



Larry's Corner

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Turning Speed And Timing

"During a slow song, turn slowly. It is not necessary to whip around a turn during a slow song unless you're doing a multiple turn. Instead, let yourself flow through the turn. Don't force it." Followers, when you are hurrying you tend to disconnect from your partner because you start worrying about where you have to be two seconds in the future.

Some pointers on turns. In doing a double turn coming out of a whip, one often begins the turn too early, on, say, the 5-count instead of waiting to anchor the right foot in place on the 6-count, then beginning the turn with feet very close together. A common mistake, is to swing that right foot out and back, hoping to help with the turn, but actually throwing oneself out of balance. And **DON'T PANIC!** It should be so easy!

A very common mistake is to rush the beginning of a spin or turn, thinking "this is gonna be fast and difficult, I'd better start it early so I'll have enough time!" Trouble is that we and our partner may not be in the right places quite yet; if we were, the difficult move might be easier. It's far better to get where you're going, take the time to get "grounded" with your body weight properly over what will be the pivoting foot, and then start your turn. If you don't get all this right it'll be next to impossible to correct it during the turn; this is what leads to "falling out of a spin". A surprising hint is to think in terms of starting the turn later. e.g. if you're going to spin on 5&6, don't start it just after 4! Finish whatever you were doing on 4, just as if you weren't going to spin, first. (syncopating as &3 4 rather than 3&4 gives you even more time to get there.)

Finish your spin before moving a foot away from this "spin position". If you anticipate the next "walk step", moving one foot away from the axis

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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before your spin is done, your spin will be done right there, as you fall off the axis! And when you do step away from the "spin position", try to make it a small step, so that you won't look as if you're falling out of the spin. Regardless of how many spins the dancer does, he/she must be able to come out of it BALANCED, otherwise he/she won't be able to follow or lead properly; they'll just fall all over the place. Not only can you tell the difference when you're not balanced, your partner can too.

In most dances, including WCS, you want to finish your spin in time to have at least a very brief pause (1/8? 1/4 beat maybe?) before you have to step away from the "spin foot position". If you don't have this brief moment I call this "settling time", it will look rushed. (this also is a distinction from Hustle styling -- Hustle looks better as the "settling time" gets shorter.) e.g. if you're spinning on 5&6, don't crowd the 1 too much. You almost want to give the impression that you had time to go around once more -- certainly that's better than giving the impression that you just barely had time, or even worse, didn't quite have time, to do what you did. (There are of course exceptions where a spin naturally flows into the next step, and in those cases you want it to look continuous, but these are obvious in context -- the above is a general rule, not an axiom.) A single spin done well, where you obviously are in control and had plenty of time before and after, ALWAYS looks better than a double spin that's obviously rushed (THAT'S an axiom!). To help stop yourself from turning, think of spreading your toes out, not curling them in. Also "Tweeze" - Twist & Squeeze your thighs and feet together which gives you good leg tone and can help you stop cleanly.

Some strongly advocate syncopating turns and such as 1 2&3 4 5&6. They reason that the most important part of any spin is the stop. So the &3 gets you into whatever pivot or turn sooner, thus making the turn (and the lady doing the turn) look snappier. Then, the lady has a full beat to slow down, settle, and prepare for the next two beats (which she will subsequently snap out, then slow down and settle).

Really good styling in WCS calls for doing spins with "soft stops". i.e. you should think in terms of slowing to a stop, not stopping suddenly. In

fact this is true of almost everything in WCS, especially in those places where you reverse direction. You should slow to a stop, have a brief pause, and then go on with the next thing; these reversals should usually not look sharp and abrupt. (This is one of the major errors made by WCS dancers who spent a lot of time doing Hustle before they learned WCS...) A perfect example is the "shuttle", aka "continuous whip". Many people think it looks better with sharp, abrupt stops, until they see a couple that does soft stops really well.

For guys leading the ladies in non-free spins: If she isn't comfortable going twice around in two counts, if she isn't COMPLETELY done with the second turn in time to have some "settling time", she'll feel rushed -- so don't keep pushing it. Most ladies like to be challenged a little bit during any given song, but hardly anyone likes to feel that they're constantly "not quite there". Be a sensitive leader. Adjust to the ability of your partner.

