

# Dance Terminology

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**Arabesque** – One of the basic poses of ballet. A position of the body, supported on one leg, which can be straight or demi-plié, with the other leg extended behind. The forms of arabesque are varied to infinity.

**Attitude** – A pose in dance derived by Carlo Blasis from the statue of Mercury by Giovanni da Bologna. A position on one leg with the other lifted in back (or in front or side), the knee bent at a 90 degree angle and well tuned out so that the knee is higher than or level with the foot.

**Axel** – A jumping movement pushing from and landing on the same leg. The free (working) leg performs a rond de jambe while the supporting leg pulls up to a tuck as the dancer makes a full rotation in the air.

**Ball change** – A transitional weight change that pushes to ball of the working foot and returns to the supporting leg. Can also be performed in a stepping-through motion.

**Battement sauté** – Brushing and stretching the working leg (as in grand battement) while pushing to a sauté with the supporting leg. Done as a preparatory exercise for several other leaps and jumps.

**Cabriole** – A step in which the extended legs are beaten in the air. The working leg is pushed into the air and the supporting leg follows. The landing is then made on the same supporting leg.

**Chainés** – Literally, chains or links. Series of turns performed in releve usually moving across the floor. The term is actually an abbreviation for “tours chainés deboules”.

**Chassé** – Meaning “chased”. A step in which one foot literally chases the other out of its position. Can be done in a series or used singly as a transition step. Chassé should glide along the floor making sure that the feet “kiss” in the air.

**Clip turn** – A half turn executed by crossing the working foot behind the supporting leg and simply untwisting the legs leaving the body facing the opposite direction.

**Degagé** – Disengaged. The pointing of the foot by brushing along the floor until the foot leaves the ground and extends fully. May also be referred to as battement glisse, gliding off the floor.

**Dig** – A position where the working foot is placed directly beside the supporting foot at the arch.

**Drag turn** – A pirouette movement performed with an inside turn. Usually in plié/releve on the supporting leg while the working leg trails while physically dragging the floor either to the side, behind or diagonally back. A very stylized turn.

**Fouetté a terre** – The term “fouetté” means literally “whipped”. In this case the supporting leg is placed in tendu to the front or back while the supporting leg raises the heel as the body rotates over that leg by turning through the hip socket. The body ends up facing the opposite direction while the foot/leg in tendu has remained in the same place.

**Fouetté rond de jambe en tournant** – The fouetté most commonly referred to as just ‘fouetté’. Literally, whipped circle of the leg turning. A popular turn in which the dancer executes a series of turns on the supporting leg while being propelled by a whipping movement of the working leg. The working leg should pass through the fourth position before being raised to hip level in the second position and then into the passé position to complete the turn. The closure at passé may be beaten or left to a simple close.

**Fouetté, a la seconde** – Like the other popular fouetté, this turn is usually executed in a series. The leg is supported in second position at hip level for the completion of the turn instead of being pulled in to passé.

**Fouetté, sauté** – The same basic motion as the fouetté a terre, but executed out of a chassé (or another traveling step). The working leg begins with a grand battement as the working leg pushes off the floor to fully extend under the body. The whipping motion rotates leaving the working leg in the air and then landing again on the same supporting leg as leaving the floor.

**Grand battement** – The working foot brushes the floor pointing at separation and continuing in altitude with a straightened and tightened knee and foot. The body should remain calm with the leg being thrown only to the maximum height allowed without disturbing the body placement. The leg is closed back into the position in which it originated.

**Grand jeté** – In this step the legs are thrown to a split in the air. The front leg should leave the floor as in grand jeté.

**Grapevine** – A series of steps moving side to side. Executed by stepping to the side (2<sup>nd</sup>), crossing back (or front) and then continuing in the same direction stepping out to the side again. Can be finished with a variety of steps including a dig or a touch out to the side that would then take you into a reverse performance of the movement.

**Jeté** – Throwing step. A jump from one foot to the other in which the working leg is brushed into the air and appears to have been thrown.

**Pas de bourrée** – Though there are many variations, the most commonly used versions are a combination of steps which move the feet in the pattern of “back, side, front”. In the jazz variation, the pattern is amended to move “cross back, open second, lunge out”. The pattern can be performed in either direction and is usually applied as a transitional step.

