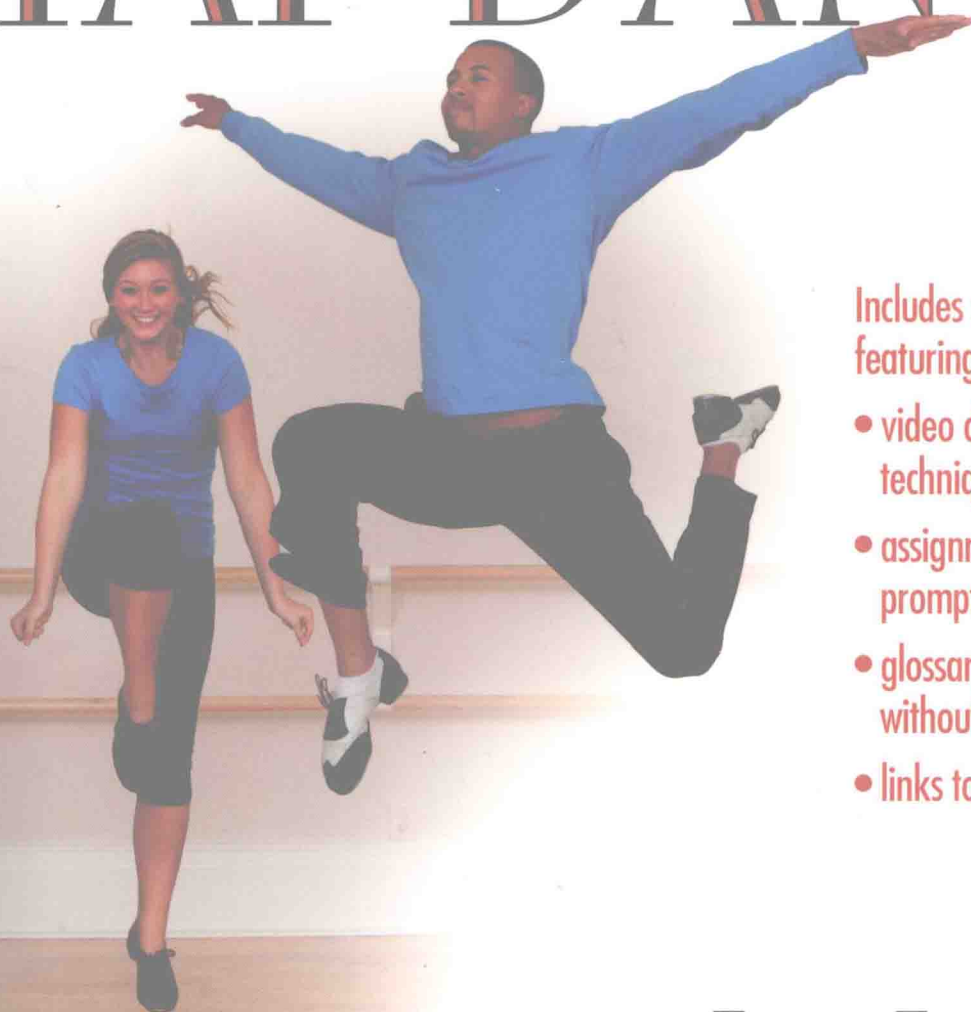


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# Beginning TAP DANCE



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Lisa Lewis

# Beginning Tap Dance

INTERACTIVE DANCE SERIES



踢踏舞初学

Beginning Tap Dance With Web Resource



**Human Kinetics**

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We are pleased to provide access to a web resource that supplements your textbook, *Beginning Tap Dance*. This resource offers photos and video clips of tap dance techniques, learning activities, assignments, quizzes, and much more.

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Beginning Tap Dance web resource

In loving memory of my best friend, soul mate, and loving husband, Johnny Van Lewis.

# Preface

**B**eginning *Tap Dance* is your guide through the world of basic tap movement. Every beginner has a unique starting point on this journey; whether you are a novice or experienced dancer, you will find your place in this book. This book takes beginning tap dance in a refreshing new direction in both academic and private studio settings; the concise explanations help you move from reading time to dancing time without missing a beat. Although no book can take the place of a dance class, this book serves as your practice companion as you learn the basics of tap dance.

