

FIGHTING FIT

New Year's resolutions hanging over your head? Fear not – these dance classes make fitness fun, says **Marianka Swain**

It's the annual January promise: healthy diet, more sleep and, of course, a new fitness regime. If dragging yourself to the gym is a chore, and you've got no desire to join the running brigade, try dancing instead.

Concentrating on learning a skill, and enjoying putting it together with music, means you're thinking less about how much your thighs are burning. Plus there are now so many different classes to choose from, you'll easily find something that suits you – and which targets the areas you need to work on physically.

Here are some of our top picks for fun and unusual dance fitness.

STRICTLY STYLE

Natalie White, Ian Waite and Mark Foster's programme FitSteps teaches the fundamentals of ballroom and Latin, but without the need for a partner. Faster dances like jive and samba raise heart rate, while you

strengthen muscle tone in the more controlled, slow dances such as the waltz. You can also feel smug next time someone on *Strictly* gets criticised for their comparatively weak core or floppy armography...

Classes nationwide
www.fitsteps.co.uk



STRIKE A POSE

Voguing master Benjamin Milan has worked with everyone from Kylie Minogue and FKA Twigs to Vivienne Westwood and Madonna herself. His

classes – open to all, but requiring a certain confidence – introduce key movements like hand performance, runway, floor performance, dips and spins, which can then be incorporated into freestyle when you're ready. It's a fierce, full-body workout, literally down to your fingertips. Classes are held at Pineapple Dance Studios and Studio 68 London
benjaminmilan.com

IN FULL SWING

Inspired by the irresistible energy of

Above left: Benjamin Milan. Above right: SwingTrain. Below left: Fitsteps with Natalie Lowe, Ian Waite and Mark Wright. Below right: Aerolatino



Charleston, swing, gospel, electro swing and hot jazz, SwingTrain promises music so infectious you won't even realise you're burning calories. A fitness spin-off of Swing Patrol, it's open to all levels: the choreography features fun, follow-along moves. The variety of fast and slow tracks means it's essentially dance interval training, and helps with cardio, balance and agility. Classes are held around England
swingtrain.com

HIGH TIME

Founded by Highland Dance champion Gillian Urquhart, Highland Hustle combines traditional ceilidh steps with funky music, aimed at celebrating authentic style while also improving stamina and coordination. Classes range from beginner to advanced, so you can find the right level for you, and there are exercises specifically for toning – plus home workouts. There's also Highland Tots: classes for children aged 2 to 4, and their parents. Classes in selected locations nationwide
highlandhustle.com

LATIN

Aerolatino creates continuous aerobic routines from a range of Latin dances, including salsa, merengue, bachatango, reggaeton, lambada and cumbia – all



set to lively music. It's more of a low-impact workout, so great for beginners or those getting back into fitness, and its build-up of choreography helps with memory improvement, cardio and core strength. Plus it's one of those uplifting styles that makes you keen to keep practising at home.

Classes across London and the South-East
aerolatino.co.uk

BEAT IT

At Your Beat prizes individualism: finding your own beat in a non-intimidating dance environment. Think a cool, millennial version of aerobics. Rather than complex choreography, their FitBEAT class uses a series of dance sequences, concentrating on isolated muscle groups and using high-intensity interval training. It's calorie-burning, so great for weight loss, and builds up general stamina and fitness – along with an endorphin rush. Classes are held at four London locations
atyourbeat.com

SHOW TIME

Get in touch with your inner showgirl via Burlercise – yes, that's burlesque meets exercise. The medium-to high-intensity class is designed for an all-over body workout, with aerobic cardio incorporating showgirl dance moves, and then – rather inspired – resistance training using specially weighted feather boas. Music is electro swing, showgirl soundtracks and a few pop divas, so it's part fitness training, part refining your sass. Classes held nationwide
burlercise.co.uk

UPTOWN FUNK

JP Omari's musical passions led to



Above: JP Omari leading a FunkFit class. Below left: Burlercise. Bottom right: Balates.

the creation of FunkFit – a fitness class where you move and groove to Motown, 1970s/1980s funk and soul, and disco classics. It's well suited to beginners, as there's no choreography to learn; you just follow along. It's also a good way to build up stamina, strength and coordination, while dancing – and perhaps even crooning – to some retro beats. Classes held in Brighton and Hove
funkfituk.co.uk

EASTERN PROMISE

Bollyfitness combines artistic elements of Bollywood choreography with classical (Bharata Natyam) and Bhangra styles, plus of course fitness.

It's designed to increase your heart rate – and if you've ever seen it performed, you'll know this high-energy dance requires serious stamina – plus specific, detailed toning movements exercise all the core muscle groups of the body. Classes include dance routines, floor workouts, and even props...

Classes held at selected venues nationwide
bollyfituk.co.uk

RAISING THE BARRE

Proof, if any were needed, that ballet dancers are hardcore, Balates combines barre work with Pilates – so building

core flexibility, muscle strength, balance, and endurance in your legs, abs, arms, hips and back. It can be tailored to different skill levels, but be prepared for a serious workout: from circuits targeting different areas to floorwork on mats and finally kicks and stretches at the barre. Classes are held at Gymbox, London
gymbox.com/classes/balates

HAVE IT ALL

Darcey Bussell's DDMIX experiments with multiple dance styles: you can mix and match 150 second-long aerobic workouts in everything from hand jive and Russian to Japanese, Irish and flamenco. There are online classes too, so either squeeze quick workouts into a busy schedule or build up your endurance. They're accessible, follow-along routines, and you can target different areas of the body. Classes are held nationwide
diversedancemix.com

