



The Common Ground Manual:

Practical Guide

**Welcome to
the Common
Ground Manual:
Practical Guide**

About

What Is It?

The Common Ground Manual practical guide offers lots of dance ideas and explorative dance tasks, shared by experienced inclusive dance practitioners, suitable for inclusive groups. The ideas shared in this resource may not be suitable for all groups and everyone, as Tim Casson reminds us 'It's not inclusion by numbers it's how we meet people in the room. That will shift and change with the same group in any given day.'

The document offers ideas and tasks to get you started on a creative activity, as means to create dance movement. It can be a starting point for creating a piece of work, or simply a useful warm up tool.

'Often when we run training sessions people really want the answers - "how do we do this?" I can't give you those answers. It's not inclusion by numbers it's how we meet people in the room. That will shift and change with the same group in any given day. There is best practice, and we can find ways of trying to incorporate it into what we do. There is no diagram, no human has one.' - Tim Casson, Candoco

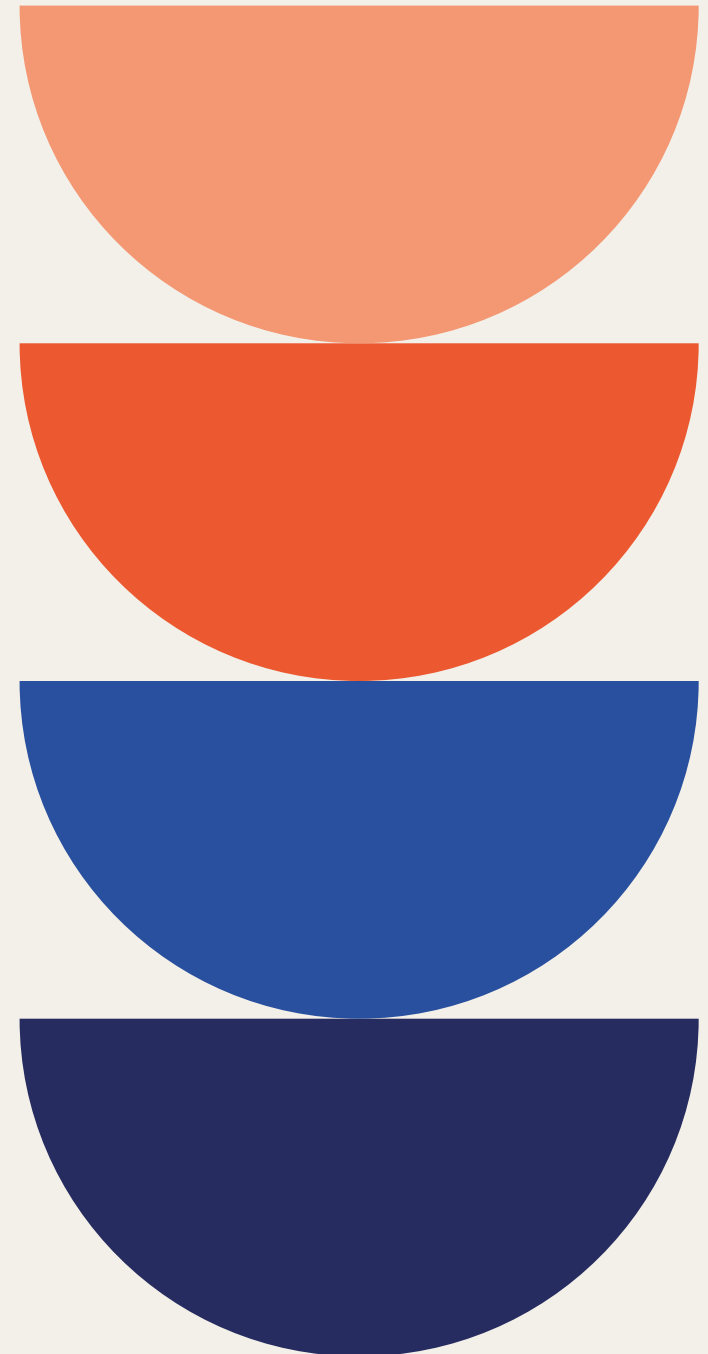


The following information and activities have been inspired by training delivered by professional inclusive dance companies and freelance practitioners. The content has been collated by Kirsty Hillyer and edited by Rachel Liggitt. Contributors include.

- Candoco Dance Company
- DanceSyndrome
- Siobhan Hayes
- Louise Katerega
- Stephanie Sandy

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PRACTICAL GUIDANCE



Setting Up Good Relationships

Create a buddy system

Pairing disabled and non-disabled participants can be a great way to share and learn from each other. Buddying up encourages understanding of one another's experiences, both physically and emotionally.

