

Chapter 16

Playing with the Effort palette

Do you ever ask yourself the following questions?

What technique goals do I have for this exercise? What is my focus today?

What qualities should I use to perform this particular step?

What is the rhythm or musicality of this exercise?

What steps should I emphasize or accent during the exercise?

These are just some of the many questions dancers ask themselves when dancing. Your answers to these questions will likely differ from your fellow classmates. This is true even when you are performing the same exercises.

Artistry involves making conscious choices about how to perform a movement, whether that involves making those choices on your own or analyzing the choices made by your choreographers or teachers. **Playing with Effort inside and outside of technique class will teach you how to make varied and nuanced artistic choices in rehearsals and on stage.**

The previous chapters have already presented many ways to play with Effort. Let's review some of those ideas.

Table 16.1 Playing with Effort

<i>Task for you</i>	<i>Benefits</i>
Generate evocative Effort images and words	Interpret the Effort concepts in your own way
Embody a classmate's Effort imagery and sounds	Discover new ways to embody Effort
Create and experiment with different Effort sounds	Learn how different Effort choices affect your technique and artistry
Perform the same steps with different Efforts	Challenge your habitual movement patterns
Create your own Effort choices for exercises inside or outside of class	Practice the skills needed for making dances and for working collaboratively with choreographers

Let's explore the Effort palette

Playing with Effort during class teaches you how to notice differences in movement qualities and it develops your improvisation skills, which is essential as you continue developing your artistic skills. As you experiment with the following activities, write about the following questions in your dance technique journal:

How do your Effort choices affect your technique?

What do you learn about artistic choice as you play with different Efforts?

Which Effort elements do you prefer?

Which Effort elements are difficult for you to embody?

Create Effortful warm-ups

An energetic and dynamically rich warm-up prepares you for the variety of exercises you experience in class. It also invigorates your sensory system and body connectivity. Employ a varied Effort-life when you warm-up before class. Experiment with:

- Sustained and Light Weighted stretches, *port de bras*, and *balançoire*;
- bouncy, Free-Flowing jogging, leg swings, and arm swings;
- firm, Strong Weighted planks, sit-ups, push-ups, and weight shifts (*glissé*, *chassé*, *temps lié*);
- quickly phrased taps and pats all over your body or clapped rhythms with Sudden accents;
- Bound or Free Flowing whole body *port de corps*;
- Direct and Indirect use of your limbs and the sense of your face.

This list presents just some of the numerous Effortful ways to warm up your body. You can make different choices everyday, so have fun and focus on your Effort life as you warm up for class.

Play with Single Efforts or Effort Factors

One Effort quality at a time

- 1 Integrate one Effort element into a *barre* and *centre* exercise from class. For example, play with Light Weight in a *grand battement* at *barre* and a *center adagio*.
- 2 Integrate the opposite Effort element into the same exercises. Using the same example above, you would play with Strong Weight during your second performance.
- 3 **Reflect:** *How do opposite Efforts change the technical and artistic demands of the exercise?*

Alternating between Efforts

- 1 Choose one Effort Factor to play with: Flow, Space, Time, or Weight.
- 2 Choose a *barre* and *centre* exercise from class.
- 3 Integrate both qualities from the Effort Factor into the exercises so that you seamlessly alternate between qualities. For example, alternate between Sudden and Sustained in a *grand allegro*, or Free and Bound Flow during a *rond de jambe* at *barre*.
- 4 **Reflect:** *How does phrasing opposite qualities in succession affect your technique and artistry?*

Playing with movement preferences

Play with Effort choices that feel good! Identify two or three Effort qualities you really love and play with those inside and outside of technique class. *What do you discover?*

Using Effort to achieve your goals

Choose the specific technical or artistic goals you want to work on, and then use those Efforts to achieve those goals. Review Tables 12.2, 13.2, 14.2, 15.2. These Tables list the technical and artistic goals that each Effort quality addresses.

For example, perhaps you want to achieve easeful fluidity during a *center adagio*. If so, Free Flow is a great choice. Or, maybe you to perform *petite allegro* with greater specificity. If so, a combination of Direct Space and Bound Flow may be appropriate. Or, perhaps you want to perform *grand allegro* with a bold and commanding attitude. If so, Strong Weight might be the exact quality you're looking for.

Playing with Effort in this way is not about right or wrong. It's about experimentation. If you experiment with an Effort quality and it doesn't work, then try a different one.

Play with a partner's Effort preferences

When you practice a peer's Effort choices, you experience yet another way of performing the movement. This develops a good artistic base for working with different choreographers.

Observe the Effort choices your peers make during technique class. Embody those choices inside and outside of class. Later, approach your peer and ask them:

- *Why did you choose to perform the movement with this Effort choice?*
- *What imagery or words do you think of when you perform the movement with this quality?*
- *How does this quality challenge or improve your technique?*