

SCHOOL'D BY FUNKMODE

You want to become a Hip Hop expert? Learn the info below and you're on your way, yo!

I AM HIP HOP (A 5-PART SERIES) - PART 1: INTRODUCTION

Most people enter the world of Hip Hop through one or two of several doors that give access to the culture. Perhaps you came to Hip Hop through dancing and therefore were introduced to Hip Hop movement and music at the same time. Or maybe you were a visual artist who always enjoyed Hip Hop music and then also found a desire to learn the specific style of Graffiti art. Whatever your personal experience, if you have been around Hip Hop for any length of time, you have probably come to understand that Hip Hop is far more than just dancing, music or art. Hip Hop is its own universe complete with its own language, its own style of dress, its own heroes, villains and pioneers, its own rich history and an evolution in each of these areas that has spanned now over 40 years. If you are new to Hip Hop, you are about to be introduced to an amazing and exciting world that you may ultimately come to represent. Anyone who says, "I'm a Hip Hop dancer" or "I love Hip Hop music" or uses the language of Hip Hop or wears Hip Hop styles is saying to the world, "I am Hip Hop." In this five-part series, we are going to help you to be the best representative possible of Hip Hop culture so that you can say, "I am Hip Hop" and mean it.

You may be asking yourself, "What is all of this talk about Hip Hop culture?" To answer that, think first about what the word "culture" means. A culture is the combination of traditions, habits, beliefs and pursuits shared by a group of people. Most often, we think of culture as it relates to the people of a particular country. For example, when we speak about "Japanese Culture", we are talking about the customs of the people of Japan, such as how they live, the type of work they engage in, the music that they listen to, the art they create, their social habits, their general likes and dislikes, their history and their traditions. However, culture is not exclusive to a geographic area. The word culture can be applied to any particular group of people who share any of the characteristics mentioned above. Therefore, when we look at all of the similarities of habits, ideas, history and traditions shared by people who claim Hip Hop as their field of interest, we say they are sharing a culture.

The next question you might ask yourself, then, is how does one become a member of any particular culture? Well, in the case of Japanese culture, it might be as simple as being born in Japan. Someone growing up in Japan is likely to speak the language, eat the foods, practice the traditions, share the beliefs and personally identify with being a representative of Japanese culture. However, though it is far less common, it is absolutely possible to be born in Japan but not speak the language, wear the clothing, nor participate in any of the practices or beliefs typically associated with Japanese culture. Therefore, being a representative of any particular culture is largely a matter of choice. How does one choose to be a part of Hip Hop culture? First, it is important to remember that Hip Hop culture is no single thing but a combination of things that are shared by people. It is possible to listen to Hip Hop music but not represent Hip Hop culture. It is possible to take Hip Hop dance classes but not be a representative of the culture. To represent a culture, one must do three things. First, a person must have an understanding of the culture and its history. Secondly, one must participate in the culture in various ways. Finally, a representative of a culture must work to advance the culture either through creative contribution and/or sharing it with others.

This may sound like a lot to do, but representing a culture is not something that is done passively. It is a series of choices that connect who you are as a person to other people who share your same feelings, outlook and interests. Still, in case you're just starting out, let's look at the three points and make it simpler. First, to learn about Hip Hop culture and history, you can start right here with the SCHOOL'd by FUNKMODE lessons. There are many to choose from covering everything from fashion to music to Hip Hop's pioneers. Next, to participate in Hip Hop culture, simply continue what you are doing now. If you're dancing, keep dancing and enjoy more Hip Hop music. This might lead you to learning Hip Hop slang and maybe fashion. Using the SCHOOL'd lessons will also likely expose you to more of the culture that appeals to you, which you'll then want to share and express. Third, once you have a knowledge of the culture and are participating in it personally, you'll eventually start to tell others about it and even begin contributing yourself. Perhaps you'll start making dances or writing rhymes. Maybe you'll design clothes or come up with your own slang. Whatever you choose, you'll have started on the path to representing the culture. And once you know it, participate in it and contribute to it, you'll be ready to declare proudly, "I am Hip Hop."

SCHOOL'D BY FUNKMODE

HIP HOP WORDS OF THE WEEK

On lock: To have something secured, in control or taken care of without a doubt.

EX: "The score's like, 48-0. The 49ers got this game on lock."

On the _____ tip: On a particular subject as designated by whatever is stated in the blank space.

EX: "That dance they put together was fully representin on the old school tip. They even did the Cabbage Patch!"

Big ups: Congratulations or praise. As if to say "A big thumbs up" or to be lifting someone up in a big way.

EX: "Big ups to my main man John for graduating with straight-As."

BONUS: Create a sentence using all words of the week

EXTRA LEARNING

- 1) What aspect of Hip Hop culture did you discover first and which one would you like to know more about?
- 2) Which aspect of Hip Hop culture do you think you represent best right now and why?
- 3) Who is someone that you've encountered on TV, in music, films or real life that you feel is a good representative of Hip Hop culture and why?