*Beginning Tap Dance* is the result of years of training from some of the best teachers in the business, including Danny Hctor and Maurice Hines; a lifelong study of kinesiology, biomechanics, anatomy, physiology, and pedagogy; and many mistakes, failures, and corrections in dealing with people. My career in tap dance began in my late teens. At that time, I offset the cost of my dance lessons by instructing children in tap dance at a studio in North Carolina. As my professional dance career progressed, I taught more advanced students in tap and jazz dance. Although my experience with advanced students is valuable, the best experience I received in understanding true beginners was teaching true beginners. When I taught beginners at Middle Tennessee State University, I learned about teaching tap dance to novice dancers, fair skill and knowledge evaluations, and progression. These learning experiences form the foundation of this book.

Each chapter in this book provides you with a framework for developing your skills and knowledge as you evolve into a tap dancer.

Chapter 1, *Introduction to Tap Dance*, provides an overview of tap dance. It examines what to expect in your first tap dance class, including the definition and the benefits of tap dance, and it explains your role as a student of the class.

Chapter 2, *Preparing for Class*, provides information regarding what to wear, how to select your tap shoes, mental and physical preparation for the class, and your unique learning style.

Chapter 3, *Safety and Health*, discusses studio and personal safety, basic anatomy and kinesiology, and preventing and treating common dance injuries.

Chapter 4, *Learning and Performing Tap Dance*, presents the learning process of tap dance, rhythmic elements, and the artistry of dance.

Chapter 5, *Tap Dance Steps*, introduces you to the steps of tap dance along with the understanding of movement. Video clips of these steps are available on the accompanying web resource at [www.HumanKinetics.com/BeginningTapDance1E](http://www.HumanKinetics.com/BeginningTapDance1E).

Chapter 6, *Developing Tap Technique*, focuses on developing your tap technique, how each part of the class structure is important for development, and how to improve your tap technique.

Chapter 7, History of Tap Dance, demonstrates the uniqueness of tap dance as it relates to the diverse ethnic groups that contributed to this art form. This chapter traces the history of tap dance to forms such as the Irish jig, African dance, and Native American dance.

The web resource that accompanies this book offers supplemental, interactive instruction. Visit [www.HumanKinetics.com/BeginningTapDance1E](http://www.HumanKinetics.com/BeginningTapDance1E) to check it out. This resource provides you with added opportunities to practice the dance steps explained in this book.

As you enter the world of tap dance, keep in mind that this book is just the beginning, offering you a small selection of tap steps from the hundreds of possibilities that exist. Just as each student is unique, each teacher offers variations in names of certain steps and how to teach them, so you may encounter some differences between terms in this book and ones used in your dance classes. This is what makes tap dance so wonderful: to discover that every region inherited its own vocabulary. It is exciting to learn and appreciate those differences, and stick with the ones that work for you. You may want to make notes about the differences and research other regions' tap step terminology. As you gain knowledge, experience, and confidence, you will develop your own path to seek more advanced steps and styles. Enjoy the journey!

# Acknowledgments

Special thanks to Bonnie Nemeth and Lizzy Morgan of Barfield School of Dance in Murfreesboro, Tennessee, for the use of their studio and to dancers Jasmine Thompson, Alicia List, Christine Licsko, Korissa Earls, Kalea Barnett, and Savannah Welch for the many hours spent as dancers and models. I would also like to thank Gayle Kassing and Bethany Bentley for their support, advice, and patience through this journey.



# How to Use the Web Resource

**I**n a tap class, exercises and combinations can move quickly. They can also contain many new movements or small additions to existing movements you have learned. However, you have an added advantage! Your personal tutor is just a few clicks away and is always available to help you remember and practice the exercises executed in class. You can study between class meetings or when you are doing mental practice to memorize exercises or steps. Check out the book's accompanying web resource at [www.HumanKinetics.com/BeginningTapDance1E](http://www.HumanKinetics.com/BeginningTapDance1E).

