

Together Apart

Dance lesson ideas during social distancing
Lessons can be adapted for Key Stages 2 to 3

By Claire Pring



More Primary dance resources:

- 'Simple Steps to Teaching Dance' by Claire Pring from Millgate House Publishers, millgatehouse.co.uk
- Resource by Claire Pring on the TES website '[clairepring](https://www.tes.com/teacher/cp/clairepring)'

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Together Apart

Clasped Hands

Ask the students to link their hands together & explore the actions they can perform with their hands connected.

Try the same task with the hands clasped behind their back.

Decide whether to keep the hands in a constant connection (e.g. fingers laced together) or allow them to twist and writhe around one another to allow a greater range of movement.

Select actions from the exploration and devise a motif.

Find a partner & stand facing them (maintaining physical distance).

Show each other your motif so that you are familiar with their material. Perform your motifs in short bursts using question & answer as a relationship so only one person is moving at a time, BUT do not tell the other person when you are stopping – allow short pauses to be part of the dance. Repeat 3 or 4 times (take turns who starts the duet & pausing in different places each time).

Decide upon a set pattern, i.e. who will start & when you will pause... then how long your partner moves for until it is your turn again.

Extension activity – repeat the duet but each time it is your turn advance towards your partner – but when it is your turn to pause maintain your shape but retreat in order to sustain the distance between you.

Try the duets to different pieces of music.

Try the duets back to back (still maintaining suitable distance).

Try the duets using different distances between the dancers.

Try adding moments of emphasis – at least once for each performer.

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Directions

Ask the students to think of a journey they know well, e.g. their walk to school or getting to the science department. Ask the students to perform a gesture sequence to communicate the journey (as if trying to explain it to someone who speaks a different language).

Repeat the process with different journeys, try to include changes of direction, going over or under landmarks such as bridges/tunnels, up & down hills, roundabouts, etc..

Decide upon one journey (or make one up) & rehearse the actions until comfortable with the content, phrasing & dynamics.

Saying the journey with the actions might help to recall it accurately, as will using a known journey rather than a made up one.

Find a partner & show each other your motifs.

Devise a travelling phrase that corresponds to the directions that the partner is giving, e.g. 'go down the hill' would be a travel including a change from high to low level.

Repeat the process so that both dancers have a gesture sequence of their own & a travelling sequence for their partners directions.

Perform the work so that one person remains on the spot performing their gesture sequence, whilst their partner performs the corresponding travelling sequence around them in some way (whilst maintaining an appropriate distance) to complement each other.

Try the duets with/without eye contact between the dancers.

Try engineering the travelling sequence so that it covers more/less space.

Try the duets with/without the vocal instructions.

Try the duets holding a prop such as a map.

Try placing dancers from different duets together so that the gestures do not correlate to the travelling motif.

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Eye Contact

Ask the students to find a space & to look around to see where everyone else is located. Ask the students to stand with their feet slightly apart & to take 2 small jumps on the spot... repeat this 3 or 4 times counting to 8 – but only jumping on count 7 & 8.

Repeat counting to 8 several times with a change of direction on count 8 so that they turn to face another dancer. Encourage them to turn to a different person each time.

Repeat the task but ask the dancers to select the 2 counts on which they will jump (ideally consecutive numbers).

It will probably be easier if students if they select 12 or 34 or 56 or 78... it will be more challenging to try 23 or 45 or 67.

Ask the dancers to fill the other 6 counts you could guide this e.g. add a gesture, add a change of level, balance, lean, shrink... or allow the dancers to devise their own but emphasise they must remain on the spot. Rehearse the motifs so they can be repeated facing different directions.

Ask the class to stand ready to perform their motif 3 times. Select one person to perform their motif but as they jump to face someone & make eye contact with someone else then they can begin... then these 2 dancers can initiate another 2 to begin... and so on – continue until everyone has performed their motif 3 times.

Try the pattern with different people starting the dance & possibly more than 1 person.

