

Dance Tips

Courtesy of J M Nelson <jmnelson.com>

Fundamentals of Partner Dancing

Step with the music and maintain cadence.

Step normally - forward, backward, or side.

Extended Arms - firmly flexible, elbows **always** slightly in front of shoulder line, upper arm almost rigid and never moving fore and aft, lower arm more flexible, hands lightly connected but not gripping.

Wrapped Arms - man's right hand on partner's shoulder blade, gentle, uniform pressure on man's right hand, woman's arm positioned gently along man's arm.

Torsos - parallel, right foot points between partner's feet. Step normally, and feet will not collide. Maintain symmetry when not parallel.

Open Frame - elbows at side and **slightly** forward, arms **never** fully extended, especially in Swing dances. Hands never grip. **Gentle** push or pull.

The Dance Frame

Your dance frame is the connection that enables leading and following. **You cannot learn enough "steps" to compensate for a poor dance frame.**

Line of Dance

Line of Dance prevents collisions by establishing a predictable traffic flow around the dance floor.

- Progress counterclockwise
- Outside lane - fast progressive dancing
- Inside lane - slow progressive dancing
- Center of dance floor - non-progressive

Polite dancers follow Line of Dance guidelines.

Step Normally

In our normal walk, we step forward, backward, or to the side. We should do the same when we dance. If you already walk upright and smoothly, little initial change need be considered. If you slump, bounce, clunk or stomp when you walk, then you need to make some adjustments when you dance.

Stay in Cadence

Let the music and style dictate **when** to step, then you will be able to concentrate on the more discretionary **where** to step. Though advanced dancers might change cadence during a song, most of our partners will expect a single cadence throughout the song. Whether SQQ, QQS, SSQQ, or some other cadence, start it together, and maintain it tenaciously.

Leaders

Start on the appropriate beat, usually the *down beat*, and maintain a steady, predictable cadence throughout the song. Reserve taking liberties with cadence until you are certain that your partner can comfortably adjust. For beginners, even a change of cadence during a foxtrot might be confusing.

Followers

Don't commit to a step until your leader indicates where it should go; better to step in place than *end up some place else*. Keep your moving foot free until you get direction, then follow the lead as indicated, either staying in cadence or returning to cadence at your earliest opportunity.

Colliding Feet

Feet will not collide if you stay in position and step normally. (See **Torsos** above.)

Underarm Turns

Leader's Connection. Keep your upper arm vertical and lower arm horizontal or near horizontal, fingers pointed downward to form a pivot. Leaders should provide an invitation and direction, not energy.

Follower's Connection. Upper arm horizontal, lower arm vertical, hand forming a socket for the leader's pivot fingers.

Progressive Turn. In progressive dances, such as country two-step, foxtrot, waltz, keep moving along line of dance during your turn.

Non-Progressive Turn. In non-progressive dances, such as rumba, cha cha, bolero, and swing, turn in place; avoid drifting away from your partner.

Alternate Connection. Experienced dancers often execute underarm turns with the leader's finger tips gently pressing into the follower's open palm.

Dance Don'ts

No cologne or perfume on hands or clothing
No chewing gum while dancing
No verbal directions; if you can't lead it, don't do it.
No sharp or dangling jewelry
No bare backs or large, open sleeves
No Spiders, No birds, No lobsters