

# SHAPE

## *Samba: We Tried It!*

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My love for dancing through a workout started back in elementary school gym class when we'd get down to "The Twist," something my friends and I still reminisce about. Lately, that love has only blossomed with Zumba and many nights dedicated to mimicking MJ's moves (watch one attempt to do so [here](#). **So when I was given the opportunity to try a Samba class at The Ailey Extension in NYC, I jumped at it.**



In true Afro Brazilian style, we all took off our shoes (this class is done barefoot), and got on the floor as our instructor, Quenia (second from the left in the photo) led us through a lengthy (30-minute!) warm-up consisting of stretching and ab exercises. As soon as we finished, a live band arrived to help us keep time to our Samba routines.

We started the dance portion with choreography Quenia referred to as Samba Do Rio, named after her hometown of Rio De Janeiro in Brazil. Its technical name: Samba No Pe, or "Samba on your feet." We lined up in groups of four on one side of the room and followed Quenia (who has some serious Rihanna swag in her step) as she shimmied across the floor. She continued to build on the routine each time we returned to the starting position, and though it took a few tries to keep up with the group—I must say I never executed the booty-shaking quite like Quenia and some others—but it was so much fun!

We then began a second routine, which was a simpler, more side-to-side version called Samba Reggae. The band was especially helpful, as we coordinated each movement to the sound of the drum. Quenia said this energetic and bouncy style, from Bahia Brazil, is often used in street parades and parties—and I could see why!

We wrapped up the 90-minute class with Quenia leading small groups through moves like plantars (a step and slide) and corta capim (putting weight on one foot and making circles with the other) to the cheers of our [fellow dancers](#). And finally, after one Quenia-led train around the room and a jump to the beat, we all finished smiling and clapping—and drenched in sweat!

To try Samba, pick up one of Quenia's dance workout DVDs at [sambasambasamba.com](http://sambasambasamba.com) or if you're in NYC, head to one of her classes at [Alvin Ailey](#).