

fresh freestyle: FOOTPRINT EVOLUTION

In the second part of our series on fresh ideas for freestyle classes, Marcus Irwin explains the footprint evolution concept

Most teachers utilise a similar system to pass on information to their students in a clear, logical and understandable fashion. Think of a teacher training a student to speak a different language. Students are first taught single words and their correct pronunciation before they learn how to combine them together into groups of sentences. Teaching in this order allows a logical and comfortable learning phase. Supplying a logical fluid path from introductory elements through to complete comprehension is most teachers' ultimate goal. Likewise, providing a comfortable and successful journey from base movement to a finished choreography product is the freestyle teacher's Holy Grail.

Once these methods are learned and mastered it appears that anything is possible. The path becomes methodical and fluid and provides a clear journey ensuring students of all skill levels can achieve the end result required of them.

This introductory chain of events is the basis for 'footprint evolution'. Understanding the importance of a strong and clear introduction followed by an incremental and methodical increase of elements is a compulsory step to either achieving, or maintaining, essential teaching skills.

Footprints

An exercise to music class can be viewed as a 'follow the leader' style experience with a long, unbroken line of sequences that are instigated by foot patterns, commonly known as foot strike. Every time the teacher's feet move to a different point, so too do the students'. If the transitions are premeditated and the students are pre warned of the impending change then a successful 'follow the leader' process is achieved.

The analogy of walking along a deserted beach and coming across a solitary and clear set of footprints made by a person who walked there before you is a good way to visualise this theme. In this case it would be possible for you to follow, and perhaps find, that person if you were to step carefully into each one of their footprints and follow their path. No matter how many twists and turns that person made you would be able to replicate their path as long as there was a clear footprint for each of these variations in direction. However if you came to a point where a number of sets of footprints appeared and they were not all in a cohesive line it would make your goal a little more difficult.

Using this image as a basis for teaching aerobic and step choreography patterns can make the information transfer from teacher to student clear and successful.



Footprint evolution concept

To begin with a fixed base footprint pattern and use incremental layer changes to increase the level of physical or mental challenge, in a smooth and logical fashion.

BENEFITS

- > Smooth and easy learning phases from beginning to end product
- > Assured success with research and practice
- > Better understanding of the mechanics of choreography construction and evolution

FOOTPRINT TO FINISHED PRODUCT TEMPLATE

Base Foot Print	
Variation 1	
Variation 2	
Variation 3	
Variation 4	
Variation 5	
Variation 6	
Variation 7	
Finished Product	

Evolutionary steps

The template above is an excellent visual guide, not only to create new combinations but also to remember and record how they were taught. The finished template acts as a choreography recipe guide and can be easily stored and called upon later for practice.

Step one: preparation

What kind of combination do you want to create — Complex with direction and rotational changes? Intense with propulsions and leaps? Dance-inspired with style and rhythm? Using the footprint as a base anything is possible, as the layers that you add over the top of the footprint reflect the style of routine you wish to create.

The aim in footprint evolution is to use layering and progression to enhance a simple, fixed foot pattern in a methodical fashion. Using the table and steps here, it is possible to create and then record these progressions for further rehearsal and practice.

Step two: choosing the footprint pattern

The goal of a footprint combination is to find an initial pattern that is simple to perform. The pattern should be set at a level that everyone can achieve. It is balanced between the right and left legs and has enough counts on each side to allow for additions to be layered over the top. This is known as the base footprint that your students repeat again and again. Mild changes are then layered over it, thus gradually changing the structure and the end result.

Step three: creation

Using the template above it is possible to place the base footprint that you have chosen into the top right hand side of the table and then start working your way down to your finished product. For example you might first like to layer an arm line over the foot pattern. Write this new variation in the box below. Next you may choose to change the rhythm of the first four counts, which you then write into the empty box below. Repeat this until you have your layered end product with a record of how you got there.

Step four: teaching footprint & evolution

The first step is to teach the actual base footprint. It can be taught quickly and without fuss perhaps using a 'Simon says' cueing technique. For example:

Your Cue: 'Ok, everyone grapevine four times... Ok, now step touch eight times?' Repeat this a number of times.

