



### **Fifth - Eighth Grade Swing Dance Project**

#### **Objectives**

- ❖ To introduce the Swing Dance style.
- ❖ To teach teamwork through partnered dancing.
- ❖ To use Swing Dance as a cardiovascular exercise.
- ❖ To allow students to experience the joy of dance.
- ❖ To introduce the history and culture of swing dancing.
- ❖ To encourage students who have an interest in dance to continue to pursue opportunities which will enhance their personal development and appreciation of the art form.
- ❖ To have fun and explore creativity through movement

**Dance Activity** (approx activity length 45 minutes)

### **Equipment**

Something to play music on (stereo, mp3 player and speakers, etc)

The song "Trickle Trickle" by The Manhattan Transfer  
[Download song here from Amazon](#)

or

"Rock Around the Clock" by Bill Haley and the Comets  
[Download song here from Amazon](#)

The song "Boy From New York City" by The Manhattan Transfer  
[Download song here from Amazon](#)

or

The song "Stray Cat Strut" by The Stray Cats  
[Download the song here from Amazon](#)

If your school has a no physical contact policy for students you will need short scarves or bandannas that the students can hold in their hands. Having each student in the pair hold one end of the fabric allows them to maintain a connection with their partner without touching the other person.

### **Movement Exercise General Information**

Divide the students into 2 lines. Traditionally swing is danced with a male and a female, but the most important thing is that there are 2 people dancing together. If the students are too close together in this double line, split the lines in half and make 4 lines. The students should be facing their partners.

Traditionally the male is the leader, but in this lesson the leaders and followers will switch roles so that all students learn both parts.

After every 7 or 8 times through the step, have the leaders move 1 person to their left so that the students are constantly rotating partners. If there is no one to the leader's left have the leader go to the other end of the line.

The students will need a fair amount of room to move in safely. The gym or a large all purpose room would be the best spaces.

**Dance Position**

The dance position for swing has the two partners making a slight "V" with the leader's left side and the follower's right side slightly open. This allows the back rock to be taken simultaneously without separation occurring. The leader's right hand is placed under the follower's shoulder blade and the leader's left hand and arm are allowed to hang by the side (with tone to them) and the follower's right hand is placed in the leader's left palm.

**Single Basic**

Use either "Trickle Trickle" or "Rock Around the Clock" for this exercise

Teach the single swing basic as broken down on the notes that follow.

Practice it for 2 songs changing partners as described above

Have the students change partners at the conclusion of the 2<sup>nd</sup> time through the song and also change places with that new partner so that the leaders are now followers and vice versa.

Repeat the exercise in this manner for the length of 2 songs.

Have the students change partners and reverse roles again.

Teach the Underarm Turn Combination as broken down on the notes that follow.

Have the students practice 2 basics and 1 underarm turn combination for the length of 2 songs, changing partners as described earlier.

Have the students change partners and reverse roles and practice their new parts for the length of 2 songs.

Have the students spread out around the dance space and dance with 1 partner for approximately 1 minute. Tell the leaders to create their own pattern of basics and underarm turns during that time.

Have the students change partners and continue with their freestyle patterns until the end of the song.

Change partners again and reverse roles. Repeat the freestyle pattern part of the exercise.

If the students are comfortable with the patterns and timing continue on to the Triple Swing exercise. If the majority of the students are still challenged by the patterns or timing, continue with the single swing exercises.

## Triple Swing

Explain to the students that the difference between single and triple swing is the number of steps taken side to side. In triple swing three steps are taken for the one in single swing. The speed of the music dictates whether a song will be danced as a triple swing or single swing. Faster music tends to work better with single swing.

Teach the Triple basic as is broken down in the following notes.

Have the students practice it for the length of 2 songs, changing partners as previously described.

After completing the second song, have the students switch partners and reverse roles.

Repeat the practice for 2 more songs.

If the students have the pattern and timing ask them to work with their current partner and try to figure out how to make the Underarm turn combination work in triple swing. Make sure both partners figure the turns out.

Have the students change partners and dance 2 triple basics and 1 underarm turn combination, keep repeating this series for 1 minute.

Have the students change partners and continue to practice the same pattern until the end of the music.

Have the students change partners and reverse roles. Repeat the underarm turn practice exercise.

**Swing Single Basic**

## Leader's Part

Count	Foot	Description of Movement
1,2 (step)	Left	Step to left side.
3,4 (step)	Right	Step to right side, basically in place.
5 (rock)	Left	Step diagonally behind right foot.
6 (step)	Right	Step in place.

## Follower's Part

Count	Foot	Description of Movement
1,2 (step)	Right	Step to right side.
3,4 (step)	Left	Step to left side, basically in place.
5 (rock)	Right	Step diagonally behind left foot.
6 (step)	Left	Step in place.

