

Ballroom Basics

During lessons, we discuss many of the following elements of ballroom dancing.

Dance Styles

- Styles
 - International – Standard & Latin; ISTD Syllabus
 - American – Smooth & Rhythm
 - Nightclub dances
- Standard/Smooth – traveling dances e.g. Waltz, Viennese Waltz, Tango, Foxtrot, Quickstep
- Latin/Rhythm – spot dances e.g. Cha Cha, Rumba, East Coast Swing, Mambo, Merengue, West Coast Swing, Bolero, Jive, Samba
- Nightclub – Nightclub Two Step, Hustle, Salsa, Lindy Hop, Argentine Tango

Dance Etiquette

- Leading partner on and off the floor
- Lady's choice – dance to lady's ability and "closeness"
- Line of Dance (LOD) – fast lanes, slow lanes, counter-clockwise
- Navigation – "floor crafting"
- Leader/follower – leader uses "core" to communicate with follower; "The body dances, not the feet"
- Invitation to the lady for a figure
- Courtesy rules: Never criticize your partner. Always demonstrate respect, trust, cooperation and politeness. Smile!

Dance Frame

- "Look where you're going"
- Posture – 4 blocks: head, shoulder, rib cage, hips
- Dance positions
- ToneBalance – slightly forward on foot; never use your partner for balance
- Contact – with each other and with the floor
- Character of dance
- Turn-out
- Lead a step with the ribcage to bring the weight of the body on supporting leg and over the "empty" weight foot

Timing/tempo/count/beat value

- Time – e.g. 3/4 (Waltz, Viennese Waltz), 4/4 (most ballroom dances), 2/4 (Samba)
- Tempo – speed of music, beats per minute (bpm), measures/bars per minute (mpm)
- Count – the timing of a dance which determines when a dancer steps in relation to the music
- Beat value – regular rhythmic pulse in music; the number of beats of music for each step, weight change or action
- Examples: Rumba – Slow, quick, quick, slow, quick, quick (SQQSQQ) – the slow is equal to twice the value of a quick
- Samba – the slow is equal to one beat; the quick is a half beat
- Recommend: count out loud or to yourself. It will help with timing and footwork

Dance positions – the relationship of the partners to each other

- Closed position
- Open position
- Shadow position
- Promenade Position – create Promenade position by rotating the body, not by pushing with the arms, which results in breaking your frame.
- Counter Promenade Position
- Fallaway Position
- Left or right side position
- Left or right outside position (outside partner)

Handholds

- Double hand hold
- Single hand hold
- Handshake

Precedes and follows

Steps

Refers to the weight change from one foot to the other; from one vertical position to another on the platform of the foot. Most steps are full weight changes (weight goes fully from one foot to the other).

**Never finish a dance step with full weight on both feet.

Footwork/foot position

- Foot position – the direction of the moving foot in relation to the standing foot and body; LF=left foot, RF=right foot (see detail page 8)
- Footwork – the part of the foot in contact with the floor
 - Heel, ball, toe, flat
 - H=heel, T=Toe, B=Ball – HT=heel/toe; TH=toe/heel

- Right foot tracks in between partner's feet in a closed position
- CBMP – (contra body movement position) – a foot position taken forward or backward in which the moving foot is placed on the same track or beyond (e.g. across) the track of the standing foot
- Side step with the inside edge of the foot
- Always move your body first, then feet

Lead and follow

- “Bend and send” – compression (muscular contraction) of supporting leg prior to moving/swinging free leg
- Use of body and weight to signal moves; move from “core”
- Leader starts with LEFT foot (leader leads left)
- Follower starts with RIGHT foot (because the lady's always RIGHT ...)
- Follower initiates a movement a split second after the lead
- Follower attempts to adjust her steps to partner's lead

CBM – (contra body movement)

The action of moving the opposite side of the torso toward the moving leg, usually to initiate a turn

Turns – which shoulder is moving backward? Right or left ...

- Natural spins – to right
- Reverse spins – to left
- Amount of turn
- Inside of turn vs. outside of turn – Is partner (or leader) moving in or outside of the circle?
- “Step, then turn” – need to achieve new inline vertical position before turning

Swing and Sway

- Swing – the rise and fall when dancing – think of a child on a swing
- Sway – inclination (lean) toward center of the turn and away from the moving foot– think of motorcycle

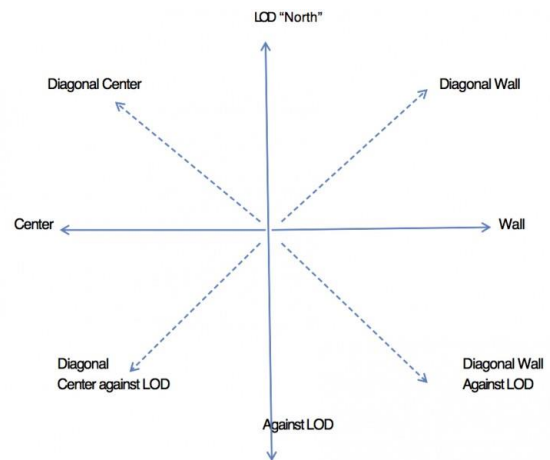
Abbreviations: (partial sampling)

A – against
 BF – ball flat
 BH – ball heel
 C – center
 CBM – contra body movement
 CBMP – contra body movement position
 CP – closed position
 DC – diagonal center
 DHH – double hand hold
 DC – diagonal center

DW – diagonal wall
 F – facing
 FallP – fallaway position
 L – left
 LF – left foot
 OP – outside partner
 OPP – open promenade position
 P – pointing
 Q – quick
 R – right
 RF – right foot
 S – slow
 T – toe
 TH – toe heel
 UAT – under arm turn
 W – wall
 XHH – cross handhold

Alignment

Used in traveling dances: The direction the FEET are aimed in relation to the room and LOD.



Easy “compass” reference: Standing with straight wall to your right; going clockwise. You are “backing” when moving backwards.

- Line of Dance (LOD) – North
- Diagonal Wall – Northeast
- Wall – East
- Diagonal wall against LOD – South east
- Against LOD – South
- Diagonal center against LOD – Southwest
- Center – West
- Diagonal Center – Northwest

Amount of Turn

