

CLASH THE WYRDS

HIP HOP

W*ACKING
HOUSE DANCE

VOGUE

DANCEHALL

LOCKING POPPING

KRUMP

ELECTRO

A SHARED SEMANTIC GUIDE

Trigger warning	— 4
Introduction	— 6
Common ground	— 8
Cross-cutting words	— 12
Locking	— 22
Popping	— 28
Hip hop	— 37
W*acking	— 44
House dance	— 50
Électro	— 56
Voguing	— 62
Dancehall	— 68
Krump	— 74
Comparative table	— 80
Red flags	— 82
Resources	— 84

Trigger warning

Every history of dance chooses what it places at the centre and what it leaves in the shadows. The narratives passed down by institutions have their recognised lineages — and their absences, rarely questioned as such. Self-taught dances born on the peripheries raise this question from the inside, through their own modes of transmission.

This question plays out on three levels. First, the way a history of dance gets built, caught between a reading through aesthetics and artists on one hand, and a cultural reading that takes in geographic and sociopolitical circulation on the other. Second, the link between narrative-building and institutionalisation, and the risk of flattening self-taught practices once they're folded into a shared framework. Finally, the conditions for a narrative that fits these practices on their own terms — often oral, rooted in Creole cultures, and shifting across geographies — and the theoretical tools that can analyse them without distorting them.

This guide is no exception: it offers one possible account among others, and invites scrutiny of its own silences.

This document will inevitably be incomplete, imprecise in places, unfinished on certain points. It may seem to lack rigour to some, insufficiently situated to others, too condensed to do justice to the complexity of these disciplines. Such criticism will likely be well founded — and welcome: it is part of the process. But standing still is not an option. Knowledge already exists — it circulates, gets passed on, gets practised: in cyphers, sessions, balls, clubs, in the memory of those who keep these dances alive. But this knowledge often stays oral, scattered, hard to access for anyone not already initiated. This text does not try to create knowledge that doesn't exist — it tries to gather a part of it, to make it legible and shareable, especially for newcomers this guide can now reach.

Waiting for a perfect formulation before passing on the slightest landmark would mean letting this knowledge circulate only among those who already hold it. There is urgency in making it accessible, even imperfectly, rather than waiting indefinitely for the ideal version.

This guide is aimed in particular at people discovering these disciplines: dancers and beginners entering the practice, teachers and trainers encountering them for the first time, venues and dance networks welcoming them without always knowing their codes, audiences discovering them on stage. It also speaks to artists and practitioners of these disciplines, as well as researchers, theorists and cultural policy actors — to anyone who names, transmits or supports these dances.

If you would like to contribute, for example by suggesting new terms and definitions, please write us at info@ccnrb.org.

Introduction

Why this guide?

This guide is about the words of locking, popping, hip hop dances, wacking, house dance, électro, dancehall, krump and voguing. Nine distinct disciplines, nine histories, nine geographies of origin, with no single homogeneous whole — this guide sets out precisely to show that.

What they share, however, says something deeper: all were born in contexts of exclusion and resistance. Racialised, marginalised, often precarious communities without access to legitimate cultural spaces created them. Out of that exclusion, all of them made a language, a body, a transmission. This shared DNA — rather than a common geography or aesthetic — is what brings them together here. Understanding them calls, then, for a work of deconstruction.

Deconstructing the inherited categories («urban dance», «diversity») that have lumped them together without naming them. Deconstructing the cultural hierarchies that have long kept them outside the field of legitimate art. Deconstructing, finally, the words themselves, since the same term can mean very different things depending on who says it, in what space, with what history. Far from an obstacle, this complexity is precisely what makes sense accessible.

So this guide works above all as a tool for shared understanding, not as a normative glossary. With no claim to settle the debates, it seeks to make them visible and to hand the floor back to those who keep these dances alive.

Who is this guide for?

Beginner dancers — to enter these disciplines with clear landmarks

Teachers and trainers — to name their intentions and situate their words in cultural context

Artists and practitioners — to reflect together on the words they use

Researchers and theorists — to have a tool grounded in living practice

Venues, professionals circles, dance networks, cultural policy actors — to understand these cultures from within and better support their artists

How to read this guide

Each chapter follows the same structure: historical and cultural background, glossary, then a few pointers for professional and institutional use.

The glossary entries make no claim to be exhaustive. They form a shareable reference base, meant to evolve alongside the disciplines and the people who carry them.

This guide does not claim authority. Designed for educational and communication purposes, it respects the artists who keep these dances alive. The definitions offered are starting points, not endpoints — they invite readers toward the practices, the people who carry them, and the works themselves, rather than standing in for them.

Use and license

Collectif FAIR-E / Centre Chorégraphique National de Rennes et de Bretagne produces this document and shares it under a Creative Commons CC BY-SA license. Anyone may freely reproduce, distribute and adapt it, provided the source is credited and adaptations are shared under the same license. It fits into a collective approach: putting accumulated knowledge into shared circulation, recognising situated experience as a resource, refusing the hierarchy between academic knowledge and practice-based knowledge.

Several terms in this guide come from English, vernacular French, or specific community slang (LGBTQIA+ slang, and so on). Far from mere ornament, these choices bear witness to the historical conditions in which these dances were born. Any translation risks losing something; this guide chooses to name that risk rather than hide it. This guide also uses French inclusive writing (danseur·se·s, artistes concerné·es) in its French edition to mark gender neutrality grammatically — a convention specific to French grammar, with no direct equivalent in English. This edition relies instead on gender-neutral phrasing throughout.

COMMON GROUND

Beyond what makes each discipline distinct, several principles run through all these dances. Naming them explicitly is a pedagogical and political act.

1. There is no hierarchy between these dances

The dimension of authorship, strongly developed over decades by self-taught artists from these cultures, strips away any grounds for opposing hip hop dances (or urban dances, street dances) to contemporary dance — whether we're talking about hip hop, w*acking, voguing, house, électro, dancehall or krump. This hierarchy rests on a single move: grouping distinct disciplines under a generic label (hip hop, urban, street) so as to hold them at arm's length from what counts as legitimate art. Artists don't recognise themselves in it — and audiences even less so.

2. Music and collective space as the cradle of these dances

None of these dances can be understood apart from the music that carries them: house music for the jack, riddim for the link, disco and funk for the whack, techno and jungle for shuffle, gospel and soul vocals, rap for breaking. Far from an outside accompaniment, music is the raw material, the signal the body answers before intention even forms.

These dances also grew in collective spaces — clubs, block parties, balls, sound systems, cyphers, sessions — where transmission, evaluation and pleasure play out together, in front of witnesses. The circle, the dance floor, the courtyard are more than a backdrop: they are conditions of possibility, places where these dances were invented collectively, in public, before ever being named or theorised.

3. Context is inseparable from technique

Learning a move without knowing where it comes from or who created it means learning an empty shape. Far from a pedagogical nicety, context is an ethical condition of transmission.

