

Cardiorespiratory training is an essential part of the physical practice of a dancer. You need the stamina to get through a choreography, especially if you're dancing a very energetic style of dance, but cardio training is also essential because it allows you to maintain proper technique throughout, which makes you less prone to injury.

The Cardiovascular System

Cardiovascular endurance depends on the ability of the heart and lungs to deliver oxygen to where it is needed and to continue for long periods under stress.

Most styles of dance have sequences of movement followed by pauses. These intermittent periods of activity work mostly on your anaerobic system, but they don't develop your aerobic capacity, which is what improves your cardio endurance.

Anaerobic Exercise

This type of exercise is intense but doesn't last long. When this happens, the demand for oxygen is sudden, and the heart is unable to pump enough of it to the working muscles in that short period. Anaerobic exercises are high intensity but short duration, such as sprinting and individual styles of dancing like centre work in ballet.

Aerobic Exercise

During aerobic exercises, there's usually enough oxygen to sustain the current level of activity without having to resort to other energy sources like glycogen. This type of training is a lower intensity and can be sustained for more extended periods, such as jogging, swimming, and cycling.

Aerobic Dance Styles

When your cardiovascular endurance improves, so does your dance ability and fitness, which make you a better dancer. You can do cross-training if you're not getting enough cardio workout out of your dance class or you can try other styles like African dance, Samba, or Contemporary, which work both the aerobic and anaerobic systems. You'll burn fat, build lean muscle, and improve your cardio all at once.

which

CARDIO EXERCISE

*is right
for me today?*



Running

- High impact, but variable foot position allows natural movement patterns
- Using a motorized treadmill makes hip flexors and quads work much harder than glutes and hamstrings
- Un-motorized treadmills provide better balance of muscle use
- Can be done anywhere for free

Cycling

- No impact and low intensity
- Can be tough on posture
- Proper seat height is crucial
- Sitting limits muscle use around hips

Step Mill

- Low impact and high intensity
- A good balance of muscles used around hip and knee
- Alignment is crucial
- Easy to cheat

Elliptical

- Low impact, but can be harder on the ligaments of the knee when overused
- Directional change adds some variety
- Fixed foot position in a parallel stride can stress joints that are used to turning out
- Heavy emphasis on hip flexors in a forward stride

Swimming

- No impact
- Allows for a greater upper body workout
- Reduces stress on the body in an unweighted environment

Rowing

- Allows for a full body workout, including the back and upper body
- No impact
- Can strain in the back if done improperly

