

**Pathway 1 Activities:**

*Before doing any Dance activities please ensure that yourself and your child are well hydrated, have not just eaten a meal, and that you do the “warm up” (below) to start every session.*

*It is important to note that during any Dance activities done at home, if you or your child at any point start to feel tired, dizzy, or unwell in any way that you stop the activity immediately and seek appropriate medical advice. Only push you bodies as far as you feel comfortable/safe, and be careful when handling/supporting your child physically throughout any of the activities.*

*Where possible, when taking part in dance activities yourself and your child should wear comfortable clothing (similar to what you would wear for sports activities), with no baggy clothes or jewellery that could cause yourself or your child to trip, get caught on or injured in any way. Dance can be done barefoot or in comfortable shoe wear such as trainers (sandals, flip-flops, heels or socks that could slip on the floor are not recommended).*

*All dance activities should be done in a clear, open space, free from anything that your child could trip over, or fall/bang into. You do not need a big room for your session, just enough space for yourself and your child to move on the spot or around in a small circle.*

Happy Dancing! 

**Warm up**

*Skills being developed: Physical preparation, awareness and control.*

Before starting any Dance activities it is important that you and your child to a warm up. This will warm up and wake up your body, ensuring that your muscles perform better and you are less likely to cause injury. This can be done to music or without.

Talk (and demonstrate) your child through the following:

1. To begin, stand still in a space and take a few controlled deep breaths.
2. Start by shaking your hands, then your arms, feet and legs.
3. Gently move different parts of the body one at a time:
* Head (side to side, up and down)
* Shoulders (shrug up and down, roll in circles)
* Arms (circular movements)
* Waist (rotate and twist)
* Hips (thrust, tilt and circle)
* Knees (bend and stretch)
* Feet (rotate at the ankles, up onto toes and down)
* Roll down the spine all the way down and up again slowly
1. 5 minutes of brisk movements including:
* Walking on the spot
* Star jumps
* Light jogging
* Lunges
1. 5 minutes of stretching including:
* Reaching arms upwards, outwards, in circles
* Bending knees up, forwards into a lunge and sideways
* Touching your toes

Don’t forget…

Help your child in whatever way they need, remind them it is ok to make mistakes, and reward their efforts with praise and positivity!

 

**Rhythmic ‘copy me’**

*Skills being developed: Musicality, attention, and physical control.*

This exercise is very simply about moving to the beat. The purpose of this activity is to help your child to organise their physical impulses and develop whole body awareness.

First, choose a song that yourself and your child enjoys that has a recognisable and easy to follow beat/rhythm. This could be a song of any genre, as long as the rhythm is easy to pick out and the song is not too ‘busy’ with lots of rhythms and words overlapping.

I recommend that at least to begin with, you do this activity sitting down. This help to keep your child rooted to a spot/space so that they can focus on the music and movements. The best chairs to use are stools or dining chairs that allow you to sit with your back straight and your legs at a comfortable 90° angle.



1. Tell your child that when the music starts you will begin to move to the music, and that they must copy you. They must try to listen to the beat and do their movements in time with it.
2. Start the music and begin to move continuously to the music using the movements listed below.

Do each movement at least 8-16 times before moving onto the next (or for long enough that your child is copying you). Make sure that each movement is done IN TIME WITH THE BEAT of the music:

* Clap your hands
* Pat your knees
* Click your fingers
* Tap your head/shoulders
* Stamp your feet
1. Next, create a simple sequence (STILL TO THE BEAT OF THE MUSIC) using the above movements.

For example:

* Clap, clap, stamp, stamp

Clap, clap, stamp, stamp

OR

* (Patting your knees) Pat, pat, pat, pat

Clap, clap, clap, clap

Pat, pat, pat, pat

Clap, clap, clap, clap

As you do this, say the movements out loud. Eg. “clap, clap, stamp stamp, clap, clap, stamp stamp”. This makes the pattern clear and helps your child to copy along and understand the RHYTHM that they should be moving to.

Continue until the piece of music has ended or until you think your child is ready to finish.

Variations – things to try:

* Develop the movements into more complexed sequences, eg.

“Clap, pat, clap, and stamp

Clap, pat, clap and stamp”

* Add any movements to the list to make the activity more challenging and varied. New movements could include:

Reaching up high

Nodding your head

Kicks

Shrugging your shoulders

* Add a creative element by including recognisable actions to the sequence. These could include:

Beep the horn

Ring the bell

Blow a kiss

Wave your hands

High five the air

When you are giving your child verbal instructions throughout this activity, it is worth noting that some children prefer to follow numbers or sounds rather than words. If your child seems to be struggling to copy you, or finds it hard to follow the beat, try the following methods as alternatives to words:

Instead of:

“Clap, clap, stamp, stamp,

Clap, clap, stamp, stamp”

 Try:

 “1, 2, 3, 4

 1, 2, 3, 4”

 OR

 “Baa, Baa, Boom, Boom

 Baa, Baa, Boom Boom”

 (or any sounds/noises that come to mind)

Don’t forget…

Help your child in whatever way they need, remind them it is ok to make mistakes, and reward their efforts with praise and positivity!

 

**Mirror image**

*Skills being developed: Attention, interpersonal, and physical control.*

This can be done with or without music, however, if you choose to use music, ensure that the music you choose is not too fast paced or distracting.