A breaking class that teaches top rock without ever mentioning the Bronx, a voguing workshop that shows the duckwalk without ever naming the houses, both produce the same result: a gesture stripped of what makes it necessary. Technique alone can be copied; meaning has to be passed on.

4. The body comes before the word

In these dances, transmission runs through the body first. The word comes later, to name an experience already lived physically.

This order reverses classical academic pedagogy, where theory usually precedes practice. Here, people dance first and understand afterward — and sometimes no word ever comes to mind what was passed on. This guide itself arrives after the gesture, never before it.

5. The plurality of bodies is a resource

Marginalised bodies — Black and Latino bodies, queer bodies, rejected bodies — invented these dances. They carry a notion of beauty and excellence foreign to academic canons.

A body that fits no academic norm can become virtuosic within these forms: what ballet sets aside, house or w*acking turns into a signature. Recognising this plurality is not a diversity policy imposed from outside, but an accurate description of what these dances have always carried.

6. A safer space is a condition of practice

Several of these dances (voguing and w*acking in particular) were born out of a need for safety. Without a guarantee of physical and emotional safety, a space cannot host these practices in their fullness.

A venue that programmes voguing without thinking through how its team welcomes trans people, or krump without anticipating the emotional intensity it can stir up in dancers or audiences, risks betraying the very discipline it claims to support.

7. Words belong to cultures

Using terms like shade, read, serve, cypher, jack or whack without knowing their origin is a form of appropriation.

Linguistic purity isn't the point here — recognition is. Each word carries a history, often pain turned into style. Using them lightly, in communication or in teaching, doesn't share them — it empties them out.

8. Self-teaching is a legitimate form of knowledge

These dances were born outside academic institutions. Far from a lack of training, self-teaching constitutes a full mode of learning in its own right.

A résumé without a diploma is not a résumé without knowledge. People trained in the cypher, the session, the club hold expertise as rigorous as anything taught in a conservatory — simply validated differently. Professional networks and venues benefit from recognising that legitimacy in their programming and remuneration criteria.

CROSS— CUTTING WORDS

Certain terms run through every dance covered in this guide. Defined here once, they avoid repetition and lay a shared vocabulary.

HIP HOP DANCES

A set of dances born of different histories and communities, brought together by shared values: self-taught transmission, spontaneous practice spaces often held in a circle.

In practice: The word hip hop carries its own trajectory and its own history — but in everyday use it has come to cover a far wider set of practices than those it originally named. This macro-level capture often comes at the expense of the specificity of the other dances and histories in this guide, defaulted into extensions of hip hop when they in fact belong to lineages of their own.

FUNK STYLES

A set of dances born in California in the 1970s within Black communities, united by a shared geographic origin and a musical lineage in funk. Locking and popping form its two main branches.

In practice: This guide gives them two separate chapters rather than one, to let each receive the depth its lineage and vocabulary deserve. The two remain bound together by their shared history.

URBAN DANCE

A generic label used by institutional and media circuits to designate a set of choreographic practices linked to street or club cultures. Its use is the subject of an ongoing debate.

In practice: Prefer the proper name of each practice, or hip hop dances where context allows — this term holds neither legitimacy nor acceptance among the dancers themselves. For some, it's empty of specific meaning. For others, it perpetuates a hierarchy between legitimate cultures and merely tolerated ones. The debate stays open: naming these dances falls to the people who keep them alive.

SELF — TEACHING

Intentional, autonomous learning, outside or in the gaps of academic institutions, without institutional backing or a diploma at the end. From the Greek autos (self) and didaskein (to teach).

In practice: A central mode of transmission in hip hop dances and club cultures. Not to be confused with the storytelling of self-teaching that a creator stages to «sell themselves».

BATTLE

Originally, a space of dialogue and exchange between dancers, with no outside judge and no imposed limit on a turn... The battle was also a means of channelling differently a violence which, without it, might have expressed itself physically. Its form subsequently evolved towards something more competitive — with judges, a formal framework and the codes of spectacle — without erasing that original function.

In practice: A battle is a space of dialogue and collective evaluation, not simply a confrontation. Say « Le » Battle, in French.

MARGIN

The margin is not a property of these disciplines but an assignment produced by dominant structures: art institutions, media, cultural policy. These dances did not choose the margin, they were placed there.

In practice: Naming the margin means also naming who decides the centre and who produces the margins. Use with awareness: this expression can sometimes reproduce the very assignment it seeks to describe.

DISCRIMI— NATION

Unfavourable or exclusionary treatment applied to a person or group because of characteristics such as gender, race or social class, regardless of ability or merit.

In practice: This common thread links these dances to one another, to varying degrees and in different forms. Hip hop is born of racial segregation and the economic crisis of the Bronx. W*acking and voguing are born of the rejection of racialised queer and trans people. House and dancehall grow in working-class spaces marginalised by social and community origin. Krump emerges from neighbourhoods hit by poverty and institutional abandonment. Only électro, born in a more mixed French context, owes more to class discrimination and cultural legitimacy than to race. Naming these discriminations doesn't freeze these disciplines into a victim identity — it recognises the historical conditions that made their invention necessary.

INTER— SECTIONALITY

A sociological concept (Kimberlé W. Crenshaw, 1989) describing the situation of people subject to several forms of domination or discrimination at once.

In practice: An essential lens here: w*acking was born of racialised queer communities, ballroom is a Black and trans culture, hip hop was born of a double marginalisation, racial and economic. Leaving out these dimensions amounts to cutting these practices off from their own meaning.

SITUATED KNOWLEDGE

A concept developed notably by Donna Haraway (1988), holding that all knowledge is produced from a position — a body, a history, a social context — rather than from a neutral, universal viewpoint.

In practice: This guide is itself situated knowledge: it makes no claim to speak from nowhere. The entries on Self-teaching, Margin, and the principle «Every history of dance is a choice» follow the same logic — acknowledging where one speaks from, rather than claiming an objectivity that doesn't exist.

ORALITY

A mode of transmitting knowledge grounded in speech, gesture and demonstration rather than writing. It implies neither a lack of rigour nor a lack of theory: it forms a knowledge system in its own right, with its own demands.

In practice: Nearly all the dances covered here are transmitted first orally and physically — in the cypher, the session, the house, the krewe. Treating orality as a deficiency compared to writing amounts to disqualifying the mode of knowledge proper to these cultures.

COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

A group of people who share a practice and pass on knowledge through regular engagement and mutual commitment, rather than through top-down formal teaching.

In practice: The cypher (hip hop), the house (ballroom), the krewe (krump), the sound system (dancehall) are all concrete forms of a community of practice. The term names what these structures share, beneath their cultural differences.

CULTURAL APPROPRIATION

Borrowing or taking up cultural elements (aesthetics, gestures, words, symbols) by a group outside the community that created them, without acknowledging their origin or benefiting that community.

