

Choosing Dance Music for the HDSDC

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I chose to write this so the dancers would understand the selection process of music and why I follow it.

I use a specific process in choosing music for our various dance venues. First, we need dance lists for teaching. The music that we choose must be slow enough for our very new dancers who are just learning to dance. Next, we need music for our beyond beginner dancers. It can be a bit faster. Finally, we need music for our dances at the Buffalo Club and at the Square Dance Hall.

The music that I choose for teaching must be slow, so when the students try to master a move they are not struggling to keep up with the beat of the song and forfeit technique. So I look for songs with a lower beat per minute. I also try to find songs that have a strong beat, so students can hear the boom, boom, boom.

When finding music for our beyond beginner dancers, I basically do the same thing but I can put in music that is a bit faster - not much though. I also try to put in a song or two that challenges them, one that does not always have a definite beat, or the beats are a little harder to identify.

Music selection is far harder to come up with for our club dances. And some dancers have strong opinions as to what should be played. I take all requests seriously and I listen to every single song from start to finish, to see if it can be danced to and is appropriate. This takes a long time to do since some people give me lists of many songs they would like to hear. First, I listen to see if a song is the right beats per minute for our club. Too fast of a beat is difficult for our dancers to dance to, so if it is too fast, most likely it will not make it to the list. Second, I listen to see if there are any words that are offensive. Most offensive music is now labeled "explicit" so I know what those songs are. Third, I get up and dance to it to see if it works. If it passes all three criteria then it's a go.

I like to have several dance lists to choose from for the Buffalo Club, so we do not get bored, and I create a new dance list for every monthly dance.

I like to start out with a peppy song to get people out of their seats and on the floor, I then move to a slower beat song to bring it down a bit. I also like to mix up the genres. I usually will do Pop, R&B, Rock, Soul, Country, Blues and so forth so each song sounds different than the one previously played. I use a formula for dance mix percentages that was passed down to me - 10% Night Club 2-Step, 10% Cha Cha, 10% Hustle, 10% East Coast Swing, a few Waltzes and Country 2-Steps, and the rest West Coast Swing. I also favor songs that work for a variety of dances. Trying to keep it fresh is very challenging, especially when people have strong opinions and like to voice them. We encourage your thoughts, but be kind please we are all volunteers and we are doing the very best we can. We do it because we have a love of the dance community and the dance.

If you have a song or songs you would like to hear please let me know, I promise to listen to each and every one. And if they meet the criteria, they will be put on a list. With that being said, we also know that most will not like each and every song that is played. But, for 3-4 minutes, let the others who do enjoy the song dance away.....