

The Odds & Evens Method

Using an ODDS AND EVENS method to teach 32 count self reversing combinations will result in a class that is not only balanced, but it may even feel like you stayed up all night practicing! Again, it's mainly the regard for the music that allows you to plug any square CD into the player that results in that "on" feeling.

In terms of your approaches to teaching, there are basically two types: the preview method and build and breakdown method.

Preview Method

The "Preview Method" is a common approach taken where you put the class in a holding pattern and demonstrate parts or the complete 32 count combination. This "monkey see, monkey do" approach works well for advanced participants who are already accustomed to your moves, but it can leave newer students totally lost and frustrated - even experienced steppers who might just be new to you as an instructor.

There are times when the preview method is actually necessary. Some pattern elements are just easier taught "as is" than to try to figure out the base moves. Some elements in a pattern can also result in a loss of visuals, in which case you may need to do a "watch me, only" preview.

Build and Breakdown Method

For the most part, the "build and breakdown method" of teaching provides the best overall workout and will allow the vast majority of participants to learn and enjoy a well-taught choreographed step class.

Keep in mind that you have to read each class to determine how fast you will be able to build it and break it down, and it will require constant monitoring as you move along in the workout.

The Odds & Evens Method: Build It and Break It Down

The odds and evens method can help to keep you on track - most of the time. Not all classes will be perfect, but acknowledge mistakes by simply laughing it off - remind them that if no one's messing up, there's nothing being learned! You can put it all in greater perspective with something like - "thank goodness it's not brain surgery... or we'd all be dead!"

Warm-Up - Test & Assess

It never fails - you put together the coolest combination, walk into your class, and lurking quietly in the back row is a handful of newbies.

To teach like a pro, you have to be ready to assess your participants and be prepared to make adjustments on the fly. It can be difficult to totally reconfigure your whole workout on the spot, but generally, you should be able to adjust a portion of your program, and extend the breakdowns of the combinations to try to accommodate your newbies.

The standard recommendation is to teach new elements during the warm-up, but you have to remember that everything will be new to your newbies. If there are tricky movements that are new to everyone, the warm up is the time to teach them, but it's also time to test and assess what the majority of the class can handle.

There may be times, if newbies represent less than 10% of the class, when you need to defer to the majority of the class and keep things moving along. At that point, the best you can do is to instruct the beginners to stick with the base moves, or take a break and just keep moving.

First Block - KISS & Test

By design, the first block of 3 combinations should be "no brainers" from the front approach. As you breakdown what are usually very familiar combinations to everyone except the newbies, provide intensity and complexity variables for the more advanced participants.

This provides the opportunity to further assess how well your newbies can follow instructions. Although you might remind them to stay with the base moves, oftentimes they will attempt the advanced variables. If they are fast learners, no problem, but if you assess that they will be at risk in trying other advanced moves, you may need to adjust your choreography throughout the workout.

The "Keep It Simple Step" block features the combinations that will be repeated the most if you are TIFTTing ("Taking It From The Top"). The more advanced variables of the base moves will allow the proficient students to work harder when you go back to the top. But to give the newer students a break from the constant struggle of establishing new pathways, it's a good idea to cue and do the base moves and allow the advanced participants to add the extras on their own.

During this block, further assessment of competencies can be made by either taking one element beyond the "fourth wall" - facing the back of the room. If you have fast learners, you might even repeat one combination as a "mirror" combo totally facing the back of the room. But if there are a lot of "over the shoulder lookers", it means these students are not quite confident in following auditory cues and there may be need for further adjustments to provide more visual learning of elements or combinations yet to come.

ODDS & EVENS - Adding it all up to 32

At this point, I have to inform you that confusion might ensue. Some may need to re-read this information and actually move through the patterns to make sense of it.

Odds - patterns that CHANGE THE LEAD

Evens - patterns that KEEP THE SAME LEAD

Note - I originally defined ODDS as "self-reversing" and EVENS as "neutral", but decided to prevent confusion over the word "neutral". This is a term commonly referred to when a movement can go with EITHER lead - a jumping jack being the best example. When the feet come together at once, the next lead has to be cued because there is no logical next lead.

Sample first block: (a block is a group of combinations put together)

First combo:

2 basics (EVEN)
2 V steps (EVEN)
2 travel knees (EVEN)
repeater 3 (ODD)

- Basics and V's are EVEN (4ct patterns each, same lead - in single numbers and when done in EVEN NUMBERS)
- Single lift steps are ODD at 4 counts each, changing leads, but when done in 2's they become EVEN.

- Repeaters are 8cts each - they are ODDS and will change lead.

Depending on the level of the class here's how you might break it down:

4 basics (16 counts) +
4 v steps (16 counts) = 32 EVEN
Travel knees 8 = 32 EVEN

- Repeater 3 is the element that changes the lead so you would do an odd number: 3 repeaters (ODDS) + 2 travel knees (2 odds = EVEN) = 32 BLOCK will be ODD

Then you would be on the other lead: either repeat or reduce to the final self reversing combo.

Next combo:

3 V's (EVEN)
1 kick (ODD)
2 L steps (2 ODDS = EVEN)

Break down first half:

- 7 V's (EVEN)
1 kick – this is the element that changes the lead (ODD)
Repeat other lead.
- Break down to 3 Vs 1 Kick = 16 cts (ODD)
- This half has the element that self reverses the combo (ODD), so performing 2X for 32 counts would leave you on the same lead at the top of the phrase. (AN EVEN NUMBER OF ODDS ARE EVEN!)

Second half:

- L's are like repeater 3's - consider them interchangeable as they are BOTH 8 ct patterns that reverse leads (ODDS)
- 4 L's = 32 they are ODDS and will be EVEN when done in EVEN numbers. In that you already have a reversing element in the first half, you would do an EVEN number of L's
- So that way the entire combo self reverses.

Adding combo 1 to combo 2

At this point, you have 2 Self Reversing (ODD) combos. When you put them together, since they are both ODDS they will be EVEN - this means if you repeat the block of just the 2 TOGETHER you would be repeating again on the same lead.

Depending on the class level, you might choose to simply repeat the second combo – which would give you 3 ODDS and result in a lead change for the entire BLOCK. Or you could move right into the breakdown for the 3rd combo and add it onto the block.

That would give you 3 ODDS together which would be a complete self reversing block. Those examples should be fairly easy to understand since they take a front approach.

Learn to Teach Step – Odds & Evens Method

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