

10 WAYS TO BECOME MORE CREATIVE AND MUSICAL IN KIZOMBA



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Kizomba is a dance with immense freedom. I would argue that kizomba is an aesthetic more than a syllabus of steps. It is closely partnered and very grounded, in the way of African dances. Motion is continuous and controlled, except as punctuated with staccato movement for effect. Of course, there are basic steps at the core of the dance to which we always return. Yet at any given moment

we are free to step in any direction, and to modify our movement in a number of ways.

I'd like to share **10 ideas** that you can use to become more musical and creative in your kizomba dancing – many of which translate well to other dance forms as well! This article is primarily directed at leaders, but followers will facilitate such musicality by being ready for anything – maintaining connection, practicing continuous movement, and never committing to a step before the leader.

1. Style/Posture

While kizomba has not yet been divided into distinct genres the way salsa has, many people recognize at least three styles. The more traditional Angolan style has a stronger hold in the arms, a bend at the leader's waist, and a circling motion. The style most commonly coming from Portugal displays more chest compression, pelvic isolations, and level changes with bent knees. In what some people call French style or modern kizomba, the posture is more upright and the hold may not be offset.

Although some people prefer one style and stay with it, it is entirely possible to vary it according to the music. When an older instrumental song comes on, try the traditional hold. When it's ghetto zouk, perhaps explore a larger body movement. When the music is a digital remix, it could be interesting to experiment with dancing toe to toe.

2. Emotion

I've said it before: kizomba is not just a time to try to get romantic – or sexual – with your partner. In kizomba we may express a whole range of emotions. I have heard Angolan emigrants recount how they came together to dance kizomba after fleeing the civil war, and tears rolled down their faces as they held one another. Kizomba songs with lyrics may be about heartbreak, about celebrating life, about dreaming, about memory, about love, as well as attraction. That means that we have a lot that we could unpack as we approach a song. Try being playful, or beaten-down-yet-determined, or dramatic, or sweet.

3. Repetition

It's a simple idea – choose any two steps of a move you know, and try doing an extra set of them before continuing or finishing the move. Walk forward a few times before your marqua. Bring the follower in and out of exit position. Pivot back and forth. You get the picture!

4. Slow motion

Slowing down your movement is an excellent way of following a lyrical line, reaching

the end of a phrase, or drawing out a moment. A single slow step can create beautiful contrast. Experiment with choosing a step or two to do slowly.

5. Acceleration/Syncopation

Whether it's a rapid shuffle back in close, speeding forward to reconnect from saida, or the follower quick-stepping around the leader in dissociation, these steps can add serious flavor to your kizomba. To keep it looking effortless, stay relaxed!

6. Direction Change

We tend to learn moves as discrete blocks. We don't have to limit ourselves that way, however. Changing the direction of a portion of your move may give you whole new ideas! Imagine your movement as seen from above, and create a new shape.

7. Pause/Stop

There's few things that make followers gasp with delight so much as a well-timed halt. Aside from knowing the music well enough to know where to place it, the key to a good pause is solid balance. Also, don't be afraid to hold your stop for even a few counts, if the moment is right.

8. Footwork Variation

Many people learn footwork variations as part of a choreography in a class. Take those elements and try placing them in your regular dancing. Experiment with your own variations as well – forward steps are among the easiest to play with.

9. Connection Change

Much of kizomba is danced chest to chest, but there are far more position and connection possibilities. Saida position and promenade may be the first we think of, but front to back, perpendicular stepping, and circling are all options. It is important to consider what the primary connection point will be as the chest connection is lost – in the arm? The back? The leg? The hip?

10. Interruption

In order to escape from repeating overmuch your typical patterns, try breaking moves into smaller pieces and inserting other moves between. This is an exceptionally good method of unlocking your creativity, because it gets you thinking about your dance vocabulary in entirely new ways.

Try them all! Don't forget to listen to plenty of kizomba music and watch other dancers whose creativity impresses you.

And if you're more of a visual than verbal learner, check out this video:

