

# The Elements of Dance: Dance Concepts

The elements of movement are space, time, and force (energy). The instrument is the body. The body moves in space and in time with force. The dance concepts should be viewed holistically. When participating in dance, all elements of dance are integrated all the time. The separation among concepts here serves as a means to think about, plan, and discuss dance.

<b>SPACE</b> Where is movement performed?	<b>Place:</b> self-space/general space (also called personal/shared) <b>Size:</b> big/small, near/far <b>Level:</b> high, middle, low <b>Direction:</b> forward, backward, right, left, up, down, diagonal <b>Pathway:</b> curved, straight, zig zag <b>Focus:</b> single focus or multi focus
<b>TIME</b> When is movement performed?	<b>Speed:</b> fast or slow <b>Rhythm:</b> beat, pattern, and tempo
<b>FORCE</b> How is movement performed?	<b>Energy:</b> sharp (sudden) or smooth(sustained) <b>Weight:</b> strong or light <b>Flow:</b> free or bound
<b>BODY</b> What is being used to perform?	<b>Parts:</b> head, neck, arms, wrists, elbows, hands, fingers, pelvis, spine, torso, legs, knees, feet, toes, ankles, heels, shoulders, etc. <b>Shapes:</b> curved, straight, angular, twisted, symmetrical, asymmetrical <b>Relationships:</b> body parts to body parts, individuals to groups, body parts to objects, individuals to groups and objects, individuals and groups to the room/space; mirroring, shadowing, meeting, parting, above, below, under, over, alone, connected, etc. <b>Balance:</b> on/off balance
<b>FORM</b> How is dance structured?	<b>ABA:</b> a= one phrase, b= another <b>Recurring theme:</b> theme in variation (ABACA, ABBC), canon, and round <b>Abstract:</b> a geometrical form, not representational <b>Suite:</b> moderate beginning, slow middle, fast end <b>Broken Form:</b> unrelated ideas, often used for humor <b>Chance Dance:</b> movement selected and refined, but randomly structured <b>Choreographic Devices:</b> retrograde (performing sequences backwards as if watching movement in rewind), accumulation (A, AB, ABC, and ABCD), repetition (repeating individual movements or movement sequences within a dance)

## Developmental Movement Patterns: Dancing with the Brain

The brain develops through specific motor activity and must go through a series of developmental movement stages so the brain can reach its full potential. These movement patterns develop from the time babies are in the womb to age eight. Through all of the following movement patterns, breathing is essential. Students should begin each movement session with deep breathing which will increase oxygen to the brain and body and focus the mind on the movement session.

<b>Core/Distal</b>	Reach out through the fingers, feet, head, and tail and gather in to the center.  These movements are baby's first attempts to reach out and explore the world; associated with feelings of connectedness, confidence, and development of interpersonal intelligence.
<b>Head/Tail</b>	First, gently move the head, then the tail; integrate movements of head and tail by moving them together.  The head and tail are constantly moving. This pattern strengthens back, shoulders, and neck muscles.
<b>Upper/Lower</b>	Move the upper half of the body (torso, arms, and head); then the lower (pelvis, legs, and feet).  By 2 ½ to 7 months babies start to ground the lower half and freely move the upper (or vice versa). This pattern promotes physical grounding which leads to emotional grounding.
<b>Body/Side</b>	Move the right side while keeping the left side still, then move the left side while keeping the right side still.  The articulation of the body halves allows a baby to move toward or away from stimuli. This movement pattern strengthens the left and right hemispheres of the brain.
<b>Cross Lateral</b>	Move across the midline such as right hand to left knee and left hand to right knee.  Movements such as crawling help develop horizontal and vertical eye tracking necessary for reading and writing.
<b>Vestibular</b>	Move off balance with swings and spins.  The vestibular system influences our relationship to gravity and affects muscle tone, balance, and arousal/stimulation. Neurological tasks such as focus, temperature regulation, waking/sleep cycles are developed and organized through movement that stimulates the vestibular system.

### References:

Gilbert, A. (2006). *Brain-compatible dance education*. Virginia: National Dance Association.

Hackney, P. (1998). *Making Connections: Total body integration through Bartenieff Fundamentals*. New York.