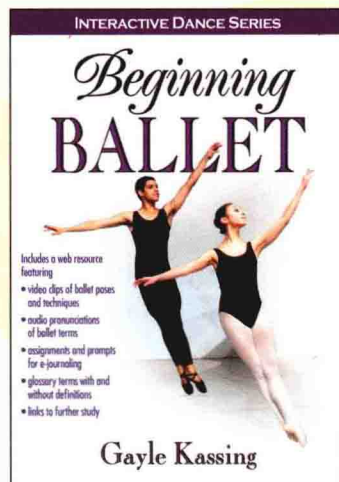
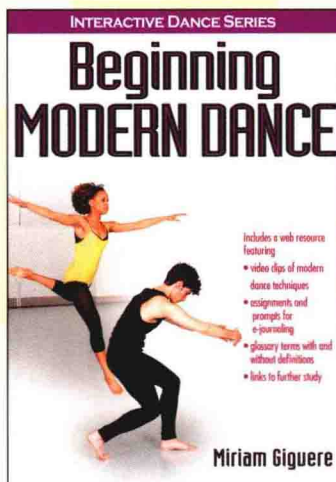
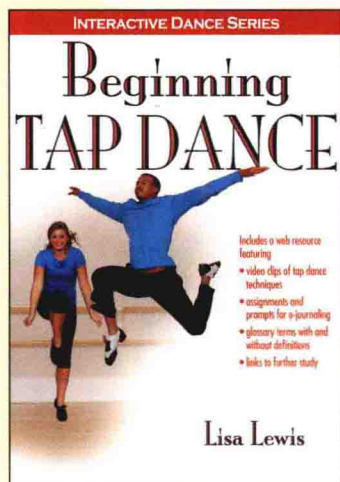
The web resource is an interactive tool that you can use to enhance your understanding of beginning tap technique, review what you studied in class, or prepare for performance testing. It includes information about each exercise or step, including notes for correct performance; photos of foot positions; and video clips of tap steps. Also included are interactive quizzes for each chapter of your *Beginning Tap Dance* text, which let you test your knowledge of concepts, tap basics, terminology, and more.

In a beginning tap class, students learn about tap technique, tap as an art form, and themselves. The Supplementary Materials section of the web resource contains the following additional components for each chapter of your *Beginning Tap Dance* text. These components support both learning in the tap class and exploring more about the world of tap dance.

- Glossary terms from the text are presented so that you can check your knowledge of the translated meaning of the term as well as a description of the term.
- Web links give you a starting place to learn more about a tap work, its style, or companies that present the work.
- Some chapters include e-journaling prompts and assignments to think more deeply about beginning tap class.
- Other assignments include specific activities to apply the concepts and ideas about tap dance.

We hope that the web resource helps you to individualize your learning experience so that you can connect to, expand, and apply your learning of beginning tap dance, enhancing your success and enjoyment in your study of this dance form.

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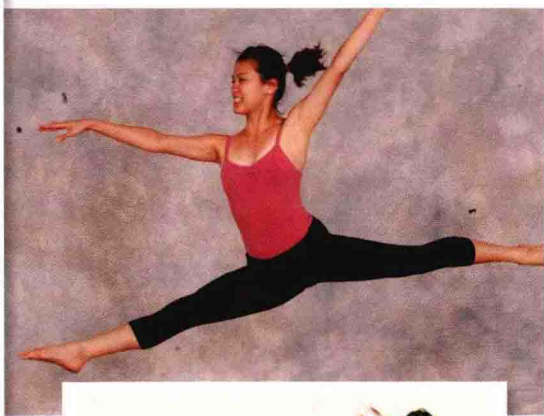
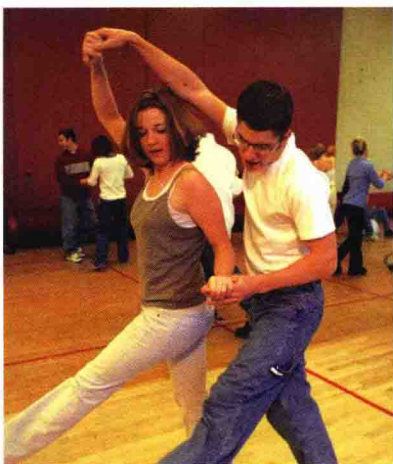
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## Chapter 1

# Introduction to Tap Dance

**T**ap dance is considered an American dance style with roots from all over the world. From Celtic ring dances to Southern minstrel shows to Broadway musicals, tap dance has a rich history that took thousands of years to create. Over time it has evolved, but the core of this art form remains unchanged. To understand what is at the heart of tap dance, try this experiment: View any video of Savion Glover performing his unmatched tap dancing skills. (You can view a DVD or do an Internet search on his name.) Then, replay the video with your eyes closed. Just listen, and you will understand what tap dance is truly about: creating rhythm. Glover has said that in tap dance, sound is the most important part; in other words, in this form of dance, it is better to be heard than seen.

