

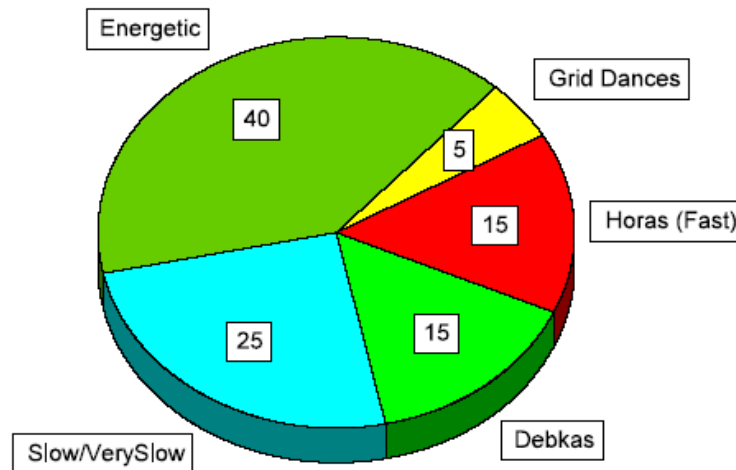
Is That Dance Israeli?

What makes Israeli dances distinct from dances done in other countries and by other cultures?

1. Israeli dances involve more arm movements, claps, slaps, etc. than most other international dance forms. Often these are added by the dancers themselves after presentation by the choreographer. With time and the “folk process,” some such flourishes become formalized and are taught with the additions.
2. Israeli dances incorporate more turns than most other dance forms. Many dances have so many turns that dancers don’t even bother to hold hands during the dance.
3. Israeli dances incorporate movements from other dance forms. Israeli dancers are generally (there are exceptions) not “purists” who toe an ideological line when it comes to dancing. They are acquisitive and copy freely from dances of other cultures. Years ago, the kicks and stamps and bounces of Turkish and Druz dances were mimicked. More recently, Israeli dances show influences from lambada, salsa, swing, and jazz.
4. Israeli dances frequently involve entire sections of the dance facing away from the center of the circle. For example, Part A might be 16 counts, at the end of which there is a half-turn to face out and the sequence of 16 counts is repeated facing out and turning at the end to face back in. This is rare in any other dance form.
5. Israeli dances each have their own piece of music. Zemer Atik and Mayim and Tzadik Katamar is each always done to the same specific melody. In contrast, a pajdusko can be done to any tune that has that particular rhythm pattern, and a hambo can be done to any hambo music.
6. Israeli dances are usually done to music that is either 4/4 or 3/4 rhythm.
7. Israeli dances are “universal”. Dance notations for Israeli dances will not have a comment pointing out that a particular dance is done in this or that region or village, or is seen primarily at weddings or certain festivals. Israeli dances are intended to be universal so that any dance can be done the same throughout Israel and throughout the world, wherever Israeli dances are done. Videos and written dance notations discourage significant variations. If you attend an evening of Israeli dancing, you’ll do the same dances to the same music. An Israeli dance is done the same in Haifa, Tel Aviv, Jerusalem, Paris, London, New York, Chicago, Miami, San Francisco, Mexico City, Hong Kong, or Tokyo. While some dances might not be done in all locations because dancers, dance teachers, and dance groups have their favorite styles, music, singers and dances, except for slight regional variations (a clap here, and extra turn there), if a dance is done at all, it is done the same way everywhere.

Presented by Loui Tucker

Types of Israeli Non-Partner Dances



Slow/Very Slow 25%

Examples: Ma Navu, Erev Ba, At V'Ani, Kvar Acharey Hatzof

Walking dances, expressive arm movements, graceful turns. You won't break a sweat doing 15 minutes of these. Usually music has lyrics. Includes some waltz rhythm. European-roots. Israelis love to sing along!

"Energetic" 40%

Examples: Tzadik Katamar, Sulam Ya'akov, Tfilla, Hora

A fast walk, with occasional triplets, skipping, leaping. You'll be warm, maybe slightly sweaty after 15 minutes of these. Mostly music with lyrics. Rarely waltz rhythm. European roots, but more recently music has lyrics in something other than Hebrew.

Horas (Fast) 15%

Examples: Mayim, Haroa Haktana

Running, leaping, skipping. Three in a row and you'll be sweating. Frequently no lyrics; either the music is an instrumental version of a song with words, or it is only music. You need your breath for dancing, not singing!

Debkas 15%

Examples: Shoofni, Tarbouka, Eshebo, Debka Oud,

Never very slow, rarely very fast, mostly "energetic." Frequently instrumentals or the lyrics are in Arabic or something other than Hebrew. Instrumentation is usually Middle-Eastern, particularly drums and flute.

Grid (Line) Dances 5%

Examples: Sapri Tama, Hameantezet, Shalom Al Israel

Especially popular with the younger crowd. The music is a subset of just about all the others, except the Slow/Very Slow. Trend in the last five years is for these dances to be choreographed to American pop tunes (Michael Jackson, Madonna) or Latin club dances, step-sisters of the Macarena.

Glossary of Israeli Steps

- R Cherkassiya: Step forward on R; step in place on L; step backward on R; step in place on L (4 steps on 4 even cts).
- L Cherkassiya: Step forward on L; step in place on R; step backward on L; step in place on R (4 steps on 4 even cts).
- Double Cherkassiya: Step on R to R; step on L crossing in front of R; step back in place on R; step on L to L; step on R crossing in front of L; step back in place on L (6 steps on 6 even cts). This step can also begin with the crossing step instead of the step to the side.
- Yemenite Step: Step on R foot slightly to R bending knee; step on L slightly backward with straight leg; step on R crossing in front of L bending knee; hold on ct 4. (three steps on four cts). Footwork can be reversed.
- Back Yemenite Step: Step backward on R foot bending knee slightly; step on L next to R, straightening both legs; step forward on R (into original position); hold on ct 4 (three steps on four cts). Footwork can be reversed.
- Varsouvienne: Facing the same direction, M's stands slightly behind and to the left of the W. M holds W's L hand in his L hand in front of her L shoulder, and holds W's R hand in his R hand in front of her R shoulder (his R arm behind her back).
- Lower Varsouvienne: Same as Varsouvienne position above, but M holds W's R hand in his R hand at her right waist (his R arm behind her back).