

# SCHOOL'D BY FUNKMODE

You want to become a Hip Hop expert? Learn the info below and you're on your way, yo!

## HOW YOU CAN CONTRIBUTE TO HIP HOP CULTURE - PART 1 (DANCING AND RAPPING)

With nearly every one of our SCHOOL'd lessons, we reiterate the importance of those who love Hip Hop contributing to the culture. Over the next three lessons, we aren't just going to encourage you to get out there and participate in the culture, we're actually going to give you concrete examples of things you can do right now to get started. Today's lesson is going to be for those who love rapping and dancing. We're going to cover a ton of ways that you can use your creativity in words and movement to be a real contributor to Hip Hop culture. To aid people who are just starting out as well as those that are already more advanced, we will divide our suggestions into basic actions that anyone can follow and ideas for those looking to become professional artists.

At FUNKMODE, we've taught Hip Hop dance to hundreds of people from preschoolers to adults. One thing we've seen over and over is that people who dance do it because they LOVE it. For most dancers, it is as if they have no choice. Dancing is like air, food or water for them. If you are one of those people, here are some things you can do to take your love of Hip Hop dance farther. If you're into choreographing dances, you can start by finding artists or songs that you really enjoy and creating moves for those tracks. It helps to choose songs that have different sounds because that will change the way you move to those songs and help you to expand your personal style. While you're developing your style, some people like to watch other people dance to get ideas and inspiration. There are many dance videos online that feature incredible dancers and more styles than you could imagine. Once you create your own dances, you might teach them to your friends who also enjoy dancing. Maybe you could even form your own dance crew with them. With dances to perform, either by yourself or with a group, there are actually lots of opportunities to perform. You could record yourself and post your video to video sharing sites. Or, you could perform for your family or neighbors. Family parties or weddings are also great places to show off your moves. At school, you could enter a talent show, perform at assemblies or school dances. Some schools will even help you organize a dance club for people who want to practice together. In the right circumstances, some schools will even allow you to have friendly dance battles at recess or lunch, if they are done responsibly. If you really love freestyling, one of the best things you can do is just put on your favorite music and get wild in your own room. This is how many Hip Hop dancers came up with their own styles; styles that we all do today. You could create your own style or your own moves. Try out some new things and perfect them. Give your new moves a name, teach them to your friends and see how far it spreads. You can use videos on the internet to do this too. Who knows, you might start the next major Hip Hop dance trend! If you are interested in taking your love of Hip Hop dance to a professional level, you can start to take classes at high level dance studios or train with experienced dancers. Once you're good enough both in your freestyling and choreography, you might start to teach at one of those studios. Often, people casting dancers for commercials and movies visit those studios because they know they can find the best teachers and students there. If you reach the level where you're good enough to start getting professional work on TV, videos or movies, you might look into getting an agent or manager who can help you find the right types of performance jobs. And as one final word of advice from FUNKMODE for any looking to become professional Hip Hop dancers, we believe that is essential that you learn your Hip Hop dance and cultural history so you can represent properly for the culture. If you are going to make money off of Hip Hop, show it the respect of truly knowing what you are representing.

Hip Hop music is clearly the most prominent aspect of the culture. As such, the majority of people who become interested in Hip Hop are drawn to the music. If you want to contribute to Hip Hop music, there are many ways to get started. Rappers, at their essence, are poets. Poets are artists who create pictures and stories with words. The first step for a poet is to start writing. It doesn't matter what you write about, so long as it is important to you. Your poetry can be funny, serious, sad, uplifting, political, religious, or downright nonsensical. The most important thing is that you write non-stop because, the more you write, the better you get at it. If rhyming doesn't come naturally to you, get a hold of a rhyming dictionary. Increasing your vocabulary is another essential part of becoming a good writer and rhymer. Read other poets. Read books you like. Many famous rappers today even say they read the



# SCHOOL'D BY FUNKMODE

dictionary. When you're a poet or a rapper, words are your tools. The more tools you have, the more you can create. Eventually, as you build your skills, the time comes when you have to start thinking about your audience. After all, Hip Hop began at parties and was meant to move the crowds. Just like with dancing, you can start sharing your rhymes with family or friends. Just the same, you could record yourself rhyming acapella or over your favorite Hip Hop instrumental tracks and post it to a video sharing site. You could also post your rhymes to an internet blog. In most major cities, there are poetry contests that allow entries from all ages of poets. Also as with dancing, you can enter your school's talent shows with your rhymes. In the early days of Hip Hop and still across the world today, people get together in small groups and have rap sessions. Sometimes these sessions are just to share rhymes and sometimes they turn into battles. Battles are great for developing and improving your skills. Another way to improve your skills is to record yourself rapping and listen to it for ways to make it better. If you have people around you whose opinion you respect, you can let them listen to your rhymes to give you constructive criticism. If you have a close friend or friends who also are interested in rap, you might be able to form a duo or group. Together you can work on creating a distinctive style all your own to help you stand out from the crowd and get noticed by larger audiences. Freestyling is a totally different skill from writing rhymes. If you want to improve your freestyling, the best thing you can do is try to rhyme about anything and everything you see everywhere and all of the time. This is exactly what the best freestyle rappers do to get them to the top of their game. If you think you're ready to take your rapping to the next level, try entering yourself into local shows like fairs or festivals. If you want to go beyond that to a professional level, one of the first things you should do is connect with a good producer who can make instrumental tracks for you to rap over. From there, you can work on creating enough songs together to form a complete album. Before trying to release your album to the world, you can try doing a limited release in your local area. There are many websites that help independent artists get their music out to audiences. Posting some of your songs to music or video sharing sites can help you get exposure as well. More and more today, new artists are being discovered by agents and record companies from the music they post online. After you have enough music to perform, you can work to book performances locally to build up a following. Those who come to your shows will often buy your albums and your music will spread even more. If you start performing consistently, you might look into getting a manager or agent who can help you organize your performance schedule and even connect with record companies who can get you music out to a city, state or even nationwide audience. As with all artistry, however, the most important thing is to stay true to your artistic vision. It is easy to get distracted from what is important to you when money is on the line. Just remember, no amount of money will ever satisfy you, if you do not stay true to yourself. Hip Hop culture will continue to grow because of creativity, not money and not record deals. When there was no money in Hip Hop, that's when it was growing the most. It grew because people had passion for the culture and did it for the love. That is the same formula that will keep Hip Hop alive and well today.

## HIP HOP WORDS OF THE WEEK

Heated: Really angry.

EX: "He just got his bike stolen and man, I've never seen him so heated in my life!"

Celly: Cellular or Mobile phone.

EX: "Hit me up on my celly later and we'll hook up to hit the mall or something."

Yay Area / The Yay: The Bay Area or The Bay. (Made popular by Bay Area Rapper E-40)

EX: "I come from Northern California in the Yay Area. The Yay is the best place in the world!"

**BONUS:** Create a sentence using all words of the week

## EXTRA LEARNING

- 1) What is one way you personally can contribute to Hip Hop culture through dancing?
- 2) What is one way you personally can contribute to Hip Hop culture through rapping?
- 3) Which calls to you more, dancing or rapping? Why?