

Larry's Corner

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Do you have any likes or dislikes, stories, or helpful hints for dancing? If so, write it down and give to Larry Ablin or Barb Johnson. We will add it to one of the future News letters.

If you would like to tell us how you became interested in dancing, write it down and give to Larry or Barb, we will add your picture with it and put it in one of the future Newsletters

If you have anything you would like to write for us, just write it up and give to Barb or Larry.

I enjoy writing something for you. LARRY

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PIVOT

take a step, heel-flat-ball, and once all your weight is on that foot, rotate on it. Feet never close. Keep other foot in extended 5th position - CBMP - throughout with knees and thighs together, hips under, shoulders down.

Traveling pivots are 1/2 turns on each step. Travel on one line. On backward half of pivot, don't drop onto heel - stay on ball of foot. Practice traveling pivots in 5th position, CBMP. On last pivot, land in 3rd position with back knee bent.

In the ballroom world a "pivot" is defined as being made on one foot - the man's BACK foot - with the other foot held in CBMP. It is a stronger turn than the normal natural and reverse turns. Stronger CBM is used and the stronger rotation results in the pivot being made with less progression and without rise. The Waltz "natural spin turn" consists of steps 1-3 of a natural turn, a pivot for the man on step 4 (lady has a pivoting action) and a spin on steps 5 and 6.

Pivoting around a "pivot point:" a pivot point is a foot that could be nailed to the floor and you could still complete that turn. For example, consider a spot turn to your right in (say, int'l) Rumba. On count 4-1, you place your right foot to your right side. Now, drive a railroad spike through your foot (ouch!), but not so deeply that you can't lift the foot a little bit up and down. Notice that you can *still* complete the turn, despite the screaming (8-). The foot you nailed to the floor is the pivot foot; that is,

you pivot around that foot.

SPIN

First wind up and swing inside arm without letting the elbow go behind you, then swing outside arm and leg together. For 1 foot spins, draw free foot in, point toe, come out in 3rd position.

In the ballroom world a "spin" is made on the man's forward foot. The spin is made on the ball of one foot while the other foot is kept sideways until weight is placed on it. You turn about your own axis with no sway. A spin turn is a two step turn.

It is a stronger turn than the normal natural and reverse turns. Stronger CBM is used and the stronger rotation results in the pivot being made with less progression and without rise. The Waltz "natural spin turn" consists of steps 1-3 of a natural turn, a pivot for the man on step 4 (lady has a pivoting action) and a spin on steps 5 and 6.

CHAINE'

CHAINE' (sheh-NAY) turn - A spin done on 2 feet, 2 steps - close ankles tightly. Traveling chaine's are: step onto your left foot, do a full turn with your weight remaining on your left foot, then step onto your right foot. The entire turn is done on one foot. forward, together, forward, together. (Feet close on the "together.")

Both Chaine's and Pivots will give 1 full turn in two steps. The pivot will visually be very smooth. The chaine turns will have a snappy look.

SPIRAL

SPIRAL - end up with legs crossed, supporting leg behind. Used by women for a 2nd turn on the S S in Country 2-step.

SWIVEL

SWIVEL - a turn executed on the ball of the supporting foot, executed on one foot, in one spot. Chicken Walk - Outside turn swivels, Jive Walk - Inside turn swivels Sugar Foot.

PADDLE TURN

PADDLE TURN - In a paddle turn to the Left, your R foot "paddles" - pushes or rotates you around your supporting (Left) leg. A paddle turn to the left

would be three steps LRL. Pushing off the R foot, turn 180 degrees on the spot as you step on the L. You should stand straight, and keep your nose, shoulders, hips, and L toe all pointing the same direction (i.e. don't twist or lean). Do not rise up on the ball of your L foot. In fact, you can bend the knees slightly to get better balance. Next, bring the R foot around and close it to the L. Then repeat the 180 turn, pushing off the R and stepping onto the L.

