Competition Guide

Dance Floor Etiquette & Floor Craft: <http://www.e-how.com>

Posture: <http://www.wikihow.com/Improve-Your-Posture>

Health & Fitness Benefits: <http://www.sixwise.com>

Injuries: Susan Simpson DANZ 2006

Our Website: <http://www.onestepdanceshop.com> for additional resources