"Disabled people know what they can do best, so by sharing this, the non-disabled buddy learns so much". – Steph Sandy, Dance Artist

Awareness of your relationship in space

Depending on an individual's disability, consider relationship in space to one another. When working with a wheelchair user, meeting the person on a similar level creates equity and allows for dual presenting and co-working for example. Be aware of how your stance can impact on interactions.

Identifying common ground to divide

There is no harm in separating dancers for rehearsals or specific sections, and then coming together for energy transfer. Consider the benefits of working separately for individuals and the group and how it can support challenges that may arise.

Listen to participating dancers

Listen to the group talking about their own passions and motivation to be there. Split the group up based on emerging themes, connecting with others whose contributions align with your own interests can be rewarding and beneficial.

Awareness and Consideration of Barriers

As facilitators we need to take a step back to understand, remember the barriers that have been overcome to get to the point of attending as well as participating. Consider the systems of care that exist to enable participation, these are both a positive and a challenge.

Ask participants to collectively draw how they see the world, outside of the studio, and what barriers are there for everyone.



Consider what barriers a building might present

Poor signage, unwelcoming staff, no accessible toilet for example.

Consider participants travel experience to be able to attend

Consider the journey of your participants from leaving home to get there, entering the venue and leaving the space to travel home.

Being inclusive

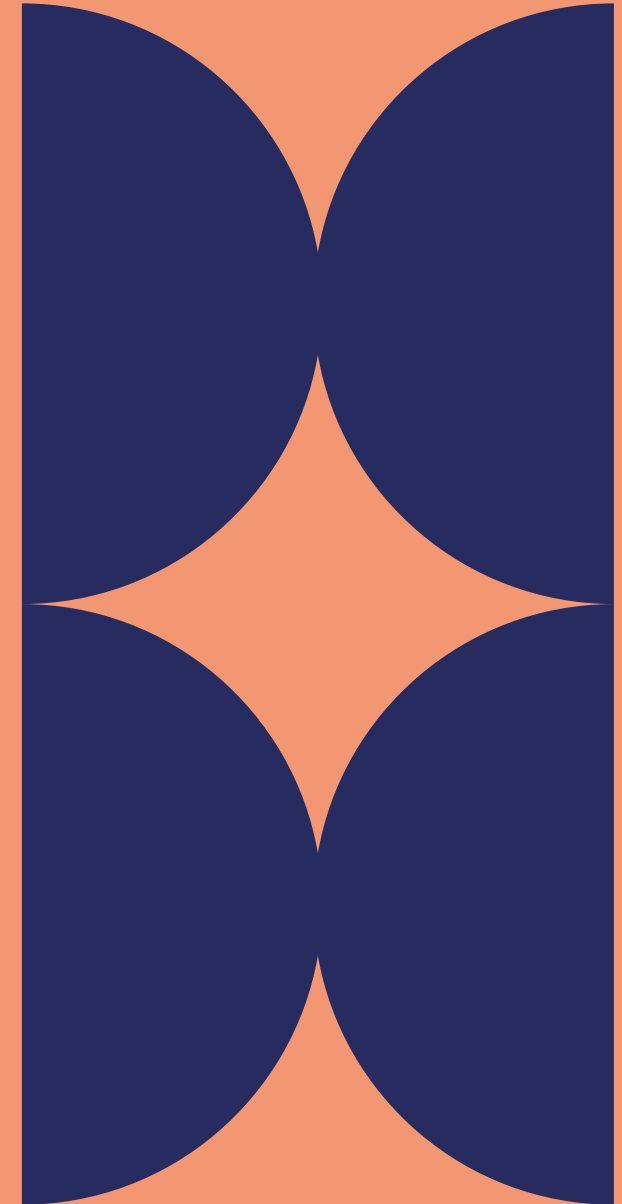
To be inclusive you aren't adapting your activity to meet the needs of a specific dancer you are adapting your activity so that it enables everyone to participate.

Check in with individual dancers

If someone isn't putting in the energy check in with them about what is impacting those energy levels as part of that holistic consideration to the barriers to participation. Identify if it's laziness, emotional barriers to engaging, physical tiredness for health reasons and how you can both enable successful and committed participation.

Parents and carers

Parents and carers know the person they are supporting well, which means sometimes they can be a barrier to challenging them and enabling growth. They have the best of intentions; they are there to care and they protect. Identify ways to enable the parent/carers to grow and develop in their role as well.



Language

How do you use or define the word “translate” in your work?