It is good to practice as 3 separate steps, stopping in-between to make sure you have the right amount of turn, alignment, and balance. Then gradually blend the three steps together into a continuous 5&6 QQQ, turning slowly at first, then turning faster. If you start to wobble, slow down and/or try again later. Don't let your feet get too far apart during the paddle turn. Whether you start with the paddle turn or try spins early on, keep those feet close together! At first, you can step on a flat foot, i.e. toe and heel, then move to the ball of your foot to make the turning easier. Eventually, you'll be able to increase the turn per step and double spin on a 5&6& count.

It is often easier to learn to spin by triple stepping, or 'paddling' through a turn, not just spinning on one foot. You can do a double turn on one triple-step as follows:

- say you're doing a right turn, turning on your right foot
- kick-start yourself with your left foot (trip-)
- the first time your left foot comes down (-ple) you are already facing forward, your left foot is slightly in front of your right, and you kick yourself into the next turn

the second time your left foot comes down you are again facing forward This double turn can function as 5&6 in WCS, follower's turn, or simultaneous leader (R turn) and follower (L turn) on the 1&2 of ECS after a side (instead of a back) rock step.

HOOK TURN

HOOK TURN - You can hook one foot behind the other and spin. You can either leave both feet in place or bring the foot you hooked behind with around to do another on the next two beats. It's

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easy to stay in place with these. Spinning on one foot usually makes it easier to stay in one place too. To do a hook turn to the R from weight on the L foot, first place your R foot hooked behind and to the side of your L, and put half your weight on the R. Next, untwist your feet, turning 180 degrees to the R, keeping your L aligned with your hips, shoulders, and nose (i.e. don't twist or lean). You should end up with all weight on your L. You can then continue turning with a RLR paddle turn, or 1/2 paddle turn RL.

Basics Of Turning And Spinning

Leaders, if you only remember one thing, this should be it: Global lead/follow rule - Lead Direction Before Rotation. This means that if it's a traveling spin, you must lead her to travel before leading her to spin. If it's a stationary spin, you must lead her to stay in place before leading the spin.

Leaders: In general, lead the turn with the connection that is closest to her center.

The way two dancer's bodies connect through the arms has a *lot* to do with how turns and spins come out. If you have a good connection with your partner... and he is reasonably good at leading... turns will be less and less of a problem.

Tips for good turning technique? Practice is the answer usually given. Others include:

- Keep knees slightly bent and relaxed - don't lock your knees!
- Keep spine, neck, head on a vertical axis. Maintain good posture - remember "KEEP NOSE OVER TOES". Keep the body "square" - head straight over shoulders over hips,- not to one side or the other. A person's head accounts for about 10% of his/her body weight - thus head placement and orientation have a huge effect on balance. Looking at your feet is as sabotaging as windshield-wiper-like oscillating your head from side to side. But so is the placement and orientation of every other body part. Dance posture is terribly important. Don't arch your back.
- Keep eyes looking forward, not down!
- Don't go up high on your toes.

- Spot on your partner in a turn.
- Use your arms for momentum.
- Keep feet together, turn on the balls of your feet, not heels.
- Stop in a definite pose.

First learn the 'paddle' turn and 'hook' turns instead of trying to spin on the ball of one foot. Once you get the paddle turns perfected, you can gradually switch to spins.

There are so many types of spins, spins on one foot, spins on both feet, spins shifting weight during the spin, singles, doubles, triples, hook behind and spin... which brings up the question: Are you learning how to "turn" or are you learning how to "spin"? A typical underarm _turn_ example is in the Cha Cha coming from a cross-over. The turn is actually begun with a step by the lady with her left foot fwd and turning to the right underarm and completed thereafter with the use of a Cha Cha Cha finish for the second half of the turn. This is a good place for the lady to start spotting on her partner to help her return to a position facing her partner after the underarm turn. Next, start exactly as above but add a second complete underarm turn. When this is done properly the "turn" is transformed into a "spin" and it will again be helpful for her to spot her partner.