**Pas de Chat** – literally, ‘step of the cat.’ A ballet jump in which the feet are lifted, one after the other, to the level of the opposite knee in a turned out position.

**Pas de Chat, Russian** – A leap which moves with the leading leg extended to second position at hip level and the supporting leg pulled underneath in a turned out position. Landed on the leading leg.



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**Passé** – Passed. Literally, the step would have the foot leave fifth position in front (although other positions may be used) and pass the knee joint to finish in the fifth position in back. Also performed in reverse. This term is most commonly referred to as the position where the toes connect to the leg just below the knee to perform pirouette.

**Penché** – Leaning or inclining as in penché arabesque. Keeping the body in the same angular proportions while tipping either forward or back.

**Pencil turn** – A turn performed in either direction on one toe while keeping the other leg very closely paralleled.

**Piqué** – Pricked or pricking. Stepping directly onto the pointed leg (at the demi-point) while lifting the other leg to a variety of positions. Can be used with arabesque, passé, etc.

**Piqué turn** – A piqué performed in the passé position while turning to the inside. Usually done in a series.

**Pirouette** – Whirl or spin. A complete turn of the body performed on one foot. May be performed in many positions of the working leg to include passé, arabesque, attitude, a la seconde (second position supported waist level) and fourth position.

**Pivot** – A step that changes the direction of motion. Place right foot forward and transfer weight. Flip the shoulders to face back by turning over the left shoulder. Can be reversed.

**Plié** – Bent or bending. A bending of the knee or knees.

**Port de bras** – Carriage of the arms. In general, the use or movement of the arms through either specified classical positions or as they are placed in choreography.

**Rond de jambe a terre** – Round of the leg on the ground. The circular movement of the leg, originating in the hip. Both legs must be kept straight while the toe of the working leg traces a circular pattern on the floor. Can be performed with the movement beginning as a tendu in front or directly behind the body.

**Rond de jambe, grande** – The same movement described “a terre” but executed at 90 degrees.

**Russian** – A popular leap that travels through the air in the same manner as grand jeté and saut de chat, but with the body open to the audience and the legs extended in second position on both sides.

**Russian, switch** – Executed in the same manner as the basic switch leap, but with the body opening into the open second position in the air.

**Saut de basque** – A traveling step in which the dancer turns in the air with one foot drawn up to passé or coupé. Completed by gliding out to perform the step in a series or to transition. A chassé tour (turning) is an appropriate beginning movement to acquaint the dancer with the basic movement. The turn is then executed in fifth position with a chassé into and out of the turn.

**Sauté** – Jumped or jumping. When this term is added to the name of a step, the movement is performed while jumping.

**Soutenu** – A turn performed by stepping onto a straightened leading leg, crossing the trailing leg in front at the knee and then releasing the leading leg as the turn untwists. The leading leg is then free to reach again from fourth position to repeat the turn in a series. Can also be used singly as an accent or transition.

**Spread eagle jump** – Also referred to as a star jump, X jump and several other terms by region. Begins in parallel first position, jumps to legs in a wide second in the air with arms in a high V. Returns to the parallel first to finish.

**Switch leap** – Begins as a grand jeté. Throws the leading leg to the back while the supporting leg throws to the front to complete a full split in the air. The switch leap should complete a split on both legs before landing.

**Tendu** – Stretched. Movement is initiated in the heel by pushing forward until the foot is forced into the fully stretched and pointed position. Can be performed front, side and back.

**Three step turn** – Performed by stepping to second position right, turning over the right shoulder to step left, and then turning again over the right shoulder to return to the right foot. Can be reversed. The movement should turn the dancer in the same direction for all three steps.

**Toe touch** – A very popular jump that may also be called a straddle jump. The jump begins in a parallel first position, springs to a very wide second position in the air with the arms traditionally extended over the toes. The jump may return to parallel first or a variety of other positions.

**Tour jeté** – Shortened from grand jeté dessus en tournant. Literally, large jeté over and turning. Begins as a grand jeté with the leading leg throwing to grand battement. As the supporting leg pushes to the air, the shoulders flip and the supporting leg is thrown as in grand battement to the back. The jump is landed on the leading leg, thus changing the support.