‘Translate’ suggests there is a ‘correct’ way and you are finding alternatives. Try using the phrase ‘transfer’ as it is a transfer of energy & skills across different bodies.

When working with any group have a consensus of what different words mean. Not everyone knows the word diagonal, can you use visual cues to direct movement?





PRACTICAL IDEAS & TASKS

Warm Up

This activity highlights the importance of being conscious of your language choice. As you read through this warm-up consider how the language may differ from your own warm up activities.

Provide the following instructions at a suitable pacing, ask the group to:

Find a space
Whatever works for you
Sitting, standing, lying

Check in with yourself – how are you doing today?

What parts aren't ready to move and what parts are?

Does anything ache? Do we need to pay attention to certain areas?

Task

To find folds in your body.
Folds that feel good.

Folds that your body needs.

If we fold, we unfold, play with this idea.

Base it on what feels good and what our body needs or wants right now.

Get into continuous moving, finding our own rhythm.

Play with different body parts, play with different directions, gently remind ourselves that we are a 3D being.

Fold on different levels.

Turn the energy dial up more.

Explore your pace or how many movements are happening at the same time.

You can drop a movement at any point.

Change focus so we aren't just dancing for ourselves and maybe we have a moment of being with another person.

You might see something that somebody does and might want to copy it.



Adding Music to the Process

Now that everyone is moving, add music to the process

Do you take on somebody else's movements?

Are there any parts of your body you have forgotten about?

Play with speed, move and expel some energy.

Fold, unfold, circle.

Any combination, different parts talking to each other, what different combinations can you create?

What's the smallest body part you can circle?

What's the largest body part you can fold?

Making it smaller, and smaller, and smaller until you come to a stop

This is a fact-finding warm up. It enables you as a leader to understand the range of movements someone has in that session, and the confidence of people's movements. Observe and consider people's physical responses to your prompts to build a library of people's movements.

Change focus so we aren't just dancing for ourselves and maybe we have a moment of being with another person.

You might see something that somebody does and might want to copy it.

Movement Exercise

Take in turns to lead movement that the group follow and repeat. Instinct will be to mimic the movement within your own ability and movement style. Try to mimic the person leading exactly, reflecting the shape, energy and dynamics. You need to feel how it feels for the lead.

By doing this you are better able to understand the physicality and range of other people's movements.

Activity Task 1

This activity and its extension element highlights the importance of how we teach and share our choreography with others.

5-minute exploration - invite the group to explore and create movements that embody each of these words in turn:

DROP

SWING

FOLD AND UNFOLD

SYMMETRY AND ASYMMETRY

After each work exploration ask them to choose their favourite for each and connect them into a small piece of choreography.

There is no pressure for it to be a finished piece, just whatever you create and being inspired by how you can connect each movement. Refine the connections and transitions of each phase before giving it an ending.

Activity Task 2

- Pairs

This activity tests your communication skills and how you set and teach choreography to different groups of people.

Mission 1: Teach your movement from activity 1 to a friend but you're not allowed to use any words at all, teach the movements by moving only and no words.

How did this feel?

Isn't it interesting how we make assumptions that people without disabilities can recreate our movements when the reality is that this isn't necessarily true.

Remember that you design your moves for you and when someone else does it they change it and interpret it for their own movement capabilities.

Mission 2: Teach your movement from activity 1 without moving, verbal language only.

How do the two experiences differ?

Usually, the physical and nonverbal communication is more technique driven inviting accurate replication.

The verbal communication is more directional, feeling and sound driven. It consists of providing metaphors and visual images. It allows permission for more freedom and interpretation.

