



~~PERFECT~~ IMPERFECT LESSONS

Lesson #6: Sharp & Smooth with 5-7 year olds - Context

This 45-minute lesson was designed for 5-7-year-olds with prior dance experience in a studio setting, and is the second of a series of lessons investigating sharp and smooth. It can be modified for different age groups, varied by length, depending on your teaching situation. See Extensions below.

Lesson Goal: Students will deepen their understanding of how their bodies can move with contrasting energy qualities.

Elements of dance: Energy modified by Body and Time.

Materials: drum, music, painter's tape

Punch and strong movement words: Strong energy vocabulary, like punch, slash, poke, kick, and whip, are words often avoided in classrooms because we associate them with violence. By embodying them in dance, children can play with these words in abstract ways, making them creative possibilities rather than potentially dangerous. For example, Laban's Effort Actions analyze punch as sudden, strong, and direct, and slash as sudden, strong, and indirect. Children can dance strong, sudden movements directly and indirectly, near and far, at different levels, with various body parts and locomotors. Giving children lots of practice to explore strong energy words spatially and with a freeze supports them in assessing the space for safety, and developing their own power: "I can move powerfully and stop powerfully." Offering light energy opposites encourages them to investigate the range of expressive possibilities.

Composition with young children: 5-7-year-olds are just beginning to investigate phrase-making and sequences. Their creativity development is best supported by asking them to perform improvisational scores rather than memorized compositions. A performance/showing prompt can offer pre-composition choices like, "decide what happens at the beginning and end of your dance" or "decide where you're going to start and where you're start and where you're going to end in space". This allows them to fully embody their choices instead of trying to "remember steps".

Connections: Vocabulary, particularly adjectives and adverbs used in science, social studies, and language arts, can often be explored in movement as energy concepts. Listen to how children describe what they observe, or source vocabulary words from texts, stories, and poetry. Experiment with applying those words to locomotors, axials, body parts, and whole body, and mixing and matching with space and time concepts, for example, an *oozy* roll, a *crumbling* high balance, or a *fluttery* jump.

Extensions: All ages enjoy exploring energy. In early childhood, investigating energy opposites like sharp/smooth, sudden/sustained, strong/light, and tight/loose helps children differentiate between two distinct qualities. Four- to seven-year-olds can play with the nuance of transitioning between energy extremes, and the full range from sharpest, to a little bit sharp and a little bit smooth, to smoothest. Children aged 7 and up are expanding their verbal and movement vocabulary, and can explore Laban's Effort Actions and a variety of rich energy language in more depth and articulation. Tweens and teens use energy in their dances in meaningful ways to express complex emotions and communicate stories. See ~~Perfect~~ Imperfect Lesson on Energy Vocabulary for more ideas.



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Lesson #6: Smooth & Sharp with 5-7 year olds - *Curricular Flow*

Warm-up 5 minutes	Rhythmical patterns and name game. Call and response with different rhythmical clapping and patting patterns. Call and response around the circle: each child says their name with a movement, and the class copies.
Exploration 12 minutes	Freeze dance. Tempo exploration, responding to the tempo of the drum: Fast, slow, acceleration, deceleration, freeze. Modify with body: whole body, body parts, body halves, and sides. Sharp exploration: Strong kicks and punches in different directions and at different levels. Layer on spins, jumps, and different locomotors. Smooth exploration: Roll and slither, layer on sneaky, silky, and soft. Try whole body and different body parts, level changes and smooth curvy shapes. Imaginary world: Pop bubbles with sharp body parts and movements. Float and roll smoothly like bubbles. Other possibilities: Smooth and slow, and smooth and fast. Sharp and fast, and sharp and slow. Rhythmical patterns: <i>shhaarp sharp sharp</i>, or <i>quick smooth quick smooth really slloooww smooooth</i>, or <i>smooth gallop smooth gallop 3 sharp jumps</i>.
Improvisation with Reflection 8 minutes	Smooth Land/Sharp Land - general space Set up two energy lands by dividing the space with a clear boundary and using imagery descriptors to support smooth and sharp movements. Students improvise by choosing where to dance, and when and how to change lands and energy qualities. With students, reflect on transitions: Do they change energy qualities suddenly? Do they slowly morph? Do they stay on the border, dancing both smooth and sharp for a while? What do they want to try?
Improvisation 2 with Reflection 10 minutes	Across the floor through Smooth and Sharp Lands Take turns dancing across the floor, crossing energy lands in a short phrase. Begin dancing in smooth land, change in the middle, end dancing in sharp land. Reverse. Possible reflection questions: Which energy quality was exciting for you to try? Why? Did anything surprise you? Did you see someone's sharp or smooth movement that you want to try? Let's try it now. What different kinds of transitions have you tried and have you seen?
Dance Party 5 minutes	Free choice dance time.
Closing 5 minutes	Final circle. Communal breath and clap.