

When a honey bee dances, she's not just shaking a leg or twisting the night away, she's probably telling the other bees something very important. Honey bees perform different dances to communicate. They perform the round dance and the waggle dance to tell the other bees where to find nectar. When a good source of nectar is found far from the hive, a scout bee performs the waggle dance. She is telling the other bees exactly where to go to find the nectar.

Read the steps of the waggle dance below and then use the diagram to see what the dance pattern looks like.

1. The scout bee flies from the hive to find a good source of nectar.
2. The scout bee locates a good source of nectar, such as a field of flowers, and collects some nectar and pollen while she's there. She also leaves a scent on the flowers to help her fellow bees find the flowers again.
3. The scout bee returns to the hive and—after she gets past the guards!—goes into the hive to tell the other foraging bees where to find the nectar.
4. The scout bee orients herself along the middle line of the hive. (Hives hang vertically, and the imaginary line that runs from top to bottom tell the bees about direction in relation to the sun: if the bee moves towards the top of the hive, she communicates towards the sun; if she moves towards the bottom of the hive, she means away from the sun.)
5. The scout bee begins her dance as the other bees watch and feel the vibrations.



6. First, the scout bee waggles by shaking her abdomen back and forth as she moves along the line. How fast she shakes her abdomen tells the bees something about how good the nectar source is. The faster the shake, the better the nectar. The length of the line she waggles also tells other bees about distance. The longer the line, the farther the source.



7. Next, she circles back around to the beginning of the waggle line. The angles she draws by her dance tells the other bees what direction, in relation to the sun, to go to find the nectar source.



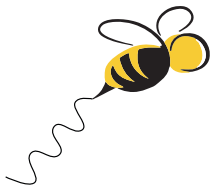
8. Then, she dances the waggle along the middle line again.



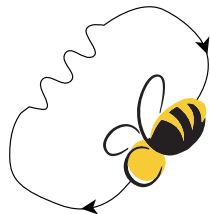
9. Finally, she circles around the other side and back to the beginning of the waggle line, completing a figure eight.

10. The scout bee may continue dancing this pattern for a short time or a long time. The longer the she dances the better the quality of the source and the more foraging bees can see the dance, take the directions, and fly off to gather nectar.

1.



2.



3.



4.