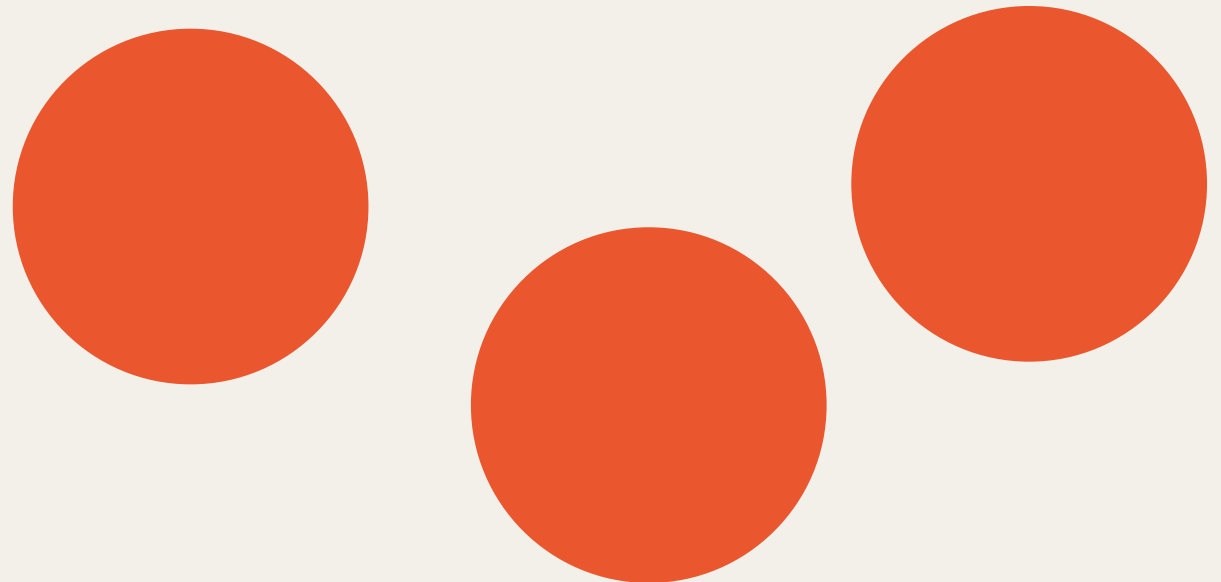
Activity Task 3

- Start & Stop

The dancers move around the space and stop when someone else does. There was no assigned leader.

The dancers then move around the space with a leader who stopped and started and they have to react to that one person.

Reflect – How does the process differ? What do you prefer?



Activity Task 4

- Leaders x3

Movements

The leader and dancers move around the space freely.
The leader stops and performs three movements.
These are:

**Turn,
Throw,
Twist**

**Stand,
Walk,
Sit**

How would you change the words in the second cluster to be more inclusive?

Activity Task 5

- Flocking

Each dancer is given a number from 1-4.

They move around the space.

When their number is called, they move to the front and start a pre-determine exercise/phrase.

As each number is called the dancer follows what is being done by the dancer who was called first.

“As a choreographer I think it gives the audience a structure, it gives the audience an idea that they know what the troop is doing”

– Siobhan Hayes



Activity Task 6

- Working with a Leader

Ledges

A dancer makes a shape, and a second dancer connects to them with touch on a point of their body e.g., a finger on their shoulder.

Together it creates a form quickly and is good for seeing how we can connect.

Witness the Shape

A dancer makes a shape, and a second dancer uses that shape to inform theirs.

Conductor

Dancers' select a body part, and the leader uses their finger to point around. Dancers' move the selected body part but following the pointing action.

Choose one of these ideas and see how you can develop it in groups.
Time limit 2 minutes

The purpose of this activity is to identify how leaders emerge in the groups to create quick work that wouldn't be perfect.

Activity Task 7

- Framing Talent

**“There is no reason not to frame talent just because you are working with a diverse group. It’s not about everyone doing the same thing”
- Siobhan Hayes**

- One dancer is in the middle moving around, the rest of group is looking away from dancer.
- This is then repeated but with the ensemble looking at the soloist.

“What did you feel about this?”

- One dancer moves around others that are static.
- The ensemble moves around the dancer who is static, the ensemble move together.

“It switches my concentration; I can concentrate on the soloist after I know that the ensemble will not change.”

Creating and exploring connections between dancers helps to build the rhythms and movements for a performance based upon the dynamics of the group. Using different activities to explore these relationships helps you to identify how you can tell a story and who the right people are to convey the energy, and intent of the piece.

3

**TAKE AWAY
THOUGHTS**

When devising choreography identify what you are seeking:

- Energy or quality of movement
- Intention or specificity

Inclusive dance practice doesn't mean you should discount specificity if that level of detail is important for what you're making. It's important to be clear about your measures of quality.

In an inclusive setting we don't have to shy away from certain material. It all depends on what you want to do with it and the parameters you put in place.

How can you actively break down barriers in your own sessions?

- Ask individuals what works for them.
- Open up & be honest.
- Have a solid structure of a session that you repeat.
- Consider what you are projecting and how that will be received – you may be the barrier...
- Ask for feedback and act upon it.
- Use different creative methods for feedback – emojis, dolls, pointing, movements.

Inclusive dance session approach example:

- Sessions last 45 minutes to 1 hour
- They are co-delivered with a participant co-leader.
- Dance artists have an hour to plan a session with their co-leader and they check in before the session.
- The structure of the session includes three areas of travelling, connections exercises, a creative element, cool down, a get together and close of the session and a final check in that everyone is okay & happy.



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