

Music Makes the World Go 'Round!

By Ashley Bishop

A study conducted by the Brunel University's School of Sport and Education shared that carefully selected music (choosing music with a specific BPM) can increase a participant's physical endurance and make the overall exercise experience more positive. They asked thirty participants to exercise on a treadmill while listening to a selection of motivational rock and pop music. When asked to keep in time with the beat of the music, they discovered that not only was the overall task of working out much more enjoyable for the exercisers, but that they also enhanced their endurance by 15%. (Side note: they had them listen to Queen, Red Hot Chili Peppers, and Madonna, no surprise they enjoyed their workouts more!) The study also discovered that when asked to work out at very high intensities, the exercisers felt posi-

tive even when nearing physical exhaustion.

Zumba® Fitness, Les Mill Body Pump, Schwinn Indoor Cycling, Pop Pilates – these formats (along with many others) are huge names in the industry with a major common denominator. They are all music driven! This means that the classes are designed around the idea that every movement executed happens with the beat of the music. The idea is that participants can work harder, longer and fatigue less quickly because they get in the “zone” or the “flow” of the workout. The use of music can also make the workouts more enjoyable, which is a huge bonus. If they enjoy the workout, they will return to class, and when they come back time and time again, they see results.



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How can we apply this to Aquatic Fitness?

There are a few ways Aqua Fitness Instructors can use the power of music to motivate their participants.

- **Music Driven Movement**

We can arrange or choreograph our classes to follow the beat of the music. Remember that choreography does not mean having to create complicated dance routines. It can be as simple as selecting four moves and delivering them in a teaching style that speaks to you. The seventh edition of the AEA Aquatic Fitness Professional Manual explains five different choreography styles that instructors can select to deliver movement: Freestyle, Pyramid, Add-On, Patterned and Layer Technique (to brush up on those definitions, see pages 195 & 196 of the manual). There is something so special about seeing your class bob and bounce together at the same time!

- **Music for Timing**

Music licensed for fitness is centered around a 32-count phrase. This means that you have four counts of eight repeated over and over again. At the completion of that 4-count phrase, one can usually hear some sort of buildup in the music that lets us (and our participants) know that a change is likely on the horizon. If you've mastered the art of counting, or can feel that cyclical phrase intrinsically, the top of the phrase is a great place to change moves or add progressions to your movement. Doing intervals? If you're using a BPM of around 128, you can plan your intervals around 15-second increments. Work hard for 45 seconds (three 32-count phrases) and recover for 15 seconds (one 32-count phrase). Say goodbye to stop watches and your GYMBOS! (Thank you, Mark Grevelding, for that tip!)

- **Music for Motivation**

Another great way to use music in your classes is to expertly pair the tone of the music with the experience you are striving for. Our intervals won't be as effective if we're splashing to "My Heart Will Go On" and "We Will Rock You" doesn't quite cut it for a cool down. A perfectly curated playlist will take a lot of the energy coaching work off our shoulders allowing us to focus more on the delivery of the content, form corrections and class progression.

Now let's explore how we can apply these three ideas to create our classes.

Select your music!

Our AEA Standards and Guidelines lays out the BPM (beats per minute) ranges most effective for aquatic fitness training. A BPM of 120 – 150 is effective for shallow-water cardio training and a BPM 100-135 for deep-water cardio training.

Billy Joel's "Uptown Girl" is 128 BPM. If you listen closely, you can easily identify the beat by listening for the tambourine hits. If you clap along with this tambourine, you will be executing 128 claps in one minute. The song is approxi-

mately three minutes and twenty seconds in duration, which means if you clapped the entire song, you would have clapped 426 times!

If you were jogging to this song at land tempo, your feet would strike the pool bottom 128 times in one minute. We could take it to water tempo (our feet would strike the pool bottom every other beat) and we would complete 64 jogs in one minute. Taking it a step further and jogging at half water tempo (changing legs every four beats) we would complete 32 jogs in one minute. This is important to keep top of mind when selecting music for our classes to ensure that the speed of which we are asking our participant to execute the moves will allow for proper range of motion, form and alignment. **(1 – SONG LINK).**

Where to source your music?

My go to app is the Yes!GO app powered by Yes! Fitness Music. With the monthly subscription, I'm able to access hundreds of albums already licensed for fitness and can filter by format and BPM. I can also access any custom albums I've already mixed on their website and any completed albums I've purchased previously. By using the app on my phone, not only can I easily search for my desired playlist, but I can even increase or decrease the BPM in the moment based on the format I want to teach, add custom timers to my playlist and easily toggle between tracks. Another bonus? If you're an Apple Watch user, this app does "speak" to your watch, which means you can toggle between songs and increase or decrease the volume no matter where you're standing at the pool! #winning **(2 –WEBSITE LINK).** *New to Yes!GO? Your first month is FREE!*

Other fitness music companies also have the ability to easily search, purchase and download music by BPM and format, and may have their own apps with similar features to the Yes!GO app.

