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Dancers and Athletes: Similar and Different

Dance and Athletics are two things you will often see grouped together. While Dance is considered a sport sometimes, it is a bit of a stretch to call it so as they have many similarities but just as many differences. In this essay I'll be comparing the two, giving a few differences as well as similarities, and explaining how each benefits the other.

Similarities between Dance and Athletics encompass a number of things ranging from the physical to the economical side of each. Starting with the physical similarities of Dance and Athletics, you need to be fit to do either properly, whether on a professional or amateur level. Cardiovascular and cardiorespiratory endurance is a must for both as then you are able to continue for a longer period of time without tiring. For both Dance and Athletics, you need to train to become better – as you do for lots of other things – but training for Dance and Athletics is different as it is mostly physical training - rendering it exercise as well as for recreation or as an occupation. Although the actual training of the two will differ from each other for the most part, coordination, balance and agility are the most important skills to develop and hone in both. Coordination is to move several body parts at once and in Dance that is important when not doing isolation, and in athletics, that is important for sports like badminton or swimming. Balance helps with moving with speed in general but it helps particularly in sports like Gymnastics and Track and Field – especially for Shot-Put and Javelin - and in Dance, it helps when you are landing from an airborne move, such as leaping or jumping, or when you shift your weight onto different points of your body. Lastly, agility is to change direction at speed and that helps in invasion sports such as basketball, football or netball as you never know where the ball is going to go, and as for Dance, it helps as the speed of the movements performed in a routine may change and the routine itself may cover lots of space.

Coaches and teachers are always found in Dance and Athletics as a person's skills in both cannot be developed by reading an instruction book; you need to see or hear it explained in order to really master something. Dance and Athletics both involve the body and so it takes time and coaching to get certain skills to certain levels. Also, there are many competitions in Dance and Athletics and a similarity is that there is usually an audience. But there are differences in how the competitions work for each, which I will explain later on. Competitions, or just practicing in general, can involve either just you or more people. It is always possible to dance alone and, excluding team – only sports, you can play sports alone too, such as in sports like Tennis, Badminton or Swimming. Injuries are also very likely in

Dance and Athletics as you may stretch wrong or something may have happened during gameplay or rehearsal.

To wrap up the similarities between Dance and Athletics, I would like to mention the economic side to it; you can make a living from both. Athletes, if they are successful, can earn a good deal of money, as with Dancers. In Dance though, there are shows such as “So You Think You Can Dance” or “Dancing with the Stars” where you can either win and earn money or work there. Unfortunately, a lot of dancers and athletes don’t make it to this level as they may not be good enough.

As you have just read, there are many similarities between Dance and Athletics but, as you will now read, for every similarity there is a difference. In Athletics, training focuses more on endurance as you will need to be able to play for very long usually, but in Dance, it may focus more on skills such as balance and coordination. Also, you generally move with more grace and style in Dance than you would in Athletics as performance is really what Dance is about, not competition. Competitions themselves are very different, as I mentioned in previous paragraphs, as in Dance you will usually perform one at a time but in Athletics, competitions are usually timed and are head to head. Also, when speaking of Athletics in general, they are usually performed on fields or courts – and most sports include objects like balls, bats, batons...etc. – whereas Dance is usually performed on a stage of some sort and while it can include props, they are not necessary in Dance. These two things, location and objects, are huge differences in Dance and Athletics.

There are countless styles and forms of Dance and you can mix them up or try and create your own as you wish, but with Athletics, you can’t do that; Athletics has fixed rules and goals that athletes work toward. Lastly, Dance is usually performed to music whereas Athletics usually is not.

Training in Dance can help in Athletics as you would primarily improve your flexibility, coordination and grace. Flexibility helps a lot as you would be able to reach farther, twist and turn more easily and your muscles would be less tight and more fluid. Flexibility helps to prevent injuries as if, for example, you had to lunge out for the ball in basketball and you injure your leg because you weren’t flexible. Coordination is very important in sports that require you to be moving more than one part of your body at all times, which most sports do. Lastly grace would help simply with performance, if you were particularly graceful then you would be nicer to watch compared to someone big and lumbering.

Training in Athletics can help Dancers as they would primarily be focusing on endurance. Athletics usually has fixed time or needs to be done quickly or repeatedly and so you need to be able to either exert tremendous effort in a short amount of time repeatedly or keep up a certain level of effort for a length of time. Dances are never as long as a football game would be for example and probably never will be, but a Dance showcase or

performance could be. So to keep dancing in a show, you would need to have cardiovascular and cardiorespiratory endurance so that you can work your muscles and constantly breathe to feed your blood with oxygen to keep from passing out.

In conclusion, while Dance and Athletics are two very similar activities that both involve movement of the body and exercise, they have enough differences to be considered separate things. Through the examples of similarities of how Dance and Athletics – and Dancers and Athletes – are similar and different, I hope I have given you a clearer understanding of the two.