

The Aquarium Underwater Dance:

Create an underwater dance inspired by Camille Saint-Saëns' piece *The Aquarium* and poem by Ogden Nash. Dance as seaweed/kelp, the tides, and three different amazing underwater creatures. We will discuss the parts of the dance, imagine which creatures we can be and want to be, and then put the piece together using self-space and general-space movements. [Here is a video that accompanies this activity.](#)

Materials Needed:

Just your bodies and some space to dance around in. This activity is great for all ages, so try it with the whole family!

Directions:

Step 1: Discuss Self-Space and General-Space

- Self-Space is our personal bubble, the space we take up without moving around the room. Try moving your bodies in self-space (kicking, swaying, jumping, spinning, etc.) without travelling.
- General-Space is moving through our room or dancing space. Look for empty places and move your body around and through them (marching, skipping, leaping, skating, etc.).
- In our Aquarium Underwater Dance we will start in Self-Space and then move through General-Space and alternate between the two. To practice, have someone be the leader and call out Self-Space and General-Space, allowing the dancers time to try different movements in their personal bubble (not travelling/self-space) and all around the room (travelling/general-space).

Step 2: Pick Our Underwater Creatures

- In our dance we will get to be three (3) different underwater creatures or animals. (Below are the three examples of what you'll find in the video.)
 - Humpback Whale: humpback whales are very big; they move slowly and smoothly through the water; you might see them jump out of the water (breach) or simply rise to the surface and lower again. Try moving like a whale through general-space.
 - Crabs: crabs are much smaller than humpback whales; they move side to side and can move quickly and slowly; crabs live very low in the water, crawling along the ocean floor. Try moving like a crab through general-space.
 - Dolphins: dolphins are medium size compared to whales and crabs; they move very quickly and like to be near the surface of the water; they jump out of the water and also spin above and below the water. Try moving like a dolphin through general-space.
- In our dance we will also do some self-space movement as seaweed or kelp.
 - Seaweed and kelp can grip on to rocks in the water; they move with the flow of the water, swaying with the tides; our seaweed and kelp will be attached to the ground by our feet and our upper body will move. Try moving as seaweed or kelp in self-space.

**“Some fish are minnows,
Some are whales.
People like dimples,
Fish like scales.
Some fish are slim,
And some are round,
They don’t get cold,
They don’t get drowned.
But every fish wife
Fears for her fish.
What we call mermaids
And they call merfish.”**
–Ogden Nash

Step 3: Put the Dance Together!

- Our Aquarium Underwater Dance has three (3) parts that repeat.
 - 1. Seaweed, 2. Tide, 3. Creature One (humpback whale), 1. Seaweed, 2. Tide, 3. Creature Two (crab), 1. Seaweed, 2. Tide, 3. Creature 3 (dolphin), 1. Seaweed
- For Seaweed, we will dance in self-space, moving/swaying/floating as seaweed or kelp.
- For Tide, we will spin/spiral in self-space. This is our transformation into our creature.
- For Creature One, Two, and Three, we will move through general-space as that creature/animal.
- The music changes will guide you through each part. The dance starts and ends in self-space. (The music used is *Amphibious* by Eric Chappelle from Music for Creative Dance, Volume 4.)

Closing:

Ask your dancers to show you movements in self-space and some in general-space, did they learn it? Ask these questions to reflect: How did you like dancing in self-space and general-space? Did you prefer moving in self-space or general-space? Did you have a favorite creature to move as? Which one? How did it feel moving as seaweed?

Bonus:

Think of other underwater creatures that might be fun to dance. Discuss how they might move and where you find them in the water, and then move through general-space as those creatures. Are there other stationary (self-space) things underwater that we could be instead of seaweed? How might they move or not move? Try the dance again and pick new creatures to be. Discuss the changes.