

# Traditional Greek Dance Steps

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Since ancient times, dance has been essential to Greek culture. Dance was used as preparation for battle, and dance displays brought revenue for civic expenses. According to the Hellenic Information Society, Greeks have such a high regard for dance that they often call their eminent citizens "lead dancers." Plato believed that dance was divine and a gift from the gods.

Greek dance is characterized by the circle, dancing counter-clockwise. There are two types of movement: the springing/leaping and the shuffle/dragging. The latter is called "sirtos" and is the older form of the two, characterized by a slow-quick-quick rhythm. Traditionally, men and women usually danced separately, the women in a circle on the inside and the men on the outside. The eldest, most prominent man would lead the dance, followed by the men in descending order of eminence, then the women in the same order of seniority.

## Other Ancient Types

- Pyrrhic was a martial dance, part of a man's military education. Gymnopaedia was athletic, somewhat like modern gymnastics. Geranos included serpentine movements in imitation of Theseus hunting the Minotaur in the Labyrinth. Ierakio honored the goddess Hera and was danced by women. Epilinios was danced while treading grapes for wine, in honor of the god Dionysius. Emelia and Kordax were the dances of tragedy and comedy, respectively. Sikkinis was of satire. Imeneos was a marriage dance, danced by the bride, her mother and friends. Hormos was danced by young men and women together. The men demonstrated their martial skill, and the women responded to demonstrate their virtue. Iporchima was danced by boys and girls together, and included pantomime and singing.

## Purposes of Dance

- Greek dances are often used for rite of passage events, such as weddings. The sirtos can be a wedding dance or bride's dance. After being crowned and becoming officially married, the bride and groom circle a table three times, in an open circle, moving counter-clockwise as is common in Greek dance. The tradition is that this is the newly married couple's first act as husband and wife.

## Basic Steps

- Dancers form a line, with the lead dancer at the right end, and the dancers joined by grasping handkerchiefs. The lead dancer, or "pro-orchestrere," will often execute intricate dance steps while the other dancers follow along with more basic steps. The dancers' feet cross each other forward and back, in a circle facing inward, moving to the right.

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