



Chelydra

"Dancer With An Attitude"

P.O. Box 1973

Newport News, VA 23601

www.chelydra.com

chelydra@mindspring.com

Be Prepared: The Importance of "AND"

Ready, Set, Go! Do you know where your feet are?

Have you ever been horribly frustrated at a dance seminar because you just can't seem to end up on the same foot as the instructor? When that happens, take a little time out and watch the instructor's feet carefully. Chances are good that she or he is executing a sneaky little maneuver called the *fudge step*.

A *fudge step* is an almost imperceptible weight change or shift in body alignment. Experienced dancers use the *fudge step* to get around those pesky laws of physics, such as the one that says you absolutely, positively, cannot step forward on your right foot if you are already standing on it. If you really have a need to step right, and you are standing on your right foot, you have no alternative but to execute a *fudge step*. In this case, that would entail a quick weight shift from the right to the left foot.

The *fudge step* is only one of many preparatory moves used on the most important count in music, and. The and count is that little dead space between beats, as in "One and Two and Three and Four and". Or, as Lawrence Welk used to say, "and-a One and-a Two".

and is the workhorse of choreography. It doesn't take you anywhere, or add to your artistic interpretation. It does provide you with that magic transition that makes it possible to progress smoothly from one movement to the next.

In most instances, and is used at the end of a measure (one repetition of the underlying drum pattern). Most dance combinations naturally complete on the final beat of a measure. In that tiny pause between the end of one measure and the first beat of the next measure (and), the dancer must prepare for the next movement. This preparation can be a change in body placement or directional orientation, a shift in weight, an alteration in focus, repositioning of the arm, taking a breath, or any of an infinite variety of subtle preparations.

The instinctive use of and is one of the techniques that allows a dancer to take charge of their performance, and to appear poised, confident, and in control of the stage. The ability to use and means that you know where your feet are (and all of your other body parts). Knowing where you are, where you want to go next, and how to get there places you in charge of your dance, and audiences will recognize and respond to your authority.

The next time you find yourself in an inconvenient position, remember that and is around to help you out of it. In dance, as in life, you need all the help you can get!