

Hip Hop Terminology

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Topic **Page Number**

General Hip Hop Definitions **3**

Definitions Related to Specific Dance Styles:

◆ **Breaking** **4**

◆ **House** **6**

◆ **Popping / Locking** **7**

GENERAL

- **Battle** A competition in which dancers, usually in an open circle surrounded by their competitors, dance their routines, whether improvised (freestyle) or planned. Participants vary in numbers, ranging from one on one to battles of opposing breaking crews, or teams. Winners are determined by outside judges, often with prize money.
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- **Cypher** Open forum, mock exhibitions. Similar to battles, but less emphasis on competition.
- **Freestyle** Improvised Old School routine.
- **Hip Hop** A lifestyle that is comprised of 4 elements: Breaking, MCing, DJing, and Graffiti. Footwear and clothing are part of the hip hop style. Much of it is influenced by the original breaking crews in the 1980's from the Bronx. Sneakers are usually flat soled and may range from Nike, Adidas, Puma, or Converse. Generally caps are worn for spins, often with padding to protect the head. To optimize the fast footwork and floor moves, the baggy pants favored by hip hop rappers are not seen.
 - **Breaking** Breakdancing.
 - **MCing** Rapping. MC uses rhyming verses, pre-written or freestyled, to introduce and praise the DJ or excite the crowd.
 - **DJing** Art of the disk jockey.
 - **Graffiti** Name for images or lettering scratched, scrawled, painted usually on buildings, trains etc.
- **Hip Hop dance** There are two main categories of hip hop dance: Old School and New School.
- **New School hip hop dance** Newer forms of hip hop music or dance (house, krumping, voguing, street jazz) that emerged in the 1990s
- **Old School hip hop dance** Original forms of hip hop music or dance (breaking, popping, and locking) that evolved in the 1970s and 80s.

BREAKING

- **Breaking** Also known as breakdancing, *b-boying* and *b-girling*. A street dance style normally danced to [funk](#) or [hip hop music](#), often [remixed](#) to prolong the [breaks](#), and is arguably the best known of all [hip hop dance](#) styles. Breaking originated in the South Bronx in the early 1970's. It includes both *toprock* (standing dance steps) and *downrock* (sequences on the ground), incorporating extreme gymnastic *power moves* and *freezes*.
- **B-boy** The term b-boy was started by DJ Kool Herc, who would yell "B-boys go down". The "B" may stand for Beat, Boogie, Bronx, or Break. A male breaker (dancer) who practices breaking or b-boying.
- **B-girl** A female breaker (dancer).
- **Downrock** More acrobatic and akin to gymnastics, encompasses all moves performed with hands, arms, or a part of the torso involving contact with the floor. Usually transition into more athletic moves known as power moves. Steps include: 6-step, drop, CC, kick out, spin, swipe, suicide, freeze, and power moves.
 - **Freeze** Halt of all motion in a stylish pose. Usually require the breakdancer to suspend himself or herself off the ground using upper body strength in poses such as the handstand or pike. Freezes include baby, airbaby, airchair, hollowback, and side freeze.
 - **Power Moves** Refers to moves that require momentum and physical power to execute. Involves weight bearing and propulsion on upper extremities and/or head. They include windmill, swipe, helicopter, and flare.
 - **Six-step** One of the fundamental steps of breaking. Downrock usually begins with six-step, which is a circular footwork sequence.
 - **Spin** A fundamental element of breaking. Spins may occur on the back, elbow, head, etc. Usally breakers wear a hat with padding inside it for head spins.
 - **Suicides** A type of end to a routine. Breakers make it appear they

have lost control and fall onto their backs, stomachs, etc. The more painful the Suicide appears, the more impressive it is.

- **Toprock** Rhythmic steps performed from a standing position. Often a prelude to downrock. Steps include kickstep, kickstep cross, kickstep out, kickstep twist, kneejerk, etc.
- **Uprock** Competitively oriented type of toprock consisting of foot shuffles, spins, turns, and creative movements

HOUSE

- **House** Style of street dance danced to house music. It's improvisational in nature and emphasizes fast and complex footwork combined with fluid movements in the torso. Prime elements of house are jacking, footwork, and lofting. These elements are influenced by soul, rhythm and blues, and funk disco which in turn are have roots in tap, jazz, bebop, salsa, and Capoeira. Styles include skating, stomping, and shuffling. Step names include: heel-toe kick, sweepstep back, farmer, hook.
- **Jacking** Moving the torso forward and backward in a rippling motion, like a wave passing through it.

POPPING / LOCKING

- **Boogaloo** A more loose and fluid style that gives the impression of the body having no bones. Incorporated strutting. Primarily involves the Boogaloo roll – these can start at the neck and go down or from bottom and go up.
- **Locking** Originally called Campbellocking, it is a style of street dance. Locking relies on fast and distinct arm and hand movements combined with more relaxed hips and legs. The movements are generally large and exaggerated, and often very rhythmic and tightly synched with the music. Moves include: point, stop and go, Scooby walk, which-a-way, and skeeter rabbit.
- **Popping** A standing dance style based on the technique of quickly contracting and relaxing muscles to cause a jerk in the dancer's body, referred to as a *pop* or a *hit*. This was influenced by miming, strutting, and 60's dances like the twist and jerk. This is done continuously to the rhythm of a song in combination with various movements and poses. It is also often used as an umbrella term to include Locking, Tutting, Boogaloo, Crazy legs, Robot/botting, and Miming. Steps include: Fresno, inverted knees, skeeters, Jason, Which-a-ways, scoop, kneedrop, twist-o-flex, walk-out.
- **Strutting** A precursor to popping and boogaloo. Included moves like walkout and twist-o-flex.

REFERENCES

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