In practice: This risk runs through several entries in this guide without always being named as such: the shift from breakin' to «breakdance», Tecktonik as a commercial brand borrowing codes from w*acking and popping, or the decontextualised use of «w*acking arms». Naming appropriation gives the means to recognise it before reproducing it.

ARTIFICATION

The process by which something shifts category, moving from «non-art» into art, made possible by a range of actors (artists, audiences, institutions, experts) who reshape the boundaries of the artistic field.

In practice: Hip hop, house dance, w*acking, krump... have all gone through — or are still going through — this process. Reflecting on it helps clarify the stakes of legitimisation and the risks of losing context along the way.

HIP HOP (THE CULTURE)

A cultural movement that emerged in the 1970s among Black youth in the South Bronx, New York. Marked by five elements: human beatbox, rap, DJing, b-boying/b-girling (breakin') and graffiti, alongside a lifestyle and street entrepreneurship.

In practice: Don't reduce hip hop to rap. Hip hop dances are one of its fundamental pillars, not an accompaniment. The elements developed independently but remain culturally bound together.

A note of caution — dances labelled «Afro»

The expression «Afro dance» describes practices born from the evolution of traditional African dances in very different countries and diasporas: kuduro (Angola), coupé-décalé (Ivory Coast), ndombolo (DRC), shaku shaku (Nigeria), kizomba (Angola, Cape Verde), azonto (Ghana), afrobeats dance, scoukouss — and many others, still evolving. This term poses the same problem as «urban dances»: it erases the geographies, the languages and the histories proper to each practice in favour of a generic category, often convenient for the person looking from outside rather than for the person dancing.

This document does not settle the question of their naming and does not refer to them at this stage

That choice is not an erasure, but a recognition that further work, carried out with the people concerned, would still be needed in order to name each dance with the precision it deserves — rather than grouping them under a label that is not their own.

LOCKING



Historical and cultural background

Locking emerges in Los Angeles in the early 1970s, around Don Campbell. The lock — that sharp bodily stop, that sudden locking-up which interrupts movement — is more than a technical trick: in a context where Black bodies face forms of marginalisation and social control, dance becomes a space of liberation, self-affirmation and visibility. Stopping short, catching the eye, claiming presence on a stage or a television studio: locking occupies space with the body where other spaces refuse it.

This dance sits within funk culture, alongside the Black social dances of the era — two distinct bodies of movement that coexist and sometimes blend in individual dancers, without ever merging into one. Locking's history is also one of collective construction rather than a single inventor. Don Campbell's first group, the Campbellock Dancers, forms in 1970, then becomes The Lockers in 1973 — a group that carries the style onto Soul Train, bringing a dance born in Los Angeles's Black communities into the national media spotlight. Around Don Campbell, Jimmy «Scoo B Doo» Foster, a member of the group Something Special, enriches the style's vocabulary; Damita Jo Freeman and Leo «Flukey Luke» Williamson also number among the figures who build locking through exchange and collective experimentation.

Four notions — Attitude, Character, Style and Grace, Pure Funk — are sometimes passed on as landmarks for understanding locking. They offer one lens among others, never to be presented as a universal truth or an official framework for the practice: locking cannot be reduced to a gestural vocabulary — it involves a whole relationship to the body, the music, space and others, where power, rhythm, groove and stillness intertwine without ever hardening into a closed system.

LOCK

The central technical element of locking: a sharp bodily stop or lock, involving the joints and hips in particular, that interrupts movement and catches the audience off guard.

In practice: A lock is never a simple stop — its force comes from the contrast with the movement before it and the one after it.

POINTS

Arm and hand gestures forming part of locking's historical vocabulary. Can direct the gaze, underline a musical accent, or establish a relationship with space and others.

In practice: One of the style's most recognisable gestures — work on precision and clarity before any variation.

PACE / KEEP A TIME

The relationship to tempo, steadiness and holding rhythm, contributing to groove and to the clarity of the stops.

In practice: Develop the ability to hold a pulse, play with accents, and place locks precisely within the music.

KNEE DROP

A signature Lockers ground movement: landing on the knees, often preceded by a jump or a kick.

In practice: Requires gradual work to protect the knees before any full-speed execution.

HAT TWIRL

A hat spin, a Don Campbell signature move.

In practice: A prop turned into a full choreographic element — naming Don Campbell is a reminder that the style carries his personal mark as much as a collective one.

Pointers for professional use

- Name Don Campbell as founder, but also the Campbellock Dancers/The Lockers and the dancers who enriched the vocabulary (Foster, Freeman, Williamson)
- Never present the four pillars (Attitude, Character, Style and Grace, Pure Funk) as a single official structure or a universal truth of locking — one lens among others
- Distinguish locking from contemporary funk social dances: two distinct bodies of movement that coexist without merging
- Have communication texts, visuals and educational packs validated by the artists concerned before publication
- Watch for micro-aggressions linked to age or the absence of a dance diploma, which can arise in exchanges with technical or administrative teams
- In press kits and educational packs: distinguish breaking (New York) from locking (California) — two different lineages, often confused

POPPING

2

Historical and cultural background

Popping is born in California in the mid-1970s. In Fresno, a young Sam Solomon — soon nicknamed Boogaloo Sam — draws on the Lockers he saw on Soul Train to develop a set of movements built on muscle contraction. Its origin remains debated: recent sources question the idea that Sam was its sole creator, while crediting him without dispute for creating boogaloo and acting as a catalyst between popping and boogaloo.

In 1977, Sam founds the Electronic Boogaloo Lockers in Fresno with Nate Johnson (known as Slide) — a name soon shortened to Electric Boogaloos after the Solomon family moves to Long Beach in 1978. His brother Timothy Solomon, known as Popin' Pete, joins the group and invents signature moves such as the crazy legs; Skeeter Rabbit (Joe Thomas), coming from locking, brings robotic precision to the crew. Suga Pop, Mr. Wiggles and other figures follow, making the crew one of the most influential in the history of the funk styles — revealed to a national audience on Soul Train in 1979.

What we now call popping was originally called pop-lockin' — a sign of the historical blur between the two styles, stemming from the first name of Sam's crew. Popping now works as an umbrella term covering a set of precise styles (tutting, Fresno, Philmore, animation...), widely spread across the world by the Electric Boogaloos, whose own style could be called the electric-boogie style: music marked out in binary strokes through the pop, blended with Californian dance currents from the 1970s through the 1990s. Dancer Bruno «Pop N' Taco» Falcon, a close collaborator of the crew without being an official member, would go on to introduce Michael Jackson to popping and the backslide in the 1980s, contributing to the style's worldwide spread.

POPPING

Today an umbrella term, covering several precise Californian styles (tutting, Fresno, Philmore...) built on the hit — a brief muscle contraction creating a jolting or robotic effect. Originally called pop-lockin', echoing the blur between popping and locking born from the first name of Boogaloo Sam's crew.