Amazon Music and Spotify also have the ability to search for music based on BPM and format, the only catch here is you often need to be connected to the internet for these apps to function correctly. The last thing we need is the internet to go down, the "cloud" to eat up our playlists and we're left without music for class.

iTunes is still another application I go to often. If you input the song information correctly (genre or BPM) you can manually search your personal library for your desired tracks. I also like that I can pick and choose music that I have purchased from a variety of sites and make a custom playlist to meet my needs.

Create your lesson plan!

What type of class will it be? Decide your goal for the class and what will the class structure look like. Will the movements you select be done to the beat of the music, will the music act as the timer for your intervals/circuits or will you teach "freestyle" and match the desired energy level of the class to your playlist? To help visualize those examples, let's



explore how to use the following four moves in three different musically mastered ways!

Move A – Jumping Jack

Move B – Tuck Jump Front & Back

Move C – Cross Country Ski with a Bounce Center

Move D – Mogul Side to Side

- **Music Driven Movement**

We've already selected "Uptown Girl" as our song and let's choose pyramid as the choreography style. As a reminder, pyramid choreography is when we gradually decrease or increase the repetitions of each move. For this combo, let's use a version of "Uptown Girl" that's licensed for fitness! (3 – **SONG LINK**).

Move A – Jumping Jack – Water Tempo (16x)

Move B – Tuck Jump Front & Back – Water Tempo (16x)

Move C – Cross Country Ski with a Bounce Center – Half Water Tempo (8x)

Move D – Mogul Side to Side – Water Tempo (16x)

Move A – Jumping Jack – Water Tempo (8x)

Move B – Tuck Jump Front & Back – Water Tempo (8x)

Move C. – Cross Country Ski with a Bounce Center – Half Water Tempo (4x)

Move D – Mogul Side to Side – Water Tempo (8x)

Move A – Jumping Jack – Water Tempo (4x)

Move B – Tuck Jump Front & Back – Water Tempo (4x)

Move C – Cross Country Ski with a Bounce Center – Half Water Tempo (2x)

Move D – Mogul Side to Side – Water Tempo (4x)

If you start about 15 seconds in, this combo will last the length of the song!

- **Music for Timing**

In this example, I'd like to do an interval segment. I'm going to stick with the same "Uptown Girl" track as the previous example, and the same set of four moves.

Move A – Jumping Jack 45 seconds of work, 15 seconds of rest (gentle jog to recover)

*also counted as three 8-count phrases of work, one 8-count phrase of rest)

Move B – Tuck Jump Front & Back 30 second of work, 30 seconds of rest (gentle bounce)

*also counted as two 8-count phrases of work, two 8-count phrases of rest)

Move C – Cross Country Ski with a Bounce Center 45 seconds of work, 15 seconds of rest (gentle jog to recover)

*also counted as three 8-count phrases of work, one 8-count phrase of rest)

Move D – Mogul Side to Side 15 seconds of work, 15 seconds of rest (gentle bounce)

*also counted as one 8-count phrase of work, one 8-count phrase of rest)

This sequence will also last about the length of the song.



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• Music for Motivation

For this lesson plan, I'd like to throw in a Tabata track which means we will work HARD for twenty seconds, perform passive recovery for ten seconds, repeated eight times. This will take four minutes to complete. The vibe and energy of "Uptown Girl" doesn't really make me want to work out to my max capacity, however a quick search resulted in this fun "Uptown Funk" Tabata track (meaning the cues to work and rest are already built into the song!) (4 – **SONG LINK**).

My sequence could look like this.

Round 1 & 2 – Jumping Jacks

Round 3 & 4 – Tuck Jumps Front & Back

Round 5 & 6 – Cross Country Skis

Round 7 & 8 – Mogul Side to Side

... and then maybe I could use "Uptown Girl" as my Pre-Cool Down and "Downtown" (from Petula Clark) as my stretch! See what I did there?

LINKS

- 1 SONG LINK:** *Uptown Girl* – <https://music.apple.com/us/album/uptown-girl/158815463?i=158816148>
- 2 WEBSITE LINK:** Yes!GO – <https://www.getyesgo.com/>
- 3 SONG LINK:** *Uptown Girl* Licensed for Fitness – <https://music.apple.com/us/album/uptown-girl-work-out-remix-128-bpm/1465324999?i=1465325112>
- 4 SONG LINK:** *Uptown Funk* – <https://music.apple.com/us/album/uptown-funk-tabata-mix/1136971893?i=1136971899>

There are so many ways to leverage the inclusion of music in our fitness classes. The most important piece is that we (the instructors) are motivated by our music. When we are excited about the lesson plan and corresponding playlist we've put together, it radiates to our participants and they can feed off of our energy. I would love to hear about the ways you use music in your classes. ■

Resources

For a complete listing of resources from this article, please email julie@aeawave.org.



Author

Ashley Bishop, originally from Vancouver, BC is an Aquatic Training Specialist for AEA, a Zumba Jammer™ with Zumba® Fitness (Aqua Zumba® & Salsa), and a CE Provider for ACE, AFAA & AEA. Recently relocated to Las Vegas NV, Ashley is the Fitness Director for uforia studios and can be found most weekends sharing her passion for education and fitness with instructors across the continent. Ashley absolutely adores teaching, learning and sharing knowledge with others. Find Ashley at www.bagelfit.com