



Creating Visual Choreography

By: Ally Paauwe

Ally Paauwe has been a staff member, head instructor and choreographer for Universal Dance Association for the past four years. She is a senior at Indiana State University majoring in public relations and minoring in dance. Ally is in her third year of coaching and choreographing for the Terre Haute South Spirettes Dance Team. She is also a member of and choreographer for the Indiana State University Fusion Dance Company.

The key to creating visual choreography is to keep it simple and stick to the basics. Creating a visually stimulating routine can be simple by using basic choreography elements such as ripples, group work, line work, isolations and musicality.

When it comes to ripples, rather than having all of the ripples travel front to back or side to side, consider having different patterns for all of the ripples. For example, you could start a ripple from the inside of a formation that moves toward the outside. You could also have your ripples start in one corner of the formation and have it ripple diagonally. By switching up the ripples, you will be able to keep the audience engaged with something that is unexpected.

There is a lot of freedom when it comes to group work and line work in a routine. With group work you can have multiple groups executing different choreography in the same formation. By doing this it will show your audience your team's versatility and creativity. Line work within a routine can create a picture for your audience. For example, within the routine have each line in your formation execute the same choreography including a technical element. However, each line can complete a different technical skill when it comes to that point in the choreography. Another way to create more visual line work is to incorporate different levels into the choreography.

Isolations are a really great way to highlight different dancers on your team while also adding a different dynamic to the routine. If you are doing a jazz routine, you could have the team executing a skill while you have a dancer or small group of dancers executing a different technical skill or sequence of skills. In a hip hop routine, you could have a dancer or small group of dancers doing floor work and tricks while the other dancers are doing choreography standing up.

No matter what style or song you are using for your routine, you can always play up the musicality of the song. You can choreograph to the lyrics or the beats in the music. A great way to create a fusion of visual choreography and musicality is by adding sound effects to your music. For example, adding sound effects to a pom routine during a jump or a turn sequence will catch the attention of your audience in a memorable way.

These are just a few ways to insert visual choreography into your routines. By sticking to the basics of choreography, the possibilities are endless. Your routine does not have to be extremely difficult or challenging in order for it to be visual; all you have to do is invent creative ways for your team to showcase their talent.