**General Notes:**

1. Swing has a very relaxed feel in both the body position and movements.
2. The footwork is ball of foot to flat throughout. Some people prefer to stay on the balls of their feet, but this is generally done only at faster tempi.
3. There is very little arm lead in a basic step. Actual leading is generally done only to signal the turns.
4. The basic can be rotated to either the right or left. Rotating to the left is the more natural choice. When rotating, the partners remain in the same alignment to each other, the whole picture rotates.
5. It is important the leader's left arm remain relaxed until needed for a lead. This is the very often the "signal" arm for leading turns and releases. Extra movement and energy will only confuse the follower.

**Swing Single Underarm Turn Combination**

Single Under Arm Turn Combination – Leader

<b>Count</b>	<b>Foot</b>	<b>Description of Movement</b>	<b>Additional Information</b>
1-6 (step, step, back, rock)	L,R,L,R	Single Basic	Lift left arm to signal turn on step 4.
7,8 (step)	Left	Step to left side.	
1,2 (step)	Right	Step to right side, basically in place.	
3 (back)	Left	Step diagonally behind right foot.	
4 (rock)	Right	Step in place.	
5,6 (step)	Left	Step to left side.	
7,8 (step)	Right	Step to right side, basically in place.	
1 (back)	Left	Step diagonally behind right foot, lower arm to end turn.	
2 (rock)	Right	Step in place.	
3-4 (step)	Left	Step to left side.	
5-6 (step)	Right	Step to right side, basically in place.	Begin easing back into dance position.
7 (back)	Left	Step diagonally behind right foot,	
8 (rock)	Right	Step in place.	

Single Under Arm Turn Combination – Follower

Count	Foot	Description of Movement	Additional Information
1-6 (step, step, back, rock)	R,L,R,L	Single Basic	
7,8 (step)	Right	Step to right side, turning ½ to the right.	Keep your free arm close to your body to avoid injury to the leader.
1,2 (step)	Left	Step on left turning between ¼ and ½ to the right.	
3 (back)	Right	Step diagonally behind left foot.	
4 (rock)	Left	Step in place.	
5,6 (step)	Right	Step to right forward, turning up to ½ to the left.	
7,8 (step)	Left	Step to left completing the turn to the left to end facing partner.	
1 (back)	Right	Step diagonally behind left foot.	
2 (rock)	Left	Step in place.	
3-4 (step)	Right	Step to right side while reconnecting in dance position	
5-6 (step)	Left	Step to left side, basically in place.	Begin easing back into dance position.
7 (back)	Right	Step diagonally behind left foot.	
8 (rock)	Left	Step in place.	

**Swing Triple Basic**

Leader’s Part

<b>Count</b>	<b>Foot</b>	<b>Description of Movement</b>	<b>Additional Information</b>
1	Left	Step to left side.	You can use slight body sway left.
&	Right	Closes to left foot.	
2	Left	Step to left side.	Return to neutral body position
3	Right	Step slightly to right.	
&	Left	Close to right foot.	
4	Right	Step to right side.	
5	Left	Step diagonally back behind right foot.	Ball of foot only.
6	Right	Step on the right foot in place.	

Follower’s Part

<b>Count</b>	<b>Foot</b>	<b>Description of Movement</b>	<b>Additional Information</b>
1	Right	Step to right side.	Follow the leader’s shaping.
&	Left	Close to right foot.	
2	Right	Step to right side side.	Ball of foot only.
3	Left	Step slightly to left.	
&	Right	Close to left foot.	
4	Left	Step to left side.	
5	Right	Step diagonally back behind left foot.	
6	Left	Step on the left foot in place.	



**General Notes:**

1. The triple may be danced ball of foot to flat foot or remain on the balls of the feet. The balls of the feet are more comfortable the faster the music becomes.
2. The basic can be rotated in either direction. Rotating to the left is more natural than the right. When rotating the lead is just a steady pressure in the direction you would like to go.
3. If using body sway, keep it soft and relaxed.
4. The lead in a basic should be coming from the leader's right arm on the follower's back. It is possible to dance basics without the leader's left hand and follower's right hand in contact at all.

## Research Project

Have the students research the history of swing dance. Other names for swing dance that students might find are:

- Jitterbug
- Lindy
- Lindy Hop
- Jive
- Rock and Roll

Have them try to find answers to the following questions:

- When was swing "invented"?
- Where was swing "born"?
- What types of music were popular for early swing dancers?
- When did swing turn into "jitterbug"?
- What was happening in the world during the early days of swing dancing?
- Who are some famous swing dancers?
- Does swing appear in any movies or tv shows?