

Communication & Support Tools

Creating clarity, safety, and connection through accessible communication



What This Supports

These strategies support dancers who may:

- process language literally or slowly
- feel overwhelmed by long verbal explanations
- rely on visual information to understand movement
- experience anxiety when instructions feel unclear
- struggle to participate verbally under pressure

Accessible communication reduces anxiety and cognitive load so dancers can focus on **movement, learning, and expression**.

Why Communication Matters in Dance

Dance teaching relies heavily on spoken instruction. For many neurodivergent dancers, processing language, movement, and sensory input at the same time can be challenging.

When communication is unclear or overloaded, dancers may:

- freeze or hesitate
- misinterpret instructions
- lose confidence
- appear disengaged when they are overwhelmed

Clear, predictable communication supports both learning and emotional regulation.

Practical Communication & Support Tools

1. Use Clear, Literal Language

Why it helps

Ambiguous or figurative language can be confusing or stressful.

What to try

- Use specific, actionable cues
- Avoid vague phrases
- Say exactly what you want the body to do

2. Give One Instruction at a Time

Why it helps

Multiple instructions overload working memory.

What to try

- Give one cue
- Pause
- Demonstrate
- Add the next step

3. Pair Words with Visual Demonstration

Why it helps

Visual input reduces reliance on verbal processing.

What to try

- Demonstrate slowly, then at tempo
- Teach facing away from dancers
- Use clear starting shapes
- Use floor markers or gesture cues

4. Use Predictable Attention Signals

Why it helps

Consistent signals cut through sensory noise.

What to try

- Use the same phrase, gesture, or sound every time
- Wait for response rather than repeating louder

5. Keep Tone Calm and Consistent

Why it helps

Tone is part of the sensory environment.

What to try

- Maintain steady volume and pacing
- Avoid sharp or rushed delivery
- Model calm regulation

6. Allow Extra Processing Time

Why it helps

Processing speed varies widely.

What to try

- Pause after instructions
- Wait a few seconds before expecting movement
- Allow dancers to join in at their own pace

7. Use Choice-Based Instructions

Why it helps

Choice reduces anxiety and increases autonomy.

What to try

- Offer controlled options
- Allow dancers to choose how and where to begin
- Frame choices as valid pathways, not opt-outs

8. Use Reassurance Scripts

Why it helps

Clear reassurance provides emotional grounding.

What to try

- “You’re safe to take your time.”
- “It’s okay to get it wrong.”
- “You can try again when you’re ready.”

9. Offer Written or Low-Pressure Contribution

Why it helps

Not all dancers can communicate verbally in the moment.

What to try

- Provide a notebook or whiteboard
- Allow written questions or ideas
- Let dancers share only if they choose

Strengths Clear Communication Unlocks

When communication is accessible, dancers often show:

- faster learning
- reduced anxiety
- stronger confidence
- improved group regulation
- clearer technique

Communication is not just information. It is **connection**.

Key Takeaway for Teachers

Inclusive communication is not about saying less. It is about **saying things more clearly**.

When teachers communicate with clarity, predictability, and care, dancers feel safe enough to learn, move, and express themselves fully.