In practice: Distinct from breaking and locking despite shared Californian origins. Popping today brings together a family of distinct currents rather than a single style.

HIT / POP

A quick muscle contraction that creates a sharp, percussive movement — the founding gesture of popping, often paired with the onomatopoeia that gives it its name.

In practice: Each hit aims at a precise musical accent — musicality, meaning the syncing of hits and movement with the strong beats, is what separates well-placed popping from merely technical popping. Work on the speed of contraction and release before adding amplitude.

ISOLATION

The ability to move one part of the body without carrying the rest along — arms, head, ribcage can each move independently of the rest.

In practice: Isolation underpins precise styles such as Fresno or twist-o-flex / masta flex. Without it, the hit loses clarity and spreads through the whole body.

TUTTING

A technique built on creating geometric shapes with the hands, arms and joints, inspired by the figurative poses of Egyptian art.

In practice: Popularised by the Electric Boogaloos, tutting demands great angular precision — each position stays crisp, almost sculptural.

ROBOT

A style imitating the mechanical, jerky movement of an automaton. Popularised by figures such as Charles Robot Washington in the 1960s-70s.

In practice: Robot is a body language in its own right: precision, sharp stops, the illusion of the mechanical. Often used as a teaching entry point for isolation.

ANIMATION

A technique giving the illusion that the body moves frame by frame.

In practice: A current distinct from popping, despite the aesthetic porousness between them.

GLIDES / SLIDES

Movements that give the impression of gliding across the floor with no visible effort. The backslide, popularised as the moonwalk, is the best-known example.

In practice: The glide is worked independently of the upper body: the fluidity of the lower half often contrasts with the jolting precision of the rest of the popping.

BOOGALOO

A fluid, undulating style, often paired with popping within the Electric Boogaloos family, built on rotating joints (hips, knees, shoulders).

In practice: Boogaloo works fluidity where popping works the jolt — the two often combine within a single performance.

STRUTTING

A standing dance style, precise and angular, built around poses and jerky movement, sometimes with sunglasses and gloves as visual style elements.

In practice: Strutting shares with robot and popping a taste for gestural precision and theatricality.

WAVING

A technique built on sending a continuous wave through different parts of the body, giving the illusion of a current running through the dancer. Part of the funk styles family, associated with the Electric Boogaloos.

In practice: Requires very fine segmented muscle control. A good exercise for working dissociation and fluidity, in contrast with the jolts of popping.

Pointers for professional use

- Name Boogaloo Sam as the creator of boogaloo and a catalyst for popping (not its sole inventor)
- Financially value the expertise of these self-taught artists on par with classical academic training, when drawing up contracts
- Have communication texts, visuals and educational packs validated by the artists concerned before publication
- Watch for micro-aggressions linked to age or the absence of a dance diploma, which can arise in exchanges with technical or administrative teams
- Don't confuse popping and locking in educational packs and press kits: two distinct lineages

Historical and cultural background

Hip hop dances are born in the South Bronx (New York) in the late 1970s, at the crossing point of an urban crisis, entrenched racial segregation, and an explosive burst of creativity. The neighbourhood had been devastated the previous decade by the construction of the Cross Bronx Expressway, which displaced tens of thousands of residents, drove middle-class flight, and triggered a wave of arson tied to real-estate speculation. On this ground of social and economic precarity, Cindy Campbell organises in August 1973 a back-to-school party in the common room of her building, handing the decks to her brother DJ Kool Herc — that evening is today regarded as the act of birth of hip hop.

Founding crews quickly give structure to breaking: the Rock Steady Crew, formed in the Bronx and joined by figures such as Crazy Legs (credited with the windmill), the New York City Breakers, and the Dynamic Rockers — crews bringing together Black and Latino dancers, a reflection of hip hop's dual community origin at birth. These dances are passed on mainly through community practice, the battle, and observation — the battle gradually becoming an alternative to gang violence. A reminder (see «Hip hop (the culture)» in Cross-cutting words): According to the redefinition proposed by KRS-One, that culture comprises nine elements: MCing (rap), DJing, graffiti, beatbox, street knowledge, dress style, street language, entrepreneurship, and dance — this last itself encompassing several forms of practice: breakin', up-rockin, popping and locking, double dutch, the hype / new-jack swing, and the electric boogie. Breakin' and hip hop freestyle form its historical core. Since then, new offshoots have appeared in other American cities, often linked to this same heritage without being its direct continuation: litefeet in Brooklyn, jerkin' in Los Angeles, turfin' in Oakland, bounce and jookin in Memphis.

BREAKIN' / BREAK

An acrobatic, rhythmic dance born in the Bronx. Includes top rock (standing), footwork (on the floor), freezes (balanced holds), and power moves (movements built on kinetic energy). Practised by b-boys and b-girls.

In practice: Use breaking, breakin' (or break, in France), never breakdance. The distinction marks the difference between naming by the dancers themselves and commercial appropriation by the media.

CYPHER

A circle of dancers in which each person improvises in turn. A central space for practice, exchange and collective evaluation.

In practice: The cypher is neither an audition nor a demonstration. Its circular logic takes a stand against the hierarchy of the stage: the centre is an empty space each person comes to fill with their own creativity. Those forming the cypher contribute — and are expected to contribute — to the energy at its centre, feeding it.

FOUNDATION

The technical and cultural basics of a style. Learning the foundation means understanding a style's history and codes before improvising. It also includes the anecdotes passed down across generations — often by serendipity rather than by lesson plan — spanning imagination and everyday reference points through to activism, and the bodily dynamics closely bound up with them.

In practice: Foundation goes beyond technique alone: it gathers gestural, historical and ethical knowledge, but also stories told at the edge of the cypher — it's these stories that give the movement flesh and tie it to what it stands for beyond the gesture itself.

HIP HOP FREESTYLE

New style comes from a contraction of New York Style. In the 1990s, New York saw a hip hop musical current emerge at a slower tempo than what had dominated before. Dances tied to hip hop — popping, locking, breakin' — were revisited within it, while new social dances emerged alongside them. The term new style, now seen as vague and dated, is giving way to hip hop freestyle.

In practice: Defer to the people who keep these dances alive for the right usage of the term, whose meaning keeps shifting across generations.

GROOVE / FLOW

Groove and flow name two related but distinct notions. Groove refers to the music and its gestural and historical context: a given type of music calls for a way of dancing that belongs to it. Flow refers to the dancer's own feeling, expressed within that musical context.

In practice: Neither is taught directly — both are cultivated through repeated exposure to a music and its gestural history, until the body responds without thinking.

PRESENT — DAY

Since the 2000s, several styles have developed in other American cities, resonating with hip hop dances without being its direct continuation. Litefeet (Brooklyn): fast, playful, plays with props and controlled falls. Jerkin' (Los Angeles): bouncy, tied to jerk music and crossed leg steps. Turfing (Oakland): narrative and illusionistic, often linked to the Turf Feinz movement. Bounce / Jookin' (Memphis): on the toes, fluid and technical, tied to local trap and crunk music.

