



Tap Dance Penguin!

This tap-dancing penguin wants to dance too! Use the penguin as your class ally -- it can "whisper" ideas to you during class and high-five the kids. You could also find & use a cute penguin stuffed animal or puppet in the same way.





Tap Dance Penguin!

Tap Class Ideas

for Preschool Age & Elementary Age for Virtual & In-Person Classes

Whenever I see a penguin, my mind automatically goes to Mumble, the tap dancing penguin from the animated movie, Happy Feet!

When I am able to, I show my students a quick clip from the movie at the top of class -- this is my favorite one to show since it is short, sweet, and features tap dance as the hero:

Happy Feet Trailer

If you would like to show your dancers a little bit of behind-the-scenes footage of how the animators created Mumble, based on Savion Glover, these two clips are great!

Happy Feet Behind The Scenes

Savion Glover & Mumble

After that, we're inspired and ready to start tapping like a penguin!

On the next pages, I've listed some of the tap activities that I use for my preschool age tappers as well as for my early elementary age tap dancers. I hope that these are a launching point for all of the penguin ideas that you can come up with!

Adding a fun theme, like penguins, to my classes helps my students to happily review and reframe steps they already know as well as make connections on new steps.

The next pages will break down some specific activities for each age group

You can start your class with a simple question -- Who can tell me something about a penguin? Your students' hands will quickly shoot into the air! By adding their ideas, they will feel included and a part of the lesson!



Preschool Age Tap Class



Interactive Tool: Blank Penguin Printable (see next page)

We begin class by saying hello to our penguin and giving it a name (mine is named Tappy!). I tell the kids, "My penguin wants to tap dance with us! Yours probably does too!"

Here are some of my favorite penguin-themed tap skill activities!

Waddle Like A Penguin -- Put your penguin nearby so it can watch you!

- Bounce knees and tilt body side to side on the beat - flex your hands like penguin flippers
- Do 8 toe drops (lift your penguin toes), then scoot waddle forward for 4 then back
- Repeat with alternating toe drops, and toes open-close
- Repeat with heel drop and boogie woogie
- Waddle anywhere!

Penguin Party! -- Put your penguin in the center of your space

Before you begin the music, review your traveling steps: MARCH, MARCH ON BALLS OF FEET, HEEL BALANCE WALKS (steps on back edges of heel taps), JUMPS, HEEL-TOE WALKS, MARCH BACKWARD, STEP CLAP, & MORE

With the music, call out a traveling step, and ask your dancers to do that step moving in a circle around their penguin. When you shout PENGUIN PARTY, they jump into the middle with their penguin and jam to the music with any step they would like! Then you call out the next traveling step and they begin again.

Slip & Slide Like A Penguin -- Hold your penguin

Penguins love to slide on their bellies! Let's slide our toe taps!

- balance on one foot, with the other in shuffle "ready position" for counts 1234
- then do shuffle shuffle shuffle step for counts 5&6&7&8
- repeat on other foot
- try shuffle steps alternating feet
- ask the dancers for other ways they could slide like a penguin -- drag step, ice-skating slides, etc



Elementary Age Tap Class



Interactive Tool: Tap Dance Penguin Brainstorm Printable (see next page)

With this age group, I like to have them think critically about the steps we're learning. When I tie it to a theme, I see them make so many connections! They often think of things - relevant things - that may never have crossed my mind!

Ask the students to grab a pen or pencil and their Tap Dance Penguin Brainstorm sheet.

What are some action words that describe a penguin? How do they move? They can share their ideas and write down their ideas as well as those of their classmates.

Now, what are some tap steps that remind you of how a penguin moves? (This is where the magic really happens! You can see how they have really been absorbing what they've learned in class.) Write down all of the steps on the belly of the penguin.

Then, stand up and use all of their ideas as a follow-along tap warm-up!

