

Level I Fundamentals Movement Curriculum

(Introductory & Beginner 1)

This is the basic ground floor of bellydance movement vocabulary. In this class you will learn the foundation movements that you will build upon and keep referring back to throughout your dance life. Learning dance is a wonderful gift to yourself. Treat yourself with respect and kindness as you embark on this journey. Each of us learns differently and at our own unique, individual pace. There is no competition here – there is no stress or worry. Be content to progress at your own pace and delight in your achievement. Remember, there is more to learning to dance than just doing a movement properly: in addition to internalizing and mastering a Middle Eastern movement vocabulary, you are also developing strength, coordination, grace, flexibility, balance and memory skills. Enjoy your journey!

When are you ready to move on?

The average student should expect to take 2 – 4 semesters of Fundamentals Level 1 before moving on. Consider your very first semester to be an introduction to the world of bellydance. Each semester after that will then be one where you are working towards getting the movements into your muscle memory and beginning the life-long journey of mastering them.

You are ready to move on when you are comfortable with all of the Fundamental Level 1 movements. You can isolate your hips from your upper body and visa versa. You understand that chest movements do not involve the shoulders and that hip movements are generated from the legs and controlled by the abdominal muscles. You recognize the movements when you see them, are able to describe them verbally, and can perform them reasonably well and without further breakdown or assistance from me.

Fundamental movements are your foundation building blocks and will continue to be drilled and refined throughout your dance career. For this reason, fundamentals level 1 and 2 are the most important classes in your dance career.

Choreography

A short & simple dance is taught each semester (one each in fall & winter). These dances are meant only as tools for you to practice putting movements to music with. Choreographies taught in this class are rotated over several semesters. If you have been in this class for awhile, you will have a chance to revisit dances learned earlier in your career.

Movements Taught

Posture/neutral body position (feet, knees, hips, spine, shoulders, neck, head)

Hips on the horizontal plane:

- glide side to side
- glide front to back
- tracing shapes – square, diamond, circle
- figure 8 – small/muscular & large/stretching
- basic hip circle; large hip circle with arms

Hips on the vertical plane

- hip lifts (no weight transfer): side/into the waist, front, front twist, back; and smooth, sharp
- hip drop (no weight transfer), single, double, “m”
- hip bump (with weight transfer): up/out to side and smooth, sharp (w/gluteus & inner thigh)
- figure 8: “under 8”, “twisting under 8”
- Umi (small internal hip circle) – introduction only

Travel Steps

- step-touch
- walking hip lifts (basic Egyptian step) in place, forward, backwards, turning
- chasse (also called step-ball-change/triplet step)
- walking hip bumps
- dancer's walk (walking posture practice) "push-pull walk"
- Twist step
- Tush push (lazy accent walk) – introduction only
- Basic arabesque
- Arabic step (flat/ball)
- Arabic II (flat/ball/ball/ball)
- 3-step turn

Arms & Hands: developing graceful hands and arms are an on-going process, constantly perfected throughout the levels

- basic arm position "hands resting on the banister"
- standard arm frames
- arm undulations (snake arms)
- basic hand position (holding a delicate blown egg)
- wrist circles: in, out
- hand undulations

Chest on the horizontal plane

- glide side to side
- glide front to back
- tracing shapes – square, diamond, circle

Chest on the vertical plane

- lift, lower
- trace shapes – square, diamond, circle

Shoulders

- accents & isolations: front, back, up, down, & rolls
- shoulder shimmy

Hip Shimmy

- twist (Lebanese) shimmy
- Egyptian knee shimmy
- American hip shimmy (basic 4/4 shimmy)

Veil

- raqs sharqi-style entrance
- basics of American veil work: simple sculptures & frames

Stomach work: stomach isolations and undulations are an on-going process, constantly perfected throughout the levels

- isolate the muscles
- belly roll up, down (muscular undulation) - introduction
- accent: stomach pop

Undulations

- introduction to the torso undulation

This is not a comprehensive list. This list has been assembled as a tool to help you in your practice at home and to give you an idea of the different topics covered in each level. There are many variables that factor into how fast we cover the material and what material will be presented each semester