Explain to your child that you are going to play a mirror game. If possible, sit or stand in front of a mirror and ask your child to move their hands, and arms so they can see how their reflection moves along with them.

Sit across from your child and tell your child that to begin, they will be the mirror and must copy you.

* Begin by moving your hands only, keeping your movements very slow (almost in slow-motion) and the actions simple and clear. Eg. slowly move your hand up to touch your shoulder.
* Progressively begin to move the rest of your upper body, still very slowly, starting with your head and shoulders.
* Move onto your legs, lifting them slowly to bend your knees, or stretching them out to point your toes on the floor.

Assist your child further by sitting or standing close up to your child so that you can touch their hands and guide them as if you were touching the mirror. It may also help your child to give verbal support during this exercise, eg. “look, I’m lifting my foot off the floor, can you do the same?”

Variations – things to try:

* Try doing the activity standing up, allowing your movements to be bigger
* Add movements that travel eg. from side to side.
* Extend the activity by speeding up your movements, or making them more fluid and ‘dance like’.

Don’t forget…

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**Prop dances**

*Skills being developed: Physical fitness, creativity, musicality and communication.*

The purpose of this activity is to enjoy and explore dance and movement to music using props to aid your children in creating new shapes and movements. Props often also give children more confidence in dance as it gives them a point of focus and they can concentrate on making the prop move rather than their own bodies.

Prop list:

* Scarves/shawls
* Hula hoops
* Bells/rattles/shakers
* Tambourines
* Hats/caps
* Ribbons
* Dolls/teddy bears

Please ensure you use props that are appropriate for your individual child and that you can use safely.

1. Choose one type of prop from the list above. If possible, find TWO of each prop – one for yourself and one for your child, although the activity can still be done if you only have one of each item.
2. Choose a song/piece of music that your child enjoys and would be happy to dance to.
3. Give your child one of the props and explain that you are going to dance whilst holding onto and moving the object.
4. Start the music and begin to dance (any type of dance will do, and you DO NOT need to be a ‘good dancer’ – any form of movement will work.
5. As you dance, encourage your child to use the prop in their movements, demonstrating with your own prop if possible how this might be done. Eg “look at how I can spin with my scarf held out”, or “look how I shake my ribbon up and down to the music, why don’t you have a go”.

If needed, you can hold your hand(s) over your child’s hands to guide them in their movements and help them to use the prop as necessary.

Encourage your child to keep moving. Make your movements as free, creative, dynamic and confident as possible. Remember, this activity is about enjoyment and improvisation – it is not about being skilled in dance, and there is no right or wrong way to move.

Variations – things to try:

* If your child seems lost in the space, try moving in a circle to the music – using your prop as you go
* Stand across from one another, and ask your child to copy you as you dance.
* Introduce some directional instructions to the activity, eg. ask your child to dance with their prop… down low / up high / in circles / forwards and back / side to side / up and down.

Don’t forget…

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**Dance routine**

*Skills being developed: Creativity, performance, physical confidence, attention and interpersonal.*

This exercise is about joining a series of basic movements together to create a sequence.

1. Choose a song that will motivate your child to take part.
2. Think of 4 simple movements that can be easily copied and done over and over, eg. Clapping your hands, marching on the spot, swinging your arms in a circle, wiggling your hips.
3. Explain to your child that you will be making up a dance routine.
4. Show them move no. 1 - clapping your hands, and say “first we will do this”
5. Show them move no. 2 – marching, and say “next, we will do this”.
6. Next, say “let’s try them together”.

Demonstrate for them clapping your hands eg. 8 times, and then marching your feet 8 times. Encourage them to join in and practice the 2 moves together a few times.

1. Show them move no. 3 – swinging your arms in a circle, and say “next we do this”.
2. Tell your child “let’s have a go adding that on”, and practice:

clapping x8, marching x8, swinging your arms in a circle 8 times.

1. Show them move no. 4 – wiggling your hips, and say “last, we do this”
2. Finally, tell your child you will practice all 4 moves together, and do so.
3. Start the music and say “let’s do it to the music”, and dance the full routine:

Clapping x8, marching x8, arm circles x8, wriggling your hips x8

You can repeat the routine as many times as you like to the music.

The level of support your child will need for this activity will vary. Ways to support them include:

* Using clear verbal instructions as you are dancing
* Holding one of both of their hands whilst you do the movements
* Standing behind them and guiding them through each movement with your hands.
* Your child may find it easier to stand side by side with you, or may prefer it if you stand directly across from them.
* Give recognisable names for the moves that you can call out as you dance eg. for marching, you could say “going for a walk”

Variations – things to try:

* When creating the routine, try asking your child “what move should we do next?”, and see if they can come up with a move to go into the routine. This will build confidence and get them more involved as a choreographer.
* Add in more than 4 moves, making the routine longer and more of a challenge.
* Once your child has learnt the routine or is feeling confident with the activity, why not perform your routine to other members of the family in your household – remember to encourage lots of applause and cheering regardless of how it goes!

Your routine can be as creative and silly as you like, and include any movements that you think your child will enjoy and be able to master.

Don’t forget…

Help your child in whatever way they need, remind them it is ok to make mistakes, and reward their efforts with praise and positivity!