In practice: Each of these styles has its own community, history and codes. Attaching them to hip hop without qualification would erase their distinct geographic and cultural identities.

NEW STYLE / HIP HOP FREESTYLE

The term new style appeared in the 1990s to designate a standing hip hop dance style incorporating a wide variety of movements, isolations and musical influences (funk, R&B, pop). It was widely used in the media, in classes and in cultural institutions to categorise what belonged neither to breaking nor to the funk styles. Too vague to describe real practices, the term new style is giving way to a more precise description of practices in favour of hip hop / hip hop freestyle.

In practice: Prefer the term hip hop / hip hop freestyle, while deferring to the people who keep these dances alive to decide on the right usage.

Pointers for professional use

- In press kits and educational packs: distinguish «hip hop dances» (a generic category) from the specific styles (breakin', hip hop freestyle, litefeet, jerkin', turfing, jookin...)
- Where possible, offer a mediation session with the audience to place the piece in its history and context
- Have communication texts, visuals and educational packs validated by the artists concerned before publication
- Watch for racist or class-based micro-aggressions (suspicious looks, heightened scrutiny, comments about origin) that artists may face while in residency or on tour
- In programming: these dances carry fifty years of history and artists of every age — they cannot be reduced to a category of «youth» or of «the banlieues».

Historical and cultural background

W*acking is born in the early 1970s in the gay clubs of Los Angeles — the Paradise Ballroom, Gino's, Peanuts — within a multiracial group of dancers who turn oppression into art, against a backdrop of disco and funk whose breaks and sharp accents feed the style's precision and theatricality. DJ Michael Angelo Harris names this whole Punking, reclaiming an insult then used against gay men. Punking is made up of three elements: Punking itself, the style's theatrical and narrative core; Posing, freezing the body in a dramatic position; and Whacking, the arm strikes that become its signature — a name inspired by the sound effects of the Batman and Robin TV series. Among the founders: Andrew Frank, Arthur Goff, Billy Starr Estrada, China Doll (Kenny), Lonny Carbajal, Tommy Mitchell, Tinker Toy, Faye Raye and Viktor Manoel, born in Michoacán (Mexico), whose dancing also draws on Mexican ballet folklórico.

Faced with the negative connotation of wack («poor quality»), the community — Shabba Doo is sometimes cited as the one who initiated the shift — adopts waackin, before Jeffrey Daniel adds the final «g». Waacking remains the most documented spelling today; whacking, more common in the media, reintroduces the closeness to whack (to strike) that the double «a» had sought to avoid. Both spellings coexist today.

This dance is deeply tied to a culture of survival and affirmation: within a context of structural homophobia and racism, the body becomes a space of total freedom. This history also carries a massive loss: in the 1980s, the AIDS epidemic decimated w*acking's founding community. Almost all of the pioneers died of the disease or of violence, leaving Viktor Manoel as one of the few survivors of that first generation.

The style spreads beyond Los Angeles from the 1970s-80s onward, carried by Tyrone Proctor through Soul Train's touring, then reaches Canada and Europe from the late 1990s. Its resurgence in the 2000s (Proctor, Manoel, Archie Burnett and others) comes with a deliberate effort at historical reclaiming, so that this international spread doesn't come at the cost of erasing its origins.

WHACK

The style's signature move: a quick, sharp strike of the arm from the shoulder, arm extended. Can be aimed downward, sideways, or at a symbolic opponent. The gesture draws its inspiration from silent films and the exaggerated expressions of their actresses and actors — extravagance and a sense of drama find their showcase here.

In practice: The whack is a gesture of affirmation, not just a technique.

POSE

A held moment in which the dancer embodies a character or emotion with maximum theatrical force. The pose is narrative: it tells a story.

In practice: Teaching the pose outside its queer and political context — self-affirmation within a hostile space — risks emptying it of meaning.

PUNKING

The original term, predating the word w*acking, used by Los Angeles queer communities in the 1960s-70s to name these same liberating arm gestures. The term w*acking gradually took over, but punking remains in use among the pioneers.

In practice: Knowing the term punking recognises the style's historical depth and honours the people who named it before w*acking became the standard term.

DIPPING

A twisting movement of the lower body, often paired with a dip or hip play. Associated with disco music and Hustle Beats.

In practice: Dipping brings attention to the lower body, often under-worked in w*acking.

SPINS

Turns and rotations woven between whacks and poses, bringing fluidity and transition between the movement's strong beats.

In practice: Spins aren't just decorative connectors: they set up the accent of the next whack or pose, and add to the style's theatricality.

MUSICALITY (W*ACKING)

The ability to precisely sync whacks, poses and steps with the accents of disco or funk music, often anticipating the breaks.

In practice: W*acking is judged as much on musicality as on the scale of the gesture — a whack placed wrong rhythmically loses its force, even when technically well executed.

Pointers for professional use

- Spelling: w*acking / whacking / waacking
- Distinguish w*acking (a distinct style, born of 1970s queer culture) from “w*acking arms” (a generic, often decontextualised use)
- Have communication texts, visuals and educational packs validated by the artists concerned before publication
- Watch for the homophobia or the micro-aggressions that artists may encounter within the host teams themselves, including in organisations that present themselves as progressive
- Ensure staff trained in welcoming LGBTQIA+ audiences are present for any residency or workshop
- Don't teach the pose or the whack outside their context: the style's queer and political dimension is foundational, not a footnote

HOUSE DANCE

5

Historical and cultural background

House emerges in clubs where Black, Latino and gay crowds largely excluded from other spaces of night-time sociability come together — the Warehouse, where DJ Frankie Knuckles develops the founding sound from 1977 onward, is the best-documented example, a place conceived as much as a refuge as a dance floor. The 1979 Disco Demolition Night, where thousands of disco records were publicly destroyed at a sporting event in Chicago, illustrates with near-literal brutality the rejection these audiences faced: disco was targeted in part precisely because it was associated with the Black and queer bodies who danced to it. House is born of that very rejection, rebuilding elsewhere, away from hostile eyes, a musical and choreographic space belonging only to those who created it. This dance is inseparable from house music — a 4/4 beat, deep bass, gospel or soul vocals — and an intense collective experience. It values connection to the floor, fluidity, and relationship with fellow dancers. The jack, that continuous swing of the torso driven by the pelvis, evokes as much a near-spiritual communion as a technical dance step — several practitioners explicitly compare it to a quasi-religious experience, a trance state in which the individual body dissolves into the movement of the group.

A generation of dancers shapes this vocabulary in New York through the 1980s-90s: Ejoy Wilson and Brian «Footwork» Green formalise the technique, while Marjory Smarth, a Haitian dancer who arrived in New York as a child, folds Haitian dance elements into it — a reminder that the style also carries an African and Caribbean lineage often minimised in accounts centred solely on the New York and Chicago clubs. This double lineage — the Black and Latino gay club on one side, Caribbean diaspora dance on the other — makes house a rare space where several histories of marginalisation cross without merging, each contributing its own bodily grammar to a shared rhythmic foundation.

