

Dancing Through the Decades

March 2025



Humans have been dancing in celebration and ceremony for as long as history can remember. From the earliest dance form called the Bharatanatyam in India from 500 BC to the current TikTok dance craze, every decade has its own dance trend.

1910s - The Foxtrot is credited to Harry Fox who was a Vaudeville actor. He first performed it in 1914 during a Broadway show called *The Ziegler Follies*, and it quickly caught on with audiences, eventually becoming a staple in ballroom dancing. Known for its slow-slow, quick-quick counts, the dance was originally called Fox's Trot.

1920s - The Lindy Hop emerged at Harlem's iconic Savoy Ballroom, blending traditional African rhythms with structured European steps. It evolved from the Charleston and became a precursor to swing dance, known for its improvisation, high-energy movements, and signature "air steps". This dance style was one of the first to challenge racial segregation, as it brought together black and white dancers in a shared social space.

1930s - The Jitterbug is a lively spin-off of both swing dancing and the Lindy Hop, incorporating fast, energetic movements. The term "Jitterbug" was popularized in 1935 by the movie *Cab Calloway's Jitterbug Party*. Some believe it refers to the jittery, quick movements of the dancers, while others argue it relates to the idea of being "bugged" or excited by the music.

1940s - The Mambo and The Rumba both have origins in Cuban history. The Mambo, blends Cuban dance music with American swing and jazz elements. This fusion created a fast-paced, rhythmically intense dance that quickly became popular in the U.S. and internationally. The Rumba, on the other hand, has deeper roots in Afro-Cuban culture, focusing on slower, more sensual movements.

1950s - Square dancing has roots dating back to England around the year 1600, but it was Henry Ford who is credited with reviving the tradition and making it a phenomenon in the US. By the 1950s, national standards had been developed for the dance, and "callers" were shouting out instructions like "promenade" and "do-si-do."

1960s - The Mashed Potato characterized by quick foot movements that resemble "mashing" potatoes, gained popularity quickly and became a staple of the early 1960s dance scene. Around the same time, artists like Billy Thorpe and the Aztecs, Dee Dee Sharp, and Nat Kendrick and the Swans all released songs inspired by the Mashed Potato, helping to cement its place in pop culture. The dance's catchy rhythm and simple, energetic steps made it an easy trend to follow.

1970s - The Hustle started in the vibrant dance clubs of New York City during the mid-1970s, emerging as a versatile dance style that could adapt to various popular music genres, especially disco. The dance gained global attention when the iconic disco film *Saturday Night Fever* featured hustle moves, although many purists believe the depiction was inaccurate and didn't fully capture the true essence of the dance.

The 1980s - Country line dances were made popular by 1980 John Travolta's movie *Urban Cowboy*. The dance involves people forming a line and performing choreographed steps to country-Western music. While it gained popularity after *Urban Cowboy*, the real line dance phenomenon exploded in 1992 with the release of Billy Ray Cyrus' smash hit "Achy Breaky Heart." The song's catchy tune and accompanying dance moves made country line dancing a nationwide sensation.

1990s - The Macarena was hard to escape from. From private parties and shopping malls to stadium games and corporate events, the song - and its accompanying highly choreographed dance - was everywhere. The music video played a major role in spreading the dance, as it became a global sensation, with people of all ages learning the moves.

2000s - Krumping, a high-energy dance that originated in South Central Los Angeles, characterized by its freestyle movements, often marked by expressive, exaggerated gestures, and more upright motions compared to the grounded, acrobatic style of breakdancing. The dance focuses on raw emotion, with dancers often incorporating aggressive, powerful movements that reflect the struggles and experiences of urban life.

2010s - Gangnam Style went beyond viral and turned into a worldwide craze. The video became the first video to surpass a billion views. The phrase "Gangnam Style" refers to a lifestyle associated with the Gangnam district of Seoul.

Your challenge is to learn a dance from a decade (either one listed above or find one of your own) and make a short video of you (and your family or troop) performing the dance. The video needs to be 30 seconds - 1 minute long with audio.

Want to really get into the challenge? Dress up in period dress for the video!



Deadline to submit your Dancing Through the Decades Challenge:

Monday, March 31, 2025, at 5:00 PM MST.

Submit report at: https://bit.ly/Dancing_March2025

You will receive your patch in 3 - 4 weeks after the end of challenge.

If you have any questions, please email info@gsdsw.org.

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