

# Jazz Class Adaptations

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*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**.

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## 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.

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## 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”
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## **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
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## **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”)
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### **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
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## **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
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### **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
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## **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”
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## **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
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## **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
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### **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
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## 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.

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### 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..