JACK

The central movement of house dance: the torso swinging back and forth, driven by the pelvis. The jack is both a physical state and a way of being inside the music.

In practice: The jack is house dance's point of entry. Before any technique, invite each dancer to find their own jack.

FOOTWORK (HOUSE)

Fast leg work close to the floor, with crossed, circular, syncopated steps. Connection to the floor is essential.

In practice: Distinct from footwork in breakin': don't confuse the two practices even though the term is shared.

SKATE

A gliding step across the floor, evoking ice skating. A fluid movement that plays with the surface.

In practice: Teaches lightness and weight transfer.

LOFTING

Aerial movements, jumps, and elevations woven into house dance. Associated with a feeling of freedom and ecstasy.

In practice: Brings verticality into a dance that is otherwise deeply grounded. Work on preparation and landing before working on height.

LOOSE LEGS

A technique of relaxed, fluid legs, where the knees and hips absorb the rhythm without stiffness. A term codified by New York house dancers.

In practice: Contrasts with the jolting precision of other styles (popping, w*acking): here, muscular release is the goal, not tension.

FARMER

A leg movement inspired by African dance and mimed agricultural labour, built on wide steps and a strong connection to the floor.

In practice: A reminder that house dance draws directly on African and Caribbean dance, often erased from narratives centred solely on the clubs of Chicago and New York.

Pointers for professional use

- House dance does not belong to hip hop dances in the strict sense: it forms its own cultural category
- Have communication texts, visuals and educational packs validated by the artists concerned before publication
- Watch that house dance's working-class, community origin doesn't become a source of implicit class contempt in exchanges with production teams
- The club experience is a pedagogical reference not to be erased: lighting, loud sound, close bodies, collective trance

Historical and cultural background

The electronic music *électro* is danced to — techno, jungle, drum and bass — is international. *Électro* the dance, by contrast, is presented by its pioneers as born in France — a unique case among the dances in this guide, all otherwise originating in the United States or Jamaica. An original choreographic gesture, forged in Parisian clubs and nearby suburbs in the early 2000s, drawing on voguing, locking, house and popping, adapted to the rhythm of electro house.

In 2002, Alexandre Barouzdin and Cyril Blanc organise the «Tecktonik Killer» nights at the Metropolis club (Rungis), as part of their Tecktonik Events project, to promote two musical styles from Belgium and the Netherlands: hardstyle and jumpstyle. Tecktonik remains the name of their event and commercial brand — never the name of the dance itself. The dance spreads by word of mouth, online videos, then the 2007 Techno Parade in Paris.

The movement then goes through a phase of intense media spotlight followed by mockery, before a new generation of dancers carries forward the work of recognition and transmission. The company MazelFreten, founded by Brandon «Miel» Masele and Laura Defretin, is today one of its leading figures. Brandon Masele also creates La Planke in 2020, a training programme dedicated to passing on *électro* to a new generation of dancers.

SHUFFLE

The base movement of *électro*: crossed gliding steps, often at very fast tempos. Can be performed with different variations (running man, T-step...).

In practice: Works on foot speed and looseness. Start slowly, break down the footwork.

JUMPSTYLE

A style built on jumps and alternating backward kicks, danced to hardstyle or gabber music.

In practice: Builds physical endurance and coordination. Watch for joint impact.

RUNNING MAN

A shuffle step that mimics running in place, one foot sliding backward while the other lifts, in fast alternation.

In practice: One of the most recognisable basic shuffle moves — often the first variation taught to beginners.

T — STEP

A shuffle variation where the feet trace angles recalling the letter T, with fast, precise weight changes.

In practice: Builds precision of footing and speed of execution, two qualities central to how *électro* dancers judge each other.

FLOW

A quality of continuity and fluidity in the flow of movement.

A dancer with flow never «cuts».

In practice: Often set against a «list of moves». Work on transitions rather than isolated figures.

TECKTONIK

A registered trademark created in 2000 by Cyril Blanc and Alexandre Barouzdin, owners of the Parisian club Metropolis — which gave its name to a dance style built on quick, angular arm movements, drawing on w*acking and popping influences.

In practice: The fact that Tecktonik is a brand and not a dance illustrates the commercial capture of self-taught practices. It sparked debates about appropriation and underground legitimacy.

Pointers for professional use

- Électro is often missing from institutional dance mappings — naming it helps recognise a living culture
- Bring in voices from the électro scene itself for programming decisions, rather than relying solely on outside media coverage
- Have communication texts, visuals and educational packs validated by the artists concerned before publication
- In communications, avoid the mocking tone historically attached to Tecktonik in 2000s media
- Stay alert to the condescension that still sometimes lingers toward électro, a legacy of its past media mockery, which can surface as dismissive remarks backstage
- Transmission through the internet and video is foundational to this discipline: value it as a legitimate mode of learning

VOGUING

7

Historical and cultural background

Voguing is born of a precise and well-documented rejection: in 1967, Crystal LaBeija publicly calls out, on camera, the racism of a drag beauty pageant jury where she wins only a runner-up placement widely seen as unjust by those present. This moment of rupture — immortalised in the documentary *The Queen* and since become a founding text of ball culture's history — pushes her to found her own house and her own competition system, reserved for

Black and Latina people who were systematically disadvantaged in pageants dominated by white beauty standards. This precise act of secession gives rise to the house system as it exists today: a structural and lasting response to exclusion, built simultaneously as a chosen family and as a legitimate space of competition.

Voguing itself — these frozen poses drawn directly from fashion magazines — ironically turns around the aesthetic of a world, white and cisgender fashion, that had excluded the very bodies now claiming and transforming it into a language of resistance. Each pose becomes a double statement: mastering the codes that once excluded you, and turning them to your advantage on your own dance floor, in front of your own jury.

Voguing is one of the choreographic practices that make up the ballroom scene, but it does not sum it up. Ballroom cultures encompass ways of life, social structures, many forms of competition, a vernacular language of their own, and a dense political history. Reducing ballroom to voguing erases most of what constitutes it.

Reducing this history to the choreographic gesture visible on stage means losing sight of what is, first and foremost, a story of social architecture: how a community rejected by existing institutions builds, from scratch and with whatever means available, its own institutions of recognition, protection and intergenerational transmission — a model that will inspire well beyond the world of dance alone.

VOGUE

A competitive dance form inspired by the poses of Vogue magazine. Divided into three broad categories: Old Way, New Way, Vogue Femme.

In practice: Don't reduce voguing to a pop aesthetic. Teach its history: who created it, in what context of survival, with what intentions.

OLD WAY / NEW WAY

Old Way: the first voguing style, born in the 1970s-80s — geometric lines, angular poses. New Way: a style that appears in the 1990s, built on contortions and extreme joint articulation, more athletic and spectacular.

