

Scarf Dancing

Materials:

- Scarves, handkerchiefs, bandanas or pieces of fabric
- Music player and a variety of songs
- Computer and Internet to research multicultural dances and music

Dance is a great aerobic activity and a good way to develop gross motor skills and physical coordination. Adding a prop like scarves provides an extra dimension for creative expression and is a simple way to keep kids interested and engaged. The longer they dance, the better!

Have the children begin by mimicking your dance moves. Then encourage them to dance freely, making up creative movements with their bodies and scarves as they listen to different types of music.

Play clips of songs with different tempos, rhythms and moods and encourage children to make creative movements with the scarves as they dance along. Start with a fun upbeat song clip and demonstrate how to dance along with the beat. Then switch to song that's slower and more flowing and follow along with swishing, fluttering and floating scarves.

How about an American cowboy/cowgirl dance? Put on some Country & Western music, twirl scarves in circles overhead and make lasso motions on your imaginary ranch while galloping around the room.

Now choose a different music style from a different country. Try African drum music and have kids dance with their scarves to the beat. Each time you do this activity, try two different styles of music from two different countries.

Extension:

Research different scarf dances from different countries and try simplified versions with your preschoolers. There are traditional scarf dances from West Africa, China, Vietnam, the Philippines, Greece, and many parts of the Middle East. Find a wide range of different styles of music to broaden children's horizons, challenge their listening skills and encourage an interest in dance and creative movement.