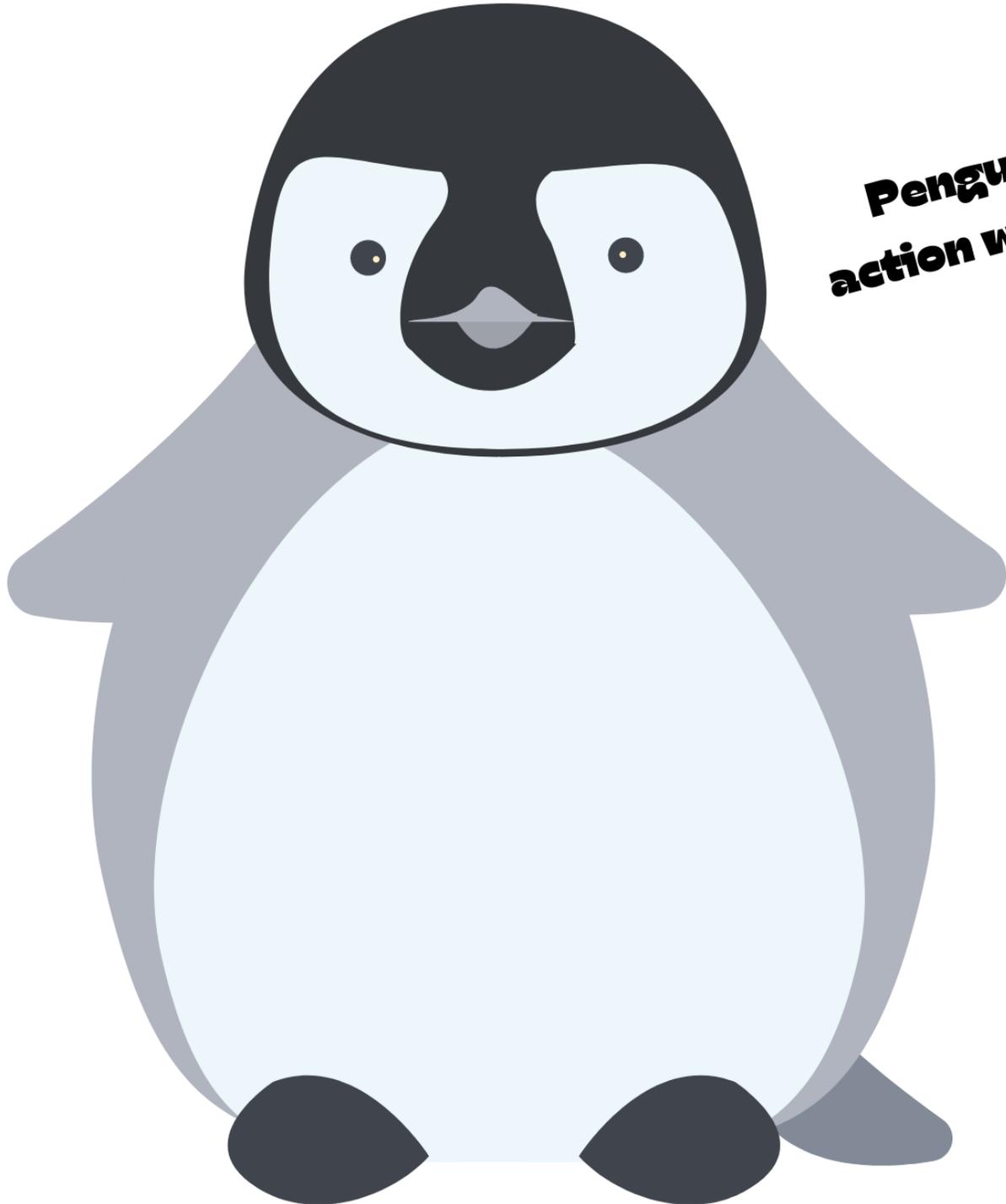
Choose a song, and then call out and demonstrate each of the steps that they came up with, in any sequence! You could do it all a slow tempo, then medium then fast. You could take a step and make it travel. Anything goes! The key is having them follow you with the ability to change to the next step and adapt to the new speed in the moment.

I've included an example sheet, so you can see some of the ideas my students brainstormed (with some additions from me).

After we do this Penguin Warm-up, we then played the **Crack The Ice Tap Dance Game**, which is a fun and interactive skill-building & skill review game. (You can find this one [HERE](#) if you are interested).



Tap Dance Penguin Brainstorm



**Penguin
action words**

Tap Steps That Remind Us of Penguins



Tap Dance Penguin

Brainstorm EXAMPLE

waddle

swim

slide

**Penguin
action words**

lean

heel-balance

point together

drag step

step touch

jump apart together

ballchange

flaps

heel-toe walks

shuffle steps

chug

crawls

Tap Steps That Remind Us of Penguins