
A Dance Breakthrough

Article

NEW YORK, New York (Achieve3000, March 24, 2021). "B-boys and b-girls go down!" For some dancers, that's the signal to bust out their best moves. First, they set the tone with funky footwork. Then they drop to the ground where they pull off some power moves like spinning on their backs, performing a "jackhammer" or a "windmill." Next, they whirl on their heads like a human cyclone. They finish it all off with a cool "freeze," pausing in a gravity-defying pose.

Recognize those signature spins and stylish stunts? These daring dancers are breakers. Breaking is an athletic dance style that's a fundamental part of hip-hop culture. It's sometimes called "breakdancing." But most of its practitioners, known as *breakers* or *b-boys* and *b-girls*, prefer the term *breaking* or *b-boying*.

Today, b-boying is beloved by fans around the world. It all started in the 1970s in the Bronx, a borough of New York City. According to hip-hop historians, a lot of the credit goes to DJ Kool Herc. He had an idea that led to a pop culture breakthrough (see what we did there?). When playing music at parties and dance clubs, this groundbreaking deejay used two turntables to mix sounds from two records.

Why? Kool Herc wanted to extend the length of the *break*. That's a section of a song when most of the instruments drop out and the percussion continues. Because a break is all about the beat, it's a good time for dancers to showcase their showstopping moves. During Kool Herc's lengthy breaks, some dancers came up with creative maneuvers. They drew inspiration from martial arts, gymnastics, and the onstage feats of rock-and-roll legend James Brown.

The new dance style caught on in New York. It was especially popular among Black and Puerto Rican teens. The dancers teamed up to form crews that faced off in informal competitions, or *battles*. One at a time, breakers took turns strutting their stuff. Sometimes the audience determined the victor via cheers and applause. While the performers went all out to upstage each other, an actual stage was not required. The match-up could take place at a city park, party, or roller rink.

Soon breaking made it to the big screen. Dancers showcased their talents in movies like *Flashdance* (1983), *Beat Street* (1984), and others. Breakers also performed in music videos and live concerts. It wasn't long before breaking became an international sensation. It thrived in countries thousands of miles from its birthplace, including Japan, Brazil, France, and South Korea. Competitions cropped up around the world and are still going strong. In today's formalized battles, dancers aren't just battling for bragging rights and street cred. Victors emerge with official recognition and cash prizes. Meanwhile, breaking continues to be a pop culture presence, showing up in TV shows, movies, commercials, and even video games.

In 2020, there was some major breaking news. B-boys and b-girls will be taking their spunky style and acrobatic artistry to the Olympics. The International Olympic Committee announced that breaking will be an official event in the 2024 Summer Games in Paris, France. It's a bold decision that's part of the group's efforts to attract younger audiences. At a prominent venue in downtown Paris, b-boys and b-girls from around the world will "go down"—and go for the gold!



Photo credit: Little Shao/Red Bull Content Pool

B-girl Logistx from the USA competes at the World Urban Games. Breaking is an acrobatic type of dancing, sometimes called breakdancing.

Dictionary

borough (*noun*) one of five parts of New York City

inspiration (*noun*) something that prompts a creative act

maneuver (*noun*) a planned or controlled movement or series of moves

upstage (*verb*) to turn the attention from someone or something else to oneself

venue (*noun*) a place where an event, such as a sports competition or a concert, is held

Activity

PART 1

Question 1

The Article primarily discusses _____.

- Ⓐ the bold decision to make breaking an official Olympic event to attract younger audiences
- Ⓑ the popular style of dance known as breaking that allows dancers to showcase creative moves
- Ⓒ how the break in music is when most of the instruments drop out and breakers can showcase their moves
- Ⓓ how breaking was featured in movies like *Flashdance* and continues to be a pop culture presence today

Question 2

Which of these had **not** yet happened when this Article was written?

This question asks about when events happened. It does not ask where in the Article the events appear. Reread the Article for clues, such as dates.

- Ⓐ DJ Kool Herc played music using a technique that extended the length of the music break.
- Ⓑ B-boys and b-girls took their style and artistry to Paris, France, for the Summer Games.
- Ⓒ Breaking competitions cropped up around the world with dancers battling for cash prizes.
- Ⓓ Dancers showcased their breaking talents in movies, music videos, and at live concerts.

Question 3

Which is the closest **synonym** for the word *upstage*?

- Ⓐ deceive
- Ⓑ aid
- Ⓒ compliment
- Ⓓ outshine

Question 4

According to the Article, how are informal battles and formal competitions different?

- Ⓐ Informal battles offer cash prizes, while formal competitions offer bragging rights.
- Ⓑ Informal battles must take place at the Olympics, while formal competitions happen anywhere.
- Ⓒ Informal battles happen anywhere, while formal competitions must take place at the Olympics.
- Ⓓ Informal battles offer bragging rights, while formal competitions offer cash prizes.

Question 5

According to the Article, why did DJ Kool Herc use two turntables to mix sounds?

- Ⓐ It allowed him to mimic the onstage feats of rock-and-roll legend James Brown.
- Ⓑ Dancers requested a lengthy break in the music to showcase their creative maneuvers.
- Ⓒ It allowed him to extend the length of the break in music when most instruments drop out.
- Ⓓ Dancers needed a signal to know when to drop to the ground and begin their routines.

Question 6

Which question is **not** answered by the Article?

- Ⓐ What venue in downtown Paris will breakers compete at during the Olympics?
- Ⓑ How did the audience determine the winners of the informal breaking battles?
- Ⓒ How did DJ Kool Herc's turntable technique lead to the b-boying style of dance?
- Ⓓ What are some of the moves b-boys and b-girls perform on the dance floor?

Question 7

Read this passage from the Article:

Because a break is all about the beat, it's a good time for dancers to *showcase* their showstopping moves. During Kool Herc's lengthy breaks, some dancers came up with creative maneuvers.

In this passage, the word *showcase* means _____.

- Ⓐ to copy
- Ⓑ to display
- Ⓒ to create
- Ⓓ to practice

Question 8

Based on the Article, the reader can predict that _____.

- Ⓐ breaking will be suspended after the Summer Olympics in Paris.
- Ⓑ breaking will be a popular addition to the Summer Games.
- Ⓒ breakers will not be successful in attracting younger Olympic audiences.
- Ⓓ breakers will be judged at the Olympics via applause from the audience.