Exercise is vital to good health. It’s good for the heart, it’s good for the body, and it’s even good for the brain.

You’re more likely to exercise regularly if you enjoy it, and one of the most enjoyable forms of exercise is dancing. Many physical education teachers have found that line dancing, in particular, can get even the shyest kids to get moving. Plus, you don’t need equipment, just a bare floor and music.

If you’re new to line dancing, choose a song and watch it danced in a YouTube video. Once you are hooked, start building your music library. Ask families for CDs, borrow them from your public library, or download from the Internet.

Walk through the steps first with children, and then dance to the music. After children have learned the simple steps and movements indicated below, add your own variations as you like. Invite children to form lines, and go.

The Chicken Dance
The Chicken Dance isn’t really a line dance because it’s usually performed in a circle or free-standing by individuals. But children love it, and it’s suitable for those as young as toddlers.

The dance originated in the 1950s from a polka written by an accordion player in Switzerland. He played the tune in his restaurant and in time added body movements. It wasn’t until 1971 when a Belgian publisher happened to visit the restaurant that the music was picked up and spread around the world. Today it is often performed at weddings and other celebrations.

The tune is available on children’s albums (Fisher-Price Toys, for example), polka music collections (Brave Combo’s World Dance Music), and singles (the late Frank Yankovic). The title may substitute Duck or Bird for Chicken.

Typically the dance is performed without lyrics,
but you might like to sing the following:

I don’t wanna be a chicken. (Move fingers and thumb together, as if to say, “Cheep, cheep, cheep, cheep.”)
I don’t wanna be a duck. (Bend elbows and move them forward and back, as if flapping wings.)
So I wag my tail. (Wiggle hips.)
Quack, quack, quack, quack. (Clap hands.)
(Make a quarter turn and repeat.)

**Cupid Shuffle**

Rhythm and blues singer Cupid made a hit with this dance on his album, *Time for a Change*. The steps are easy, and Cupid gives directions as he sings. The lyrics for the simplest part of the dance appear below. Invite children to clap their hands throughout.

To the right, to the right, to the right, to the right. (Take four steps sideways to the right.)
To the left, to the left, to the left, to the left. (Step sideways to the left.)
Now kick, now kick, now kick, now kick. (Move the right heel forward and back, then the left heel, then the right and left again.)
Now walk it by yourself. (Step and make a quarter turn to the right.)
(Repeat)

**Cha Cha Slide**

Mr. C the Slide Man, also known as D.J. Casper or Willie Perry, recorded the album *Cha Cha Slide* in 2000. He issued “Cha Cha Slide Part 2” in 2009. The words and steps below offer a simple version of the dance.

While clapping hands, as directed by the singer, bounce up and down in time to the music.

Everybody clap your hands.
Clap, clap, clap, clap your hands.
Clap, clap, clap, clap your hands.

All right, we’re gonna do the basic steps.
To the left. (Take sliding steps to the left.)
Take it back now, y’all. (Slide back to the right.)
One hop this time. (Hop forward.)
Right foot, let’s stomp. (Stomp with right foot.)
Left foot, let’s stomp. (Stomp with left foot.)
Cha cha real smooth. (Sway hips as you step forward and back.)

Turn it out. (Step, making a quarter turn to the right.)
(Repeat)

**Mexican Hat Dance**

Often called the national folk dance of Mexico, this dance probably originated in colonial times. It became world famous through Russian ballerina Anna Pavlova, who added it to her repertoire after visiting Mexico in 1919, and Mexican dancer-choreographer Amalia Hernandez, who founded Ballet Folklorico de Mexico in 1952.

When performed by professionals, the dance is beautiful, graceful, and demanding. But it has been simplified for children—and non-professionals—into two basic movements: hopping in place and then sliding right and left. The instructions below describe dancing in a line, but the dance is often performed in a circle and, of course, around a hat.

At parties and celebrations, the dance is performed without singing, but you can use the lyrics below, reprinted from The Learning Groove, www.the-learninggroove.com/#!mexican-hat-dance/ckt.

You step and step and step, and then you clap your hands. (Fold arms and hop in place, thrusting each foot forward in turn.)
You step and step and step, and then you clap your hands. (Repeat hopping.)
You step and step and step, and then you clap your hands. (Repeat hopping.)
You step and step and step around the Mexican hat. (Repeat hopping.)

