



## **Conditioning CAN Be Fun**

*By: Jenny Eustice*

*Jenny is the coach of the University of Iowa Dance Team. She has also been the ESPN Commentator for the UDA National Dance Team Championship. Jenny is a veteran member of the Universal Dance Association Staff.*

Conditioning is an important aspect of training for any athlete, including dancers. Whether you are competing, performing, or just practicing, conditioning is important at every level to ensure that your body is prepared to DANCE.

The fact is most dancers dread conditioning. But, with the right tools and exercises, you won't even feel like you are working out! Conditioning **CAN** be fun. Here are a few tips and tricks to incorporate conditioning into your practices in an entertaining way:

1. **Use team-building style conditioning whenever possible!** A great example of this is the Rabbit Run. You can do this in a large gym, or outside if it's a nice day. Instruct your team to jog in a single file line. The person jogging in the back needs to sprint to the front while everyone is jogging. You can start with cycling through the team once, and build from there. When teammates encourage each other through the sprint sequence, you will push yourself more than if you were jogging on your own!
2. **Use incentives as you condition.** Try breaking your team up into smaller groups of 4. Whether you are running sprints or stairs, make it into a relay. Whichever team wins get to rest for a set!
3. **Incorporate games into conditioning.** It is amazing how hard you work when you don't realize you are working out! Freeze tag is a fun way to workout without thinking about the "work" portion. Split your team into two teams, one team smaller than the other. This team is "IT". If you are tagged by the team that is "IT", you have to freeze, and you can only move if your teammate jumps over you or tags you. You can play this for hours without realizing how many sprints you have actually done.
4. **Circle Circuits.** Sometimes it is necessary to do harder conditioning workouts. To motivate your athletes, have them spread out in a circle. Do short bursts of activity. For example: 30 seconds of mountain climbers, 30 seconds of tuck jumps, 30 seconds of burpees and finish with 10 toe touches as a team. Repeat this circuit 2-4 times. By facing each other in the circle, your dancers will be motivated by each other!

By using these tools, at the end of your season, your dancers should be looking forward to conditioning! And if you are ever in doubt of how to make conditioning fun, throw on some fun music! Nobody can touch that!