

## Detailed course plan

### Session 1:

Outlook and attitude:

What is your aim in teaching?

Aims of teaching	
focus is on me and how others see me	focus is on the student and their learning process
<p>Status prestige popularity respect sex appeal authority entertaining yourself</p> <p><i>thus less attention for the quality of the learning experience for the student.</i></p> <p>Some indications of the above aims, identified in the session:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* attention seeking, showing off</li> <li>* putting students down, or being overly critical</li> <li>* lecturing</li> <li>* habitually seeking assurance or expressing self-doubt (e.g. “I’m probably not explaining this clearly, sorry” or “There’s probably a much better way of doing this” (takes focus away from student’s learning, invites their doubt in you, or leads to them blaming themselves for not understanding)</li> <li>* unwillingness to admit that they don’t have the answer to something, or that they might be mistaken.</li> <li>* frustration with students for not getting it</li> <li>* apathy about students learning</li> </ul>	<p>Serving others sharing the joy of knowledge helping other find skill and confidence helping others access and explore their creativity helping student to not care about making mistakes (because they’re great aids of learning) helping others have fun</p> <p><i>thus more attention on what works well or less well for getting good learning results - helping you become a better teacher and learn more.</i></p> <p>Some indications of the above aims, identified in the session:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* observing student comprehension of guidance.</li> <li>* not showing frustration</li> <li>* using language accessible to students</li> <li>* providing balance of encouragement and points for improvement.</li> <li>* respecting student’s ability when dancing with them</li> <li>* exercising tact and sensitivity when students get frustrated with themselves or each other.</li> <li>* willingness to say 'I don't know' (and where appropriate 'let's do an experiment to find out').</li> <li>* genuine care and attention for student’s learning, but without taking the student’s dancing abilities as a personal reflection on them.</li> </ul>

**By focusing on the student and the quality of their learning experience with you, much more than your status as a teacher, you put yourself in the best position to do a great job.**

In practice, perhaps no-one is going to be 100% focused in the right columns all the time, but if that is our aim, we’ll tend to do the best job of teaching that we can.

### Students teaching other students

Teach what you have confidence in → according to how you have been taught → *until* you’ve refined and tested other ideas that work better.

### **Conflict resolution and constructive critique.**

This will be the subject of a later session, but since it came up in discussions a brief consideration is given here.

*Two students are working together and one says to the other:*

“You’re doing it wrong”

The Tango Lingua approach is to celebrate mistakes, because without them learning would not be possible. Instead of thinking in terms of ‘fault’, treat the learning process as an experiment, note the outcome and try something different. Enjoy the process of refining what you’re doing.

A possible response to the students above, addressed to them, or the group as a whole, could be along the lines of:

“With tango you will both learn the most and have the most fun if you focus on working as a team and just treating things not going to plan as an opportunity for you *both* to learn, rather than focusing on who was right or wrong. Also your partner is *much* more able to do a good job of leading or following you, if they feel relaxed and happy in an embrace with you - for which a mutual attitude of respect and teamwork tends to help.”

**For offering individual constructive input to students, that encourages their focus on learning, rather than on having made a mistake, the following are some example approaches:**

“See what it feels like to do it this way ...”

“To make it even better try ...”

“Do you prefer how it feels when you do ...?”

“What difference does it make when you do ...?”

“Try it more like ...”

“Compare these two ways of doing it ...”

### **\* What if you’re asked about technique you’re not sure about?**

Be honest, say ‘I don’t know.’ or ‘I’m not sure, but perhaps it works like ...’ if you have some idea. Make a note of questions you have the answer for, and try to find out so you can answer them next time.

\* Some students may take the attitude ‘you’re just a student like me, why should I listen to you?’ or ‘I will eat my shoes before I let you tell me how to dance’.

Remember you’re there to offer your understanding, according to what you’ve been taught. If students seem to have an issue with it, if you approach the situation in a humble and honest way, explaining ‘this is what I’ve been shown by my teacher, who has asked me to share that understanding with you, but it’s up to you if you want to listen or not’, then other students are more likely to pay attention, compared to if you just tried to take up a position of authority.

In practice, a class that is organized with teaching assistants, will be clearly presented as such, so all the students know what to expect at the beginning of the class. E.g. “I will be asking some of my more experienced students to assist in teaching you during the class, where they will share the same techniques that I have taught them. This is to make sure everyone gets the most input from experienced dancers possible, with consistent technique, and thus the best learning experience.”

## The same knowledge presented in different ways

While the core technique you'll be practising and sharing will hopefully be the same, people often have different ways of understanding the same thing, and thus different explanations, analogies, ways of demonstrating or use of tactile input will work for different students. So you will use your intelligence to select different approaches as called for.

**Discussion point:** Relating to the above, students have different rates of learning. What attitudes might help you avoid getting frustrated, or becoming impatient with them? What would the affects of getting impatient with them be?

Some comments from the session about the likely affects on students were:

- They'll feel frustrated, upset, or angry with themselves.
- They wouldn't enjoy the lesson.
- They wouldn't come back.

In conversation attitudes to avoid frustration were located on the green column (focus on student and their learning process), while it was agreed a self-focus of the teacher more easily leads to frustration, because a student 'not getting it' becomes a personal reflection of the teacher, in the teacher's mind.

The question was raised 'Are there some people who are just never going to get it?'

If the focus is solely on technique, there will be some people who really struggle with it despite different approaches at helping them learn. In these cases it's worth remembering there are various reasons why a person would do tango, including all the social elements. There are also different levels of technical understanding and ability, and for some a very basic level allows them to get the satisfaction from tango that they want - which is OK. If though the student remains frustrated with themselves, talking with them about their expectations, what they're prepared to put in to get there, along with the joy to be had from simply walking in an embrace, may help.

### Role-play:

Teacher teaches for a few minutes, emphasizing certain attitudes or outlooks from the red (self-focus) column, participants offer critique identifying the attitude.

Participants do the same, teach something for a couple of minutes, emphasizing a certain attitude from the 'me focus column'. Other participants act as students and play certain roles, e.g. 'I don't understand', 'My other teacher didn't do it like that', 'I'm bored with this'.

Then repeat the same exercise, trying to imbibe the 'student learning focus column'. Other participants offer their feedback.

### Water game

What's the idea behind it?

When you move through water you feel the connection/contact of the water with your body at all times, in all positions. The connection is constant and consistent. When you dance with that quality of connection the possibilities for playful musical expression are truly infinite, and exploring them becomes natural and exciting. Without that consistent quality of connection, developing your tango technique and expanding your vocabulary becomes comparatively like stumbling around in the dark. Thus the water game is a key tool in the Tango Lingua approach to tango.

The basic level of the water game uses steady, smooth movement without much focus on momentum.

**Activity:** Go through the basic level water game.

Other participants go through aspects of the water game. E.g. side steps together, forward steps for follower, teaching the rest of the group and identifying common misunderstandings from beginner students which the others act out.