

All Minds Dance Hub
Inclusive Teaching Resource

Jazz Class Adaptations

*Supporting energy, musicality, confidence, and performance
through flexible pathways*



What This Supports

These adaptations support dancers who may:

- feel overwhelmed by fast pace or layered information
- struggle to manage high energy while staying regulated
- find long or complex combinations difficult to retain
- need clarity before performance expectations
- process musical phrasing more easily than numerical counts

Jazz does not need to be toned down to be inclusive. It needs **clear structure, thoughtful pacing, and supported regulation**.

Key Challenges in Jazz Classes

Jazz places simultaneous demands on:

- working memory and sequencing
- coordination and motor planning
- musical timing and phrasing
- visual processing (mirrors and group movement)
- emotional regulation under performance pressure

When these demands are layered too quickly, dancers may lose clarity, confidence, or regulation, even when skill and musicality are strong.

Practical Adaptations for Jazz Classes

1. Separate Energy from Speed

Why it helps

High energy does not require fast tempo. Slowing movement allows dancers to organise coordination and dynamics without losing style.

What to try

- Teach combinations at a slower tempo first
- Layer dynamics before increasing speed
- Encourage “full energy at half speed”

2. Offer Regulated Energy Options

Why it helps

Sustained high intensity can be dysregulating for some dancers.

What to try

- Alternate high-energy phrases with grounded movement
- Allow temporary reduction in intensity when needed
- Frame energy variation as musical choice

Sequencing & Memory Support

3. Chunk Jazz Combinations

Why it helps

Breaking combinations into sections reduces cognitive load.

What to try

- Teach short, clear sections
- Repeat each section before adding the next
- Name sections (for example, “the kick section”)

4. Build Layers Gradually

Why it helps

Jazz often combines legs, arms, head, and style at once.

What to try

- Teach footwork first
- Add arms once lower body is secure
- Introduce head and focus next
- Add style and performance quality last

Musicality & Timing Support

5. Teach Musical Phrasing Before Counts

Why it helps

Numerical counting can overload processing for some dancers.

What to try

- Identify accents or lyrics
- Use rhythm words instead of numbers
- Clap or mark rhythms before dancing

6. Use Consistent Music

Why it helps

Changing music frequently increases cognitive load.

What to try

- Use the same track while learning
- Allow dancers to become familiar with phrasing
- Change music only once movement is secure

Performance & Expression

7. Separate Learning from Performing

Why it helps

Performance pressure during learning increases anxiety.

What to try

- Learn movement without performance expectations
- Introduce expression once choreography is secure
- Use clear language such as “learning mode” and “performance mode”

8. Offer Choice in Performance Style

Why it helps

Not all dancers connect to a single performance expectation.

What to try

- Offer a range of performance qualities (cool, playful, powerful)
- Allow dancers to choose how they embody style
- Avoid enforcing one “correct” expression

Space & Visual Considerations

9. Reduce Visual Overload

Why it helps

Mirrors can increase anxiety and self-monitoring.

What to try

- Teach facing away from mirrors during learning
- Reintroduce mirrors once movement is secure
- Allow dancers to choose mirror position where possible

10. Clarify Direction Changes

Why it helps

Fast direction changes place high demands on spatial processing.

What to try

- Clearly demonstrate pathways
- Use floor markers or reference points
- Keep directions consistent while learning

Strengths Jazz Can Unlock

With the right pathways, jazz can develop:

- expressive confidence
- rhythmic precision
- dynamic contrast
- musical interpretation
- individuality and style

Many neurodivergent dancers thrive in jazz when clarity, pacing, and authenticity are prioritised.

Key Takeaway for Teachers

Jazz thrives on **clarity, pacing, and authenticity**.

When teachers adapt how energy, sequencing, and performance are introduced, jazz becomes an inclusive space where dancers can be bold, expressive, and confident without overwhelm..