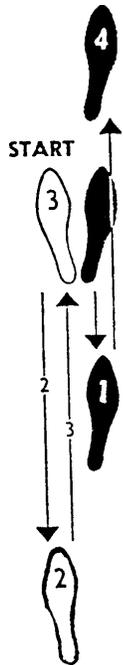


How to Dance the Charleston



The Charleston, first introduced in 1924, quickly became the most popular dance of the 1920s. It is the perfect dance for jazz or Dixieland music written in 4/4 time. Try dancing to one of these popular 1920s tunes: "Charleston" or "Yes Sir! That's My Baby."

Now that you have found the music, it is time to learn the basic Charleston step—the kick. The step involves four steps, one step to each count of a 4/4 measure of music. Start with your feet together.

1. **Step back** with your **right** foot.
2. **Kick back** with your **left** foot.
3. **Step forward** with your **left foot** to original position.
4. **Kick forward** with your **right** foot.
5. **Repeat:** Return to step 1 where you step back with your right foot.

The arms also play an important role in dancing the Charleston. Try holding your arms straight out from your body and bending them at your elbows with hands pointing up. Swing your arms from the elbow, first to the **right** and then to the **left**. Combine this movement with the kickstep—and you are dancing the Charleston.

How to Dance the Charleston Lesson Plan

Objective:

1. To learn how to dance the Charleston by following written instructions

Time: 20 minutes

Materials:

1. "How to Dance the Charleston" activity sheet.
2. Jazz recordings of "Yes Sir! That's My Baby" and "Charleston"

Directions:

1. **Review** the background information regarding the Charleston.
2. **View** with students videos from the internet of the people dancing the Charleston in the 1920s. Ask students what they think about the dance. Does it look hard? Or easy? Compare it to other dance styles that came before such as the waltz or the two-step, how do they differ? Compare the Charleston with how people dance today. Have students explain how the style of popular music during a particular decade changes how people dance.
3. **Distribute** the "How to Dance the Charleston" activity sheet.
4. **Review** the written directions with students before trying the dance.
5. Students may **practice** individually, in pairs, or groups.
6. Once students have mastered the steps, have the entire class **try it** with music. If possible videotape the students and watch the performance together.

Background information: Dances such as the foxtrot, tango, and the black bottom made their way onto dance floors in clubs and ballrooms across the United States in the 1920s, but it would be the Charleston that became the defining dance of the decade. Much like the jazz music that gave it's name to the era, the Charleston is an American invention. Named for the city of Charleston in South Carolina, this dance was first popular within African American communities. The dance soon found international popularity after it was performed in the 1923 musical *Runnin' Wild*, alongside James P. Johnson's song "The Charleston". Most people thought that the dance was too difficult for amateur dancers to master, but within a year every young "flapper" and "sheik" (fashionable women and men) was dancing the Charleston.

Additional activities:

1. **Music/Writing/Art:** Jazz music had a great impact on America and abroad in the 1920s. One of the most popular performers and composers of jazz music was Duke Ellington. Read aloud Duke Ellington by Andrea Pinkney. Have students try to define unfamiliar words and phrases used in the book that are associated with jazz. Play for students an example of a Duke Ellington song from the 1920s. Have students describe what the music sounds like, then create a drawing that captures the feeling of the song. Have students write a label for their drawing, explaining the title of their work and how the music influenced how the picture looked, using words and phrases from the story that they defined.

Links to standards

Dance: 1.1, 1.2, 1.5, 3.2, 3.4

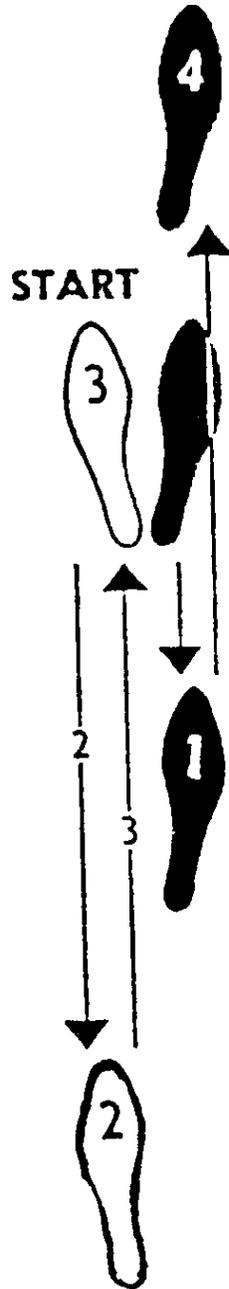
Music: 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4, 5.3

Visual Art: 3.1

Language Arts: RL.4.1, RL.4.3, RL.4.4, RL.4.7, W.4.2a,b,d,&e, W.4.4

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