There's not nearly as much material on traveling spins (which you need for two-step and such) as on spins in place. Spotting can throw you off if not done right. You have a starting and a braking foot. I'm sure that learning this technique will always benefit you somehow, but is there an inherent contradiction between this technique and the people who teach spotting, and count out the full footwork in spins (paddle turns and such)? Is there a time and place for both, or do you have to commit yourself to either? The answer is that these are like two "tools" in your spinning toolbox. Many dancers learn how to step through turns first and then learn spinning techniques much later. Stepping is still easier for a wider variety of leads. You are able to support your weight even if you get slightly off balance. Stepping seems easier to teach beginning spinners because it can be broken down, done step by step, gradually increasing the speed. Spinning is

much harder to break down. Breaking it down means starting with a quarter spin, then a half, then a whole, etc. But in a dance, you can't do just a quarter spin. You can step around a full spin, even if it's slower or less smooth than it will be eventually. Spinning relies on the objective of becoming a "pencil" so if the lead is a large circle or if the follower is not perfectly balanced it's not at all a safe bet for me. This kind of spinning also relies on very strong inner thigh muscles to keep one's legs, from shoe to torso, stuck together under one's center of balance. This is much harder than it seems, especially if the lead is not so strong, or the floor is not so smooth. If the lead is good and strong, and if the floor is smooth and clean, however, stepping seems to actually remove some of the momentum, slowing the spin down. This may or may not be desirable, but I feel like you have the choice to either spin or step.

When doing spins, keep your feet as close together as possible. You want weight on the ball of only one foot, and you can change from one foot to the other during the spin, but the non-weighted foot should be right beside the other and should be just skimming the floor. Again the point is to keep your center of gravity as close as possible to the axis of rotation.

"Many turns require the follower to turn in place. Try not to drift away from your partner when turning. That is, maintain your balance during the turn and stay atop of your feet. This is essential to staying in a slot during West Coast Swing."

Many dancers/teachers preach that anytime a man gets hit during a woman's spin it's his fault. It's his responsibility to adjust to her, even if she's off balance and out-of-control. After all, he's the one watching her spin and can see where she's headed when, if she's off kilter, she's watching the room blur by.

"The leader can turn too. Don't feel hesitant to turn to unravel out of an awkward position."

Your weight should be on the ball of your foot when turning. Ballet dancers turned ballroom dancer, get the nasty habit of turning up on their toes. This makes you become three inches taller when turning (not good!). Ankle rise used to lift the heel must be absorbed in the knees and hips. Also, stylistically, it can be a detriment to look like a ballerina and tippy-toe around the dance floor on straight legs. (When we want to insult another swing dancer, one of the most scathing words we can

evoke is "ballerina"! Ballet dancers switching to ballroom find that one of the most difficult habits to correct is coming down in their knees instead of standing tall and straight like a ballerina. The character of WCS is to dig into the floor - to keep your upper body gliding but low, so that your legs can bend, point, and do generally fancy footwork beneath you.) You can sometimes spot brand new ballroom dancers who came from a ballet background; you see a great topline and posture, but then you look down and notice that they spend a lot of time with straight legs, way up on their toes and that they show turn-out in unexpected places. Ballet and ballroom technique are different. For smooth dancing, heel leads, lowering, body swing and parallel feet are usually not instinctive. And in Latin, "No ballerina likes to do that with her hips".

While we're calling names, let's mention the derisive term "foot dancer" which used to be applied by Latinos and Swing dancers to studio trained types who moved their feet to the right places, but did nothing (musical, interesting or otherwise) with their bodies, sometimes not even changing weight fully.

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Teach Beginners at Singles All Together dance class on Monday night, at Lenox center on Minnetonka Blvd in St Louis Park.

Teach at Singles All Together on Tuesday night 8pm at Medina.

Teach Ballroom at Jefferson Community Ed on Thursday at 26th and Hennepin 612-668-2740