Many people become interested in tap dance after viewing a video of someone fluttering across the dance floor with rhythmic precision. Whatever has encouraged your decision to explore this dance form,

this book serves as a guide through your journey. Do you remember learning how to sing simple songs when you were a child or how to catch or kick a ball for the first time? Tap dance uses the same skills, so you are limited only by your own commitment and persistence. Unlike any other dance form, tap uses the sounds of the feet to create music while incorporating the rhythmic arm and leg movements known as dancing. Most other forms of dance are limited to only the visual input of expressive action. The interplay of the visual movement with the aural rhythms of foot patterns makes tap dance a unique, fun, noisy, and rhythmic form expression.

## DEFINING TAP DANCE

Tap dance is an expressive art form using the language of movement and sound. From the moment you first put on your tap shoes, tap dance gives you an avenue to express the inner rhythms that were present in you long before you were born. After birth, you explored your world through touch and movement, which, in addition to your inner rhythms, give you the skills to dance.

To amplify rhythmic sounds, tap shoes are equipped with metal plates you can manipulate by using a combination of heel, toe, sliding, hopping, and jumping movements to create a variety of percussive sounds. These percussive rhythms can stand alone, or they can be used in combination with music. Effectively manipulating these sounds and creating a variety of rhythmic patterns are the defining characteristics of tap dance. The excitement and challenge of tap dance lie in the complexity and speed of patterns along with sound syncopation and expressive performance. Other dance forms focus on body placement and movement; tap adds not only the movement sequence but the mastery of coordinating sounds, too.

Tap dance has a style for everyone, including the graceful, smooth cadence of the soft-shoe, the flashy style of buck and wing, the Nicholas Brothers' own acrobatic swing style, and the stomps and stamps of rhythmic percussion known as *hoofing*.

## BENEFITS OF STUDYING TAP DANCE

Why study tap dance? You could ask the same question about learning a foreign language or musical instrument. Tap dance is a musical form of expressing yourself. Poise, grace, creative expression, and appreciation for the arts are but a few reasons for you to study it. Dance in general has many health benefits, including increased **flexibility**, muscular strength and endurance, spatial awareness, balance, and energy expenditure (which can reduce excess weight; Alpert 2011). It also improves mental health by raising endorphin levels, which relieves stress; it reduces anxiety and depression; and it increases self-awareness and self-esteem (Vetter, Myllykangas, Donorfio, & Foose 2011). Tap dance has a place in history, too. When you study how it has emerged over time, you gain an appreciation for history, dance tradition, and world cultures.

You may have tried other dance forms before trying tap dance. Whether or not you have been successful in other dance forms, you can tap dance; in fact, anyone can. You may not realize it, but you have already performed tap steps such as



shuffles, taps, heels, and toes while singing or listening to music. You can learn tap dance at any age or ability level. Once you have learned some basic steps, you can create your own variations and combinations of patterns and rhythms. It is as simple as tapping your toes and skipping across the street.

### DID YOU KNOW?

Engaging in arts and cultural activities as either a participant or an observer has been linked to higher self-scores of physical and emotional health and well-being (Cuypers 2011).

## BASICS OF TAP CLASS

The main objective of a beginning tap class is learning to dance. Thus, the class requires no previous experience and is structured differently from other academic subjects such as literature, chemistry, or social studies. The teacher presents the day's exercises and combinations, then you respond by replicating the movement to music, drum, or any other device that creates a beat. Attending class provides physical practice and intellectual knowledge on which you build your technique and understanding of tap as an art form.

If you have had previous tap dance training, you may be required to attend a placement class where instructors determine your level or you may talk with your teacher about your previous training. Keep in mind that beginning tap focuses on the foundations of tap dance, which may include steps you have already learned. However, if you want to review the foundations to renew your body's movement memory or you simply enjoy practicing the basics, then beginning tap may be the right choice for you. No matter your level, attending class regularly helps you perfect your technique and develop your artistry.



Participating in tap class is a great way to engage both your body and your mind.