

Belly Dance FAQ for Beginners:

What is Belly Dance?

Belly Dance is a term for a beautiful feminine dance form from the Middle East. Its movements are thousands of years old and are based on traditional folk dances. Belly Dance differs from Western dance forms in the use of the body by emphasizing the torso and using isolations to express the rhythmic and emotional qualities of Arabic music. Traditionally, it is an improvised solo dance — a dancer's personal interpretation of the music.

Is it a good workout?

Yes! The dance is a great total body workout that builds strength, is easy on joints, and increases your flexibility. Belly Dance is also a great emotional release because it is fun and creative!

What if I am not a dancer?

Beginner classes are geared for non-dancers. You will learn basic movements and then build upon them.

What if I am a dancer, do I need to take beginners?

Yes. You may progress more quickly than a non-dancer, but you need to learn the basics, as they are the building blocks for more advanced technique. Again, Belly Dance uses the body in very different ways from other dance forms. You will also need to learn how to play the finger cymbals.

Am I too old to learn?

Never! Women of all ages are welcome!

When can I start?

I recommend new students start at the beginning of a session because the class is cumulative. I want you to have fun and not get frustrated by not understanding the movements and isolations that have been taught and are being built upon. In addition, the students are learning to play new finger cymbal patterns weekly.

What if I missed the first few weeks but want to start now?

If you really can't wait for the next session, then I suggest a private lesson or two to bring you up to speed with the class.

Will there be other women my size in the class?

Yes, there will be women of ALL sizes in the classes. The beauty of this dance form is that it makes you feel wonderful in *your* own body, no matter its size or shape.

I have an injury; can I still take the class?

This depends on the type of injury and your doctor's advice. Speak with me about past injuries or body weaknesses so that I can give you alternative exercises or movements if necessary. Mostly you need to learn the difference between good and bad pain so that you don't aggravate the condition. Some conditions can actually be improved through proper exercise. Ex: Lower back problems may be lessened by strengthening your abdominals. Learn to listen to and respect your body.

What do I wear?

Wear workout or dance wear, something comfortable to move in that you don't mind sweating into!

Do I need shoes?

We dance barefoot, so you don't need special footwear. Some students do wear dance slippers or sandals, but that is a personal choice.

Do I need a hip scarf?

You are welcome to bring or purchase a hip scarf to accentuate the movements, but it isn't necessary. I do have some hip scarves available for purchase should you develop a craving we call "bead lust," the strong desire for something sparkly!

Do I need finger cymbals?

I do provide use of *zills* for the beginner classes. I also sell them and encourage you to purchase your own so that you can practice on your own.

Do I have to wear a costume for class?

No. This is a good workout — it would be too hard on the fine fabrics of a costume.

What is a class like?

The classes start with warm-up and conditioning exercises to help you prepare for the movements you will learn. Next is instruction in dance movements mixed with finger cymbal instruction. The class closes with stretching and cool-down exercises. All of this is done to an array of fun Arabic musical selections.