

GROUP EXERCISE & MIND BODY

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Evolving freestyle routines

Picture the scenario: You have spent an afternoon creating a challenging freestyle routine that will really get your participants moving. You are pumped and excited and ready to launch the routine at your 6:30 class that night.

You start your Level 2 class with four newbie's and a handful of more experienced participants. You sift through the choreography in your mind to figure out which sections your participants will cope with and panic slightly about your ability to modify the complex choreography you have created. As you progress through the choreography it becomes clear that some modification will be needed and that you shouldn't take it to the level you had planned. Some of the combinations are too complex to modify so you end up scrapping a whole section and making something up on the spot. Suddenly that fabulous routine, and your teaching ability, are not looking so hot anymore... Sound familiar?

An experienced freestyle teacher usually has a bank of mini routines to call on to buffer the effects of a tragic class. Less experienced or ill prepared instructors, however, can become overwhelmed in the pursuit of complex choreography resulting in unhappy participants who fail to have a proper workout.

Preventing tragic classes!

It really comes down to class planning and methodical creation of progressions. Most instructors choreograph a routine and then figure out how to teach and break the routine down. Starting with base moves and slowly adding layers is the best way to create a class that offers varying levels and progressions. For enhanced creativity though, a combination of choreographing the end product and using base moves and layers will ensure that no matter what level of participants we have in our class, we can teach a class that delivers all expectations.

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Evolving freestyle routines

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This is where the teaching methods of 'pit stops' and 'holding patterns' work beautifully to create that smooth journey we long for in a class. Pit stops are choreography pauses which allow us to assess the participant's commitment to the movement and to decide whether we stay with that level or layer another element. This can be very easily planned when creating a combination. For example, if we set base moves and vary one element at a time we can slowly develop choreography that is worthy of being a finished product in itself.

Also, because of the nature of the learning phase, it pays to progress at a certain pace and then to take a break from learning and just enjoy the moves before too much new information becomes demotivating. Progressive choreography is always changing, making it advantageous to pause and reflect on the journey. This can de-stress the mind and reinforce the newly learnt structure. This is where the holding pattern, which is a very simple movement or the base move of the next combination, is inserted.

The more pit stops available, the easier it will be to accommodate the class. Ultimately the pit stop is a prospective end point or layer, so in one class the progressions could be:

Pit stop one:	fundamental level
Pit stop two:	fundamental level
Pit stop three:	athletic level
Pit stop four:	athletic level
Pit stop five:	moves 1 level
Pit stop six:	moves 1 level
Pit stop seven:	moves 2 level

If your participants on a certain day are of level 2 standard then you would quickly progress through all the pit stops. If they are more athletic, you may decide to stop at pit stop four. The following choreography backs up the theory and provides options for you and your participants:

Choreography abbreviations:

Alt:	alternate
SSD:	single single double
R:	right
L:	left
HP:	holding pattern



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Base Moves: Alt step knee to the front x 4 + SSD small jog + SSD step curl	
Pit stop 1.	Alt step knee x 4 (R/L/R/L) + R/L grapevine knee dip (step R + step L behind + step R + step L with a knee dip) + SSD step curl Repeat on the left HP of step clap + may need to isolate and repeat grapevine to gain commitment
Pit stop 2.	R/L/R Alt step knee x 3 + L mambo cha cha to the front + R/L grapevine knee dip + SSD step curl Repeat on the left HP of step clap + may need to isolate and repeat step knee x 3 + mambo cha cha
Pit stop 3.	R/L/R Alt step knee x 3 with direction 1* + L mambo cha cha to the front + R/L grapevine dip + SSD step curl *(Layer 1 of direction: R knee front, L knee back, R knee front) Repeat on the left HP of step clap and isolate and repeat the step knees with direction to create commitment
Pit stop 4.	R/L/R Alt step knee x 3 with direction 2* + L mambo cha cha to the front + R/L grapevine dip + SSD step curl *(Layer 2 of direction: R knee front, L knee back, R knee to R side then turn to the front for mambo cha cha) Repeat on the left HP of step clap to assess progression and decide whether you will move onto next pit stop. Repeat Direction 2 if necessary.
Pit stop 5.	R/L/R Alt step knee x 3 with direction 2 + L mambo cha cha to the L side* + R/L grapevine dip x 2 + SSD step curl *(when the last step knee is completed turn towards the back to do the mambo to the left side and the cha cha across facing the back) Repeat on the left HP of step clap then isolate the step knees and mambo cha cha with new direction. Repeat until seamless and then repeat pit stop 5. Assess commitment and then decide if you can progress to pit stop 6.
Pit stop 6.	R/L/R Alt step knee with direction 2 + L mambo cha cha to side and back + grapevine dip + step turn dip + SSD step curl HP of step touch as you repeat the grapevine dip plus step turn dip. Assess commitment and decide whether to progress to pit stop 7.
Pit stop 7.	R/L/R Alt step knee with direction 2 + L mambo cha cha to side and back + grapevine dip + step turn dip + turning SS curl (R step and flip to the back + L leg step and flip to the front) + double curl HP of SSD curl and repeat the turn on the single step curls and double curl on the spot until there is commitment.
When you have reached this stage (pit stop 7) you have mastered all pit stops and reached the finished product. (See page 4 for photos)	

The take home message of the pit stops and progressions in this routine is to take time in layering and use the repetitions to gain commitment from your students. This routine may be progressed all the way in one class, or you may stop at pit stop 4 in week one, pit stop 5 in week two and then reach pit stop 7 by the third or fourth week. You choose depending on your ability to slowly layer to your participants and on the level of participant coordination in any given week! Apply these concepts to all freestyle routines to keep creativity and freestyle alive!

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Evolving freestyle routines

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R leg step knee front



L leg step knee back



R leg step knee R side



Step to left side to mambo by turning towards the back



L leg mambo to left side



L leg cha cha facing the back



R leg grapevine with L leg knee dip



L leg step turn with R leg knee dip



R/L leg step curls turn to the right



R leg step double curl Repeat on the left ♦



Zosha Piotrowski, BSpSc

Zosha is an international instructor trainer and convention presenter. She is involved in developing instructors and talent in freestyle group exercise, and is the key program developer and lecturer for Network Pilates courses. Her goal is to motivate and infect others with her energy and to bring wellness and entertainment into people's lives. Zosha is also the co-host of 'Pilates TV' on Foxtel's Lifestyle Channel.