In practice: Don't rank the two styles: each carries its own technical demands and its own aesthetic.

VOGUE FEMME

A highly feminine, fluid voguing category, prizing grace, seduction, softness and extravagance. Includes runway, duckwalk, death drop, hair and hands performance.

In practice: Death drop: a dramatic backward fall ending on the floor in a full split. Duckwalk: a crouched movement on the heels or the balls of the feet — a voguing signature.

SHADE / READ

Shade: a subtle insult or dig delivered in front of an audience.

Read: a direct, sharp critique, a coded and consensual form of verbal sparring, more direct than shade.

In practice: These tools of verbal performance should never be used to cause real harm in a teaching context.

SERVE

To offer, present, embody something with total intensity and conviction. «Serve looks»: to fully embody an aesthetic.

In practice: Names total intention, complete commitment — one of the most useful words in choreographic teaching.

HOUSE

House: a chosen family within ball culture, led by a Mother and a Father (House of Ninja, House of LaBeija...). **In practice:** The house shows how marginalised communities build their own systems of care and transmission.

CATEGORY

Category: a competition category defining the criteria for judging.

Pointers for professional use

- Don't programme voguing without its context: ballroom is a whole ecosystem, not a stand-alone choreographic style
- Favour programming artists who come from the houses and from direct transmission
- Provide, as part of hosting conditions, access to gender-neutral changing rooms and toilets, or facilities adapted to trans and non-binary artists
- Have communication texts, visuals and educational packs validated by the artists concerned before publication
- Pay particular attention to the transphobia and homophobia artists may encounter, including — indirectly (misgendering, intrusive questions, inappropriate remarks) within welcoming teams
- Ball culture is a living Black and Latino LGBTQIA+ heritage, to be recognised as such in cultural policy

DANCEHALL



Historical and cultural background

Dancehall emerges in Jamaica in the late 1970s as an evolution of reggae, in a context of economic crisis and intense political polarisation between Jamaica's two main parties. The neighbourhoods where this culture is born — often garrison communities, electoral strongholds marked by recurring violence — find in dance and the sound system a space of expression that escapes, at least momentarily, this structural violence: the clash between rival systems replays on musical ground a rivalry that, elsewhere, plays out in the street. Dance here works as a language both political and aesthetic. Each new move — often invented and named by a single dancer, as the style's tradition demands — becomes an object of collective pride as much as an individual signature. Gerald «Bogle» Levy, born in Trench Town and assassinated in 2005, remains its most emblematic figure: his creations, immortalised in tracks by artists such as Buju Banton or Beenie Man, illustrate this economy of recognition where the choreographic gesture circulates and enters collective memory through music — unlike other dance cultures where movement stays more anonymous. Other figures carry this lineage forward, such as John Hype, who shares a stimulating creative rivalry with Bogle, or Ding Dong (Kemar Ottey), spotted by Bogle himself before founding his own crew, the Ravers Clavers, and becoming a reference in his own right.

In France and across Europe, dancehall takes root from the 1990s onward through Caribbean and African diasporas. Its circulation raises a question specific to diasporic dances: how does a practice born of a very situated political history — that of post-independence Jamaica — continue to make sense once displaced into an entirely different social context? This dual belonging, local and transnational, remains foundational to the practice as it exists today.

RIDDIM

A Jamaican term for the instrumental rhythm over which rappers, singers and dancers perform. The riddim is the backbone of dancehall culture.

In practice: In dance, each riddim calls for its own specific movements — understanding the riddim means grasping why the body responds before the mind even decides.

LINK

The basic dancehall movement: a rolling motion of the pelvis, often in direct response to the riddim. The starting point for most combinations.

In practice: Like the jack in house dance, the link is as much a state as a movement.

DUTTY WINE

A characteristic feminin dancehall move: intense rotation of the head and shoulders, combined with hip work. Highly codified.

In practice: Represents an affirmation of femininity and sensuality — not to be reduced to mere spectacle.

BOGLE

A founding dancehall step, created by Jamaican dancer Gerald Levy, known as Bogle (1964-2005), a legendary figure of dancehall culture.

In practice: Naming Bogle means naming a lineage.

SOUND SYSTEM

A mobile sound rig made up of powerful speakers, turntables and a selector (DJ) — the social and musical infrastructure on which Jamaican culture was built.

In practice: Understanding the sound system clarifies why dancehall is a collective response to a collective music.

CLASH

A musical face-off between two rival sound systems, competing live in front of an audience by playing their best tracks and exclusives. It foreshadows the logic of the battle in dance.

In practice: The clash structures a large part of dancehall culture: winning or losing plays out in front of witnesses, in the moment, with no going back.

Pointers for professional use

- Don't lump dancehall, afrobeats and afrodance together: these are distinct cultures
- Dancehall in France is carried by artists who have developed a style of their own — identify and name them
- Have communication texts, visuals and educational packs validated by the artists concerned before publication
- Watch for racist bias or conflation (violence, hypersexualisation) sometimes projected onto artists out of unfamiliarity with the culture
- The question of an umbrella category (Afro-descendant, diaspora...) is an open debate to raise with the artists concerned

KRUMP



Historical and cultural background

Krump is born in a South Central marked for decades by the 1965 riots and by those of 1992, the latter sparked by the acquittal of the police officers filmed beating Rodney King — an event that crystallises decades of racial tension and systemic police violence in these neighbourhoods. Tommy the Clown's clowning, born in this precise context, offers a concrete and tangible alternative to gang involvement: dancing in clown costume at children's birthday parties rather than fighting in the street, turning a need for belonging into a structured artistic practice rather than a risk of violence.

Krump is its darker, more intense evolution, carried notably by Tight Eyez and Big Mijo — a direct outlet for accumulated rage and pain, which never tips into the real violence it channels and sublimates rather than represses. The word's very acronym — Kingdom Radically Uplifted Mighty Praise — inscribes this catharsis in an explicit, deliberate spiritual register: krump doesn't merely sublimate anger into aesthetic movement, it deliberately places it in service of an embodied form of prayer. This spiritual dimension is no after-the-fact dressing: it is constitutive of the practice from its origin, in neighbourhoods where churches and gangs already competed for the allegiance of a youth in search of meaning and belonging. Krump offers a third way, neither religious institution nor street structure, but a space where bodily intensity itself becomes a form of transcendence.

STOMP

A powerful strike of the foot on the ground. One of krump's founding elements — it grounds the dancer, asserts presence, releases pent-up energy.

In practice: To be taught with both physical and emotional care.

CHEST POP / ARM SWING

Chest pop: an explosive contraction of the chest driving the arms outward. Arm swing: a powerful swing of the arms, creating centrifugal energy.

In practice: These gestures come from a state — work on the intention before the shape.

BUCK

A term naming both a peak level of intensity in krump and a figure: the Buck embodies that intensity in exemplary form.