Your Cue: 'This next time can you grapevine two times and then only do four step touches?' Again repeat a few times.

Your Cue: 'Now just grapevine once and stay on the other side for six step touches.' Repeat a number of times and this becomes your base footprint.

Your students will now continue to repeat the footprint. They are now following in your footsteps. If the subsequent changes over the base footprint are gradual and logical it means that nobody need ever step out of sync with you. As your footprint changes so too does theirs.>

EXAMPLE 1: INTENSE RESULT

Base footprint:

- 1 x grapevine (without tap)
- 6 x alternate hamstring curls
- Variation 1: Change the last two curls
- 1 x grapevine
- 4 x alternate hamstring curls
- 2 x step touch
- Variation 2: Change 1st 4 x curls to dbl
- 1 x grapevine
- 2 x dbl alternate hamstring curls
- 2 x step touch
- Variation 3: Change dbl to squat & curl
- 1 x grapevine
- 2 x squat and curls
- 2 x step touch
- Variation 4: Change step touches to jogs
- 1 x grapevine
- 2 x squat and curls
- 4 x jogs
- Finished product:
- 1 x grapevine (pic 1A)
- 2 x squat and curls (pics 1B & 1C)
- 2 x pendulum side jogs (pic 1D)

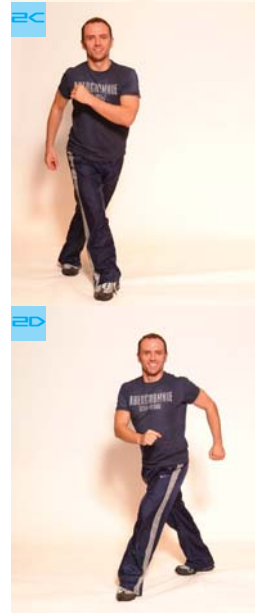


Choreography examples

The examples above show how a single base footprint can change into different end results, depending on what layers you add to them. Look carefully and you can see that on each new line only one element has been changed. This is one of the secrets of smooth layers and successful transition. Changing one element at a time allows the students' experience to grow slowly.

Repeating this new variation numerous times also allows for greater commitment, allowing them time to become accustomed to the minor change in the sequence before the next variation.

Using this system to create your combinations not only makes you aware of the exact steps that are needed to teach the routine flawlessly, it also doubles as a written record of your resulting combinations. Like a recipe book, try keeping all of your written and researched routines so that you can refer to it for ideas or inspiration at any time. **1**



For over 16 years Marcus Irwin has maintained his status as Australia's most popular fitness personality. His name remains synonymous with health and fitness and he is regularly referred to in the media as the Pied Piper of Fitness.

Marcus will be presenting at Fitness Forum 2004, 22 - 24 October 2004. For more information or to book please call 0870 60 80 001 or email: events@multitraxuk.com

FURTHER INFO

Next issue in Fresh Freestyle we cover crash diet blocks and illusions. Two simple yet stunning ways of wowing your participants with choreography that is easily taught but challenging and fun.

For more choreography ideas, including free downloadable clips, evolution video streaming and much more visit www.marcusirwin.com

EXAMPLE 2: COMPLEX RESULT (PICS 2A-E)

Base footprint:

- 1 x grapevine (without tap)
- 6 x alternate hamstring curls
- Variation 1: Change hamstring curls
- 1 x grapevine
- 3 x alternate hamstring curls
- 8 x march
- Variation 2: Change hamstring curls
- 1 x grapevine
- 3 x hop clap
- 8 x march
- Variation 3: Change 8 x march
- 1 x grapevine
- 3 x hop clap
- 6-point mambo
- 2 x march
- Variation 4: Change 2 x march
- 1 x grapevine
- 3 x hop clap
- 6-point mambo
- 2 x march spin
- Finished product:
- 1 x grapevine (pic 2A)
- 3 x hop clap (pic 2B)
- 6-point mambo (pics 2C & 2D)
- 2 x march spin (pic 2E)

