

## Cuing in Step

**Cuing is like a song you sing... *ahead of the music.***

Most important to keep in mind is the time your participants need to hear, understand, and then process your verbal cue. If you cue as you do, it is too late for your participants to understand and then react. So the idea is to cue at least 3 beats ahead.

This is from a beginning march for 32 counts. On the second half of the last measure (4, 2, 3, 4 is the first half; 5, 6, 7, 8 is the second half) you will begin your cue for the next measure.

Counts	4 , 2, 3, 4	5	6	7	8	1, 2, 3, 4,
Do	March	Keep march	Quick Slap	R Leg	Point forward	BASIC
	R, L, R, L	R	L	R	L	Up R, Up L, Down R, Down L
Cue		PAUSE	BA--	--SIC	RIGHT	

It takes some practice to get a good timing and rhythm on cuing. The brief pause on the count of 5 allows the participant to start to initiate the current movement. It's best to wait until the first foot of the pattern has begun - before you cue the next move. If there's a lot to cue, you can start ON that beat, but if you cue too far ahead, those without a feel for music will try to execute what you are cuing too soon.

The next consideration in cuing is to say what is *most* important first. If there is a drastic change in direction that requires more of an effort or reaction, don't leave the important info for the end of the cue. In these instances it is beneficial to use hand signals to supplement directional changes. If you are going to do a hop turn off the right end, face the platform and then do a basic right foot lead, you would cue "**hop** turn off the end (point in the direction), **right** foot basic". So the important cues are **hop** turn and **right** basic.

It's not always necessary to cue the lead foot. In classic Reebok terminology, cuing right and left is supposed to be what the FOOT STRIKE is on the pattern. But if you are on a basic right and going to do a traveling knee up, you will be moving TO the LEFT and stepping up with your right foot. It can be confusing to cue "strike right, knee up", if what you want them to do is travel *left*, step up with the *right* foot and lift the *left* knee. Best is to simply cue "travel knee" and use your hand to signal the direction.

If the last pattern is "neutral" like a jumping jack, there is no logical or natural next lead so you need to cue the foot strike: "right foot up" or "right basic". Additionally, if you generally teach a natural travel for "tap free", but for directional purposes you *need* them to do a tap instead, you will have to cue a tap once they get used to automatically traveling.

As you build your combos and provide variations for the advanced participants, you may need to double cue the base move and the advanced option. This is dependent on your assessment of the class and how well they are doing at the time. If you have mixed levels, you would cue "travel kick revolving door" - the base move is the travel kick and the advanced option is a revolving door. If this confuses new participants, you can simply cue "travel or revolve" and *do* the base move, letting the advanced revolve on their own.

### **Judicious Use of Preview**

Some people just don't like to be the last ones to get the next move. You will recognize them when you put the class in a holding pattern, point to your eyes and say "watch me only"!

You should only preview a pattern if it travels to the other side to face the back, resulting in a loss of visual connection, or if it is difficult to smoothly break down from a base move. Some tricky elements may just be easier to get by *showing* rather than trying to breakdown from a base move. It may take a bit of trial and error to determine which patterns are best taught by "cutting to the chase".

Although you may select to preview sparingly, don't be surprised if a few people attempt to follow your movements, despite your instruction to "stay where you are". This can be quite frustrating because it's usually these visual learners, eager to be the *first* to get the move, who end up being the *last* to get it!

It may take further explanation to convince them that you *ONLY* ask them to stay in the holding pattern because you know they will lose sight of the pattern and they should get it in their mind first.

### **Importance of Breakdown**

A common mistake made by many instructors, especially in the beginning when they are eager to impress advanced participants with their stellar choreography, is "cutting to the chase" too soon.

The majority of patterns you will do in a step class have a "base move" from which you should begin to teach in a multi-level step class. For the fitter participants, cuing them to "work" the repetitions in the breakdown will allow them to get a good workout while newer students are doing the necessary repetitions to create their automatic neuromuscular pathways.

As you reach the peak of the workout, use higher met expenditure elements in the combinations that you are teaching such as lunges and across the tops. These elements can even be repeated as "intervals" where everyone stops thinking and just works all out for a minute. Then you continue to break the pattern down to your combination or return to the top with the lower intensity patterns which will allow them to recover from their effort.

Fewer new people are venturing into step classes today, finding them "too complicated". If students aren't getting what you are doing, it is most likely that you are teaching to the front row. Remember that your job is to *teach*, not to impress with your performance. If people are not getting what you are doing, then you are NOT doing your job!

After 2 decades of step, you will have people - yourself included - who might think that to start a combination with "base moves" is boring. But a step class should not be about how many 32 count combinations you can rip through in an hour. It's about providing a good solid, calorie combusting workout for *everyone* who ventures through the door.

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