

On Your Mark, Get Set, Go!

By Connie Warasila

Before everything else, getting ready is the secret of success. – Henry Ford

At the beginning of any successful endeavor, like a WATERinMOTION class, is a time of planning. WATERinMOTION does most of the planning for its instructors. Remembering the choreography does take some practice for the instructor. Once the instructor has learned the choreography the presentation of that material also benefits from practice. Just like practiced choreography, a strong introduction can be one of the most important segments of a WATERinMOTION class. It sets the stage for a dynamic exercise experience.

Ann Gilbert, choreographer of the WATERinMOTION Platinum program, teaches instructors the importance of communicating to clients the structure of the class. She refers to this as “Framing Out” the class. This type of communication is imperative in order to set expectations, build excitement and trust and prepare students for the session. Without some sort of introduction exercisers just follow along a path that seems to wander, without purpose. Students may feel anxious or apprehensive if the instructor just starts the class without explaining the structure for the class time. This is especially true for people that are new to class. Delivering an introduction that tells the students who you are, what you’ll be doing and how the class is structured will put the students at ease and give them confidence that you are prepared, knowledgeable and excited to lead.

A great introduction has six parts:

- Welcome
- Introduce yourself
- Introduce the class name and length
- Explain the structure
- Investigate special needs
- Start the party

Welcome

Arrive early to set up for the class. That might involve setting up the stereo, distributing equipment, placing your mat and chair, filling your water bottle, changing your shoes, etc. All of that should be done prior to greeting your clients as they arrive. When it is time to start the class, position yourself in your teaching location. From this location verbally welcome everyone. You could say something like, “Hello every-

one. Welcome to WATERinMOTION." Be clear about establishing that you are the leader.

Introduce yourself

Inform the class of your name and that you are the instructor for this class. If you are filling in for another instructor inform the class that the regular instructor asked you to come and lead them. Establishing your identity as the instructor helps clients understand their own role as the student in the class setting. You could say something like, "My name is Connie and I'll be leading the class today."

Introduce the class name and length

Review with the students in the class the name of the class they are attending and let them know how long the class is planned to go. Flight attendants always announce the flight number and destination of a flight before the airplane cabin is closed. They do this to make sure that everyone on the plane is on the correct plane traveling to the correct destination. I'm sure they do this because it has proven to be a problem in the past. How upset would you be if you ended up in Cleveland when you had planned on going to Hawaii?! Just like taking a plane to a destination, your students need to hear that they are in the right place at the right time for the right class. You could say something like, "This is an hour-long WATERinMOTION class."

Explain the structure

Students who understand the class plan trust the instructor and apply themselves more effectively. Briefly review the type of movement that will occur first, next and last. Include that the class will start with a warm-up, progress to cardio to get your blood pumping and lungs breathing, followed by isolated muscle exercises for the upper and lower body and core, and then finishing with relaxing, flexibility stretches. Also mention that each song will have three movement patterns that are repeated three times. This one piece of information has transformed my classes. Before including the song structure in the introduction, my students seemed to be unable to remember the moves. Now that I include a reminder in the introduction that "each song has three moves repeated three times," my clients are more confident in performing the moves and anticipating changes. They are moving with purpose and understanding. This is the one, most effective item to mention in the introduction.

Investigate special needs

Quickly ask if anyone has anything new about their body that you need to know prior to moving together – and getting older doesn't count! Then ask if anyone has to leave early today. If so, be understanding, give a reminder for them to stretch on their own and thank them for coming for some of the class.

Start the party

Now that you have their attention take advantage of the moment and tell them it's time to begin. Tell them the focus of the first track, the starting move and turn the music on. You could say something like, "It's time to get this party started! The warm-up starts with a jog. Let's go!"

This 6-part introduction may seem like a lot of information but it can be delivered in less than 2 minutes. Write out what you'd like to say in your own words and practice it until you can deliver it smoothly. Here is a full example:

Hi everyone. Welcome to class.

My name is Connie and I'll be leading the class today.

This is an hour-long WATERinMOTION class.

Remember that WATERinMOTION has a specific structure-each song has three moves repeated three times. We'll start with a warm-up, then cardio, followed by some upper and lower body work then core. We'll finish with a relaxing flexibility segment.

Does anyone have anything new about their body that I need to know before we move together? Anyone need to leave early today?

Alright, let's get this party started. We'll start the warm-up with a jog. Let's go!

Now it's your turn. Write out your own introduction and practice, practice, practice. In no time you will see how getting off on the right foot can impact the success of your class.

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