

Learning to perform ab-driven shimmies
By The Troupe Amani

One of the ways that my dance partner and I teach shimmies is "ab driven" Here are the steps for learning this shimmy the way we do it:

1. Find the correct muscles.

- Stand in dance posture (knees soft/bent, pelvis tuck, chest lifted, shoulders back)
- Lift one foot off of the floor, keeping the hips level (may need to steady against wall until you develop the balance)
- Using only the abdominal muscles on the sides (obliques) contract the muscles on one side to lift hip
- Keep hip lifted for 15-30 seconds using these muscles
- Lower hip slowly back down to neutral, still controlling with the same muscles.
- hips should move up/down only with no side to side or twisting
- When done correctly, this movement does not interfere with chest movements or have any effect on the upper body

2. Now that you have the muscles, start with lifts and drops.

- Practice hip lifts and hip drops using these muscles to build up strength, control and extension

3. Once comfortable with lifts/drops, beginning alternating sides slowly.

- There is no real weight change here. One of the reasons we like this shimmy is that b/c it does not engage the weight or muscles in the legs (much - always some reciprocal muscle movement to keep balance, etc.) it makes it very easy to layer with traveling steps.
- Watch your self in the mirror to make sure you are isolating only the muscles in your torso and not leaning side to side to compensate.

4. Speed your alternating hips, keeping it even and "countable" until you can shimmy with it comfortably.

- This shimmy takes time for most people b/c it can be difficult at first to find the correct muscles and gain control over them
- Once this shimmy works, you can layer it with almost anything because your legs are free to travel, your chest is free to move and you can still add side to side or twisting motions in the hips by controlling all of your torso muscles.

The way we teach this shimmy leads to some very strong ab muscles and torso core b/c you are using the core to drive the movement and to stabilize the body, so you are firing muscles in opposition to lift/drop/hold.