Try using music of a different tempo.

Try organising the dancers into different formations.

Try giving the dancers the option to decide whether or not they will start when someone looks at them.

Try including an exit or action, e.g. melt to the floor, when someone has completed their motif 3 times.

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Footwork

Ask the students to explore different ways that their feet can be together – e.g. side by side, one on top of the other, soles touching... Then repeat the task finding different ways of the feet being apart, e.g. balances such as arabesques, wide stance, stretches (inevitably someone will do the splits – sorry!)

Ask the students to devise a motif using the idea of the feet being together & apart.

To add greater challenge ask the students to vary level, direction, sustain balances.

Find a partner & stand facing them (maintaining physical distance).

Show each other your motif.

See if you can recreate your partners motif (which is focused on the lower body) with your upper body (and they learn yours).

With the material you have you could...

devise a short dance lacing the material together in an A-B form

devise a short dance lacing the material together with a repeat in an A-B-A form

devise a short dance lacing the material together by splicing the 2 motifs and combining them in a random order... a bit of this... a bit of that... (repeat sections if you wish)

devise a short dance performing the legs from your motif with the arm actions from your partners motif at the same time (co-ordination)

devise a duet where you perform one motif then the other (but one person uses their upper body as the other person uses their lower body)

Try the dances facing different directions.

Try adding some body percussion to the dances.

Try the dances to music of different time signatures or strong rhythmic patterns.

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Lead & Follow

Ask the students to select two different body parts, e.g. the tip of a finger & the back of a knee, then find a way of bringing the 2 together – then separate them. Ask the students to explore different ways of bringing these 2 parts together & apart – explore using *levels, direct & indirect, speeds such as slowly drawn together & suddenly split apart*

Change the different body parts & repeat the process..

To add greater challenge consider asking the students to think of one body part resisting the separation whilst the other is trying to break free (to add a sense of tension).

Find a partner & stand facing them (maintaining physical distance).

Each person names one body part they are going to use as their point of focus. Ask one person to use their chosen body part to guide the actions of their partner – instruct them that they must maintain a constant distance between them. The pairs can explore levels; advancing/retreating; direct/indirect; speeds...

Change over roles regularly – consider changing the body parts each time – vary the distance between the pairs – introduce a slight time delay so that the leader initiates an action & pauses for the follower to respond.

If space permits introduce travelling from one end of the room to the other – might work best moving one pair at a time down the sides of the room (next pair starts when the first pair are at a suitable distance).

Devise duets using the idea of different body parts being attracted/repelled. Consider including... travel; spacing; resistance; varying the body parts; time delay...

Try the duets adding in pauses.

Try the duets using long pieces of elastic to connect wrists and/or ankles (but do not allow this to dictate the body parts selected).

Try starting slowly & increasing speed as the duet progresses.

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Location

Ask the students to select a spot on the floor & use one body part to connect to this location. Explore how far away they can travel whilst maintain a connection with their location – encourage using a range of levels & directions.

Repeat the task but varying the body part in contact with the floor, i.e. if the left foot was in contact previously this time it might be the right elbow. This can be repeat a number of times using different (unusual) body parts such as a knee, hip, shoulder, ankle...

Repeat the task allowing the part of the body in contact with the location to vary frequently.

The use of rubber 'spots' could be helpful if there are any issues around making contact with the floor – alternatively they could use some tape on the floor such as electrical tape.

Select actions from the exploration and devise a motif.

Find a partner & show each other your motifs.

Perform your motifs at the same time (several times) so that they start at the same time & have a similar sense of flow. Decide upon 3 moments where both solos will pause & how long you will pause for... ensure that you both commence again at the same time. (So whilst the timing is together – the movement content is different, or apart).

Try the duets to different pieces of music.

Try the duets starting at slightly different times.

Try the duets with longer or shorter pauses.

Try the duets in different arrangements e.g. side by side, one behind the other (whilst still maintain a safe distance).