In practice: A useful question in any style: what does it mean to give everything, to let go of control while staying within form?

JAB

A quick punch or arm strike thrust forward, executed with force and precision. A fundamental element of krump's vocabulary, often combined with chest pops and arm swings.

In practice: The jab channels an offensive energy without ever touching the other person — that's the whole point of krump: making an intensity visible without it tipping into real violence.

SESSION

The session is krump's space of collective practice. The krewe is the group of dancers who practise together, a unit of transmission and of protection, similar to the house in ballroom.

In practice: Krump is not a solitary practice, even when it looks that way.

CLOWNING

A precursor style to krump, created by Tommy the Clown in Los Angeles in the 1990s. More festive and colourful, it shares krump's street roots and intense emotional expression.

In practice: Mentioning clowning gives krump a lineage.

Pointers for professional use

- Ensure physical and emotional safety before any workshop in a teaching context: krump can release strong emotions
- Don't programme krump solely as a display of virtuosity or aggression: its spiritual and cathartic dimension is essential to it
- Plan a discussion after the performance so audiences can situate the style's spiritual and cathartic dimension
- Don't demand that krump dancers fit a format built on contemporary dance's codes (duration, emotional neutrality), which would strip away what makes the style distinct
- Have communication texts, visuals and educational packs validated by the artists concerned before publication
- Watch against psychiatrising or pathologising krump's emotional intensity, which teams unfamiliar with the discipline may misread
- The founding figures — Tommy the Clown, Tight Eyez, Lil C, Buck — deserve to be named

COMPARATIVE TABLE

This table summarises the main dimensions of each culture. It doesn't aim to reduce them but to make connections between them easier to see.

	Origin	Community
Dancehall	Jamaica · 1960s / France 1990s	Jamaican diaspora
Locking	Los Angeles · 1970	Black
Popping	Fresno, California · 1977	Black
W*acking	Los Angeles · 1970s	Queer, Black, Latino
Hip Hop	Bronx, NY · 1970s	Black, Latino
Voguing	Harlem, NY · 1970-80s	Black, Latino LGBTQIA+
House Dance	Chicago / NY · 1970-80s	Black, Latino
Krump	Los Angeles · 2000s	Black
Électro	France · 1990-2000s	Youth, mixed

Place	Transmission	Core value	Keyword
Sound systems, clubs, street	Oral, sound system, video	Freedom, energy, identity	Riddim / Link
Street, clubs, shows, battles	Direct, shows, videos	Presence, theatricality, community	Lock / Attitude
Street, clubs, shows, battles	Direct, named transmission	Precision, control, resistance to erasure	Hit / Pop
Clubs, battles, stage	Direct, master figures	Self-affirmation	Serve / Pose
Street, hall, battle	Oral, cypher, battle, crew	Respect, foundation, belonging	Foundation
Balls	Houses, Mother/Father	Excellence, belonging	Category / Serve
Underground clubs	Club, community	Groove, community, joy	Jack / Feel
Street, church, battle	Communal, spiritual	Catharsis, faith, creative rage	Stomp / Buck
Raves, internet	Internet, self-taught	Precision, play, freedom	Flow / Precision

RED FLAGS

Red flag	Prefer instead
Urban dance	The proper name of each practice
Breakdance	Breaking / Breakin'
Contemporary hip hop	Hip hop dances / dance
Urban cultures	Hip hop cultures / club cultures
Funk style (singular)	Funk styles (plural)
New style	Hip hop freestyle
Tecktonik (as a synonym for électro)	Électro dance / électro
Voguing (as a synonym for all of ballroom)	Ballroom / ballroom cultures
Dancehall mistaken for reggae	Dancehall
Defaulting to a «youth» framing	Name the artist and their trajectory
Labelling as «hip hop» what isn't	Name each discipline by its own name

These terms should raise a flag: their use often signals a lack of familiarity with, or a loss of context around, these practices. This table works as a quick reference for communication teams, programmers and institutional partners.

Why
A term produced from the outside, rejected by most artists and dancers. Empty of specific meaning, it perpetuates a hierarchy that serves a dominant narrative.
A term born of commercial appropriation by the media (The Voice Journal, 1981). The dancers themselves say breaking or breakin'.
A redundant phrase that defines nothing and adds an unnecessary layer of confusion.
Same reasoning as for «urban dance». A counterculture doesn't try to fit into its urban environment — it questions it.
The term names a body of distinct styles (locking, popping...), not a single practice.
A dated, vague term, giving way to a more precise description of the practices.
Tecktonik is a registered trademark that captured only part of électro dance. Using it as a synonym erases everything that exists around and after it.
Voguing is a practice within ballroom cultures, not their summary. Collapsing one into the other erases most of what constitutes them.
Two distinct musical and choreographic genres, despite a direct lineage. A common conflation in the press and in programming.
These dances carry fifty years of history and artists of every age. Locking them into a «youth» category erases that historical depth.
House dance, w*acking, voguing, dancehall and krump are autonomous cultures, not subcategories of hip hop. Defaulting to that label erases their own origins and communities.

Resources

Films and documentaries

Documentaries

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- Israel, I. (2002). *The Freshest Kids: A History of the B-Boy*. QD3 Entertainment — the history of breakin'
- Silver, T. (1983). *Style Wars*. Public Art Films — a founding document on graffiti, breaking and New York rap, featuring the Rock Steady Crew
- LaChapelle, D. (2005). *Rize*. Lions Gate Films — clowning and krump in Los Angeles
- Busch, W. (2006). *How Do I Look*. Art From The Heart — ballroom cultures
- Schoo, S., & Nichols, M. (2013). *Flex Is Kings*. Street Level Productions — flex / lite feet in Brooklyn
- Stora, R. (2017). *Les Promesses du sol*. Darjeeling / Arte France — a documentary series on the Parisian hip hop scene
- Stora, R. (2025). *Les Corps électriques*. Arte France — a return to hip hop dance and a story of lineage
- Phil, L., & Getti, M. (2026). *Rebonds — Une épopée de la danse électro*. Arte France / Zorba Production — a history of électro dance and Tecktonik in France, featuring Brandon Masele, known as Miel

Fiction films

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- Lathan, S. (1984). *Beat Street*. Orion Pictures
- Silberg, J. (1984). *Breakin'*. Cannon Films

Series

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- Quillévéré, K., & Cisterne, H. (2022). *Le Monde de demain*. Mandarin Télévision — the origins of French hip hop (NTM, Dee Nasty)
- De Longeville, T. *DJ Mehdi*. 360 Créative — a central figure of the French electronic music scene

Additional resource: the Soul Train archives (1971-2006), an American television programme, form a key historical record for watching locking, popping and w*acking in their earliest years.

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This document is produced by Collectif FAIR-E / Centre
Chorégraphique National de Rennes et de Bretagne.
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Graphic design: BURO-GDS
Print: Média Graphic
Printing and Legal deposit: October 2026
ISBN : 979-10-90061-21-7