Twirling and twirling around, I hope we don’t fall to the ground. (Link arms and slide-step to the right.)
Twirling and twirling around, around the Mexican hat. (Slide-step to the left.)
Twirling and twirling around, I hope we don’t fall to the ground. (Slide-step to the right.)
Twirling and twirling around, around the Mexican hat.
(Slide-step to the left.)

**Chorus in Spanish:**
Da un paso, un paso, un paso, y da dos palmas.
Da un paso, un paso, un paso, y da dos palmas.
Da un paso, un paso, un paso, y da dos palmas.
Da un paso, un paso, un paso alrededor del sombrero.

**Macarena**
The Spanish pop duo Los del Río (Those from the River) recorded this song in 1995, and it became a global hit almost overnight. The song is about a woman of the same name or any woman from the La Macarena neighborhood of Seville in Spain.

Because the original lyrics and many videos of this tune are aimed at adults, get a children’s version (Sesame Street, Kimbo Educational). Start with feet together, and bounce up and down in time to the music throughout, adding the movements below.

Dale a tu cuerpo alegría, Macarena. (Thrust right arm forward, then left arm.)
Que tu cuerpo es pa’ darle alegría y cosa Buena.
(Bring right hand to back of neck, then left hand to back of neck.)
Dale a tu cuerpo alegría, Macarena. (Bring right hand to right waist, then left hand to left waist.)
¡Eh, Macarena! Aaay! (Sway body right and left, then jump a quarter turn.)
(Repeat)

**English lyrics**
Give happiness to your body, Macarena.
‘Cause your body is for giving happiness and good things.
Give happiness to your body, Macarena.
Heeey, Macarena! Aaay!

**YMCA**
The Village People, a six-member disco group that started in Greenwich Village, recorded this song in 1978 as a filler on its album, *Crusin’*. Fans created the dance, using their arms to form the letters, and made it enormously popular.

Today the dance is often performed at weddings and sports events. According to one source, the largest YMCA dance occurred in 2008 when the Village People performed it at halftime of the Sun Bowl in El Paso where 40,148 fans danced it.

Use a marching step throughout the dance, adding movements below. For variation, substitute *W* for *M* and *woman* for *young man*.

Young man, there’s no need to feel down.
I said, young man, pick yourself off the ground (raise arms up as if lifting up).
I said, young man (point finger to front), ‘cause you’re in a new town.
There’s no need (thrust right arm up to the right) to (thrust left arm up to the left) be (thrust right arm down to left) un- (thrust left arm down to right so
arms cross) happy (clap hands).

Young man (point finger to front), there’s a place you can go.
I said, young man (point finger to front), when you’re short on your dough.
You can stay there (point to the back), and I’m sure you will find
Many ways to have a good time (step right and left, clapping hands on each beat).

It’s fun to stay at the Y (stop, raise arms outward to form a Y), M (bring fingers to rest on shoulders), C (curve arms to the left) A (bring arms to a point overhead).
It’s fun to stay at the YMCA (repeat).
They have everything for young men to enjoy.
You can hang out with all the boys (step right and left, clapping hands on each beat).

Cotton-Eyed Joe
The folk song Cotton-Eyed Joe (or Cotton Eye Joe), has been popular for decades primarily in Texas and the South. Although its true origin is unknown, it has been recorded many times and is often played in dance halls and at parties. One popular version appears on two albums by Asleep at the Wheel. Several collections of children’s music also contain the song.

This dance calls for heel and toe taps as well as a grapevine step, which means sweeping one foot around behind the other, and then stepping to the side in the same direction. Simple instructions for the dance appear at www.dancintime.com/blog/tag/cotton-eyed-joe/.

If it hadn’t been (Move the right heel forward and tap twice: heel, heel.)
For Cotton-Eyed Joe, (Move the right toe back and tap twice: toe, toe.)
I’d been married (Step the right foot to the right, then across to the front.)

Long time ago. (Step the right foot to the right, then across the back.)
Where did you come from? (Grapevine to the right—left foot behind the right—and stop on the right. Then touch or scuff with the left foot.)
Where did you go? (Grapevine to the left—right foot behind the left—and stop on the left, then touch or scuff with the right foot.)
Where did you come from, Cotton-Eyed Joe? (Step to the left, turning in a complete circle.)