WHY SHOULD I LEARN TO DANCE?

For fun, enjoyment

Improve self-confidence

Meet more people and make new friends

A form of exercise

Relaxation

A better social life

Throw (or go to) more parties

self-improvement

a hobby/interest

popularity

overcome shyness

entertainment

sense of achievement

better health

happiness

better posture

Cometitions

LEARNING TO DANCE

Can I learn to dance?

Yes, anyone can learn to dance. If you can walk and keep your balance, you can learn to dance.

How long will it take?

You will start dancing from your very first lesson. To complete a course, it usually takes between 8 to 12 lessons.

How much will each lesson cost?

Group lessons cost between S\$60 to S\$100 per course, depending on the level of the dance and the reputation of the teacher. Private lessons cost S\$40 to S\$60 per hour.

Do I have to relearn my steps often?

Frequent practice is recommended if you want to remain polished in your dancing. However, once you have learned the basic steps in a dance, you can easily pick up the new variations, sometimes by just observing how other people do them.

Can I learn at a time convenient to me?

Most dance schools run classes in the evening from Monday to Sunday. Afternoon classes are also available but only if there are sufficient students to form a class. Individual classes can be scheduled anytime.

What is the best way to learn?

If you are new, you should take group lessons, which will introduce you to more dance enthusiasts and let you have a rotation of partners. Also take group lessons to learn steps. Don't waste your money learning steps in private lessons, unless you are having trouble learning a specific step. You should also practice your steps frequently, say every week, at a disco or at the school's club nights. Individual lessons are recommended when you want to focus on specific problems.

Dancing With Other People

"Dance with different people. Don't fall into a bad habit or develop bad technique." Dancing with many different partners helps. Besides practicing with your regular dance partners, go to some of the social dances that are available and mix. Everyone's lead and follow is different, and the variations help you to become a better dancer. Dancing with someone more experienced might allow you to be more successful in trying something new or perfecting some styling. Once you learn how it feels, you can then do it with anybody. Dancing with someone less experienced than you is very good in determining if you have a good lead. This may even be more useful than dancing with someone more experienced. When you can get a less experienced dancer to successfully do a step she has never done before, you know you are doing well. If you dance only with one partner, you will never learn to lead/follow; you'll only learn to compensate for each other's bad habits.

At many local weekly dances, all the best dancers take over one corner of the room, and the beginners tend to stay at the other end and dance with each other. You can see how it would be rather difficult to ask the good dancers to dance if they all hang out in a crowd and you have to barge in to even speak to them. So, make a special effort to get down to the beginners' end every so often and ask someone for a dance. Resist falling into a clique at your local club: to outsiders, though you will be seen as the best dancers, you will also seem snobby and un-touchable.

Consider asking newbies: you were once one. Those experienced dancers who agreed to dance with you as a newbie gave you incentive (by "suffering" through with your learning) to keep going to reach a point of being a "decent dancer". Do the same for the newbies you meet and make them feel welcome - it is an investment in your future dance partners. Remember, as a beginner you don't know how perfectly right it feels for two people to dance as one until it happens to you for the first time.

Dance Shoes

	Man	Lady
Rock and Roll	Flat	Flat
Latin	1.5" heel	2.5" heel
Ballroom	1" heel	2" heel

Rise and Fall

How do you describe the difference in the "rise & fall" in American Foxtrot (box rhythm - SQQ, or Hover) as compared to the rise and fall in American Waltz.

The best people to ask about this one are actually international dancers, since the situation is exactly the same between Int'l Foxtrot and Waltz. However, I will take a stab at it here.

Foxtrot has a more linear and elongated quality than Waltz. Imagine for a second a string, which is situated in the shape of a sine wave (Waltz rise & fall). Now imagine pulling gently on the ends of the string. While the sine wave gets longer, it also gets shorter. It now represents Foxtrot rise & fall.

This is somewhat abstract, but it's the best representation I've heard so far.

In more concrete terms, (yet also more confusing to many beginners), leg and body swing help you to go in just about any direction you need to go, including forward, back, side, up, or around. In Waltz, I use it to take me primarily in an upward direction, while in Foxtrot I use it to take me outward (ie forward, back, or laterally). This does not mean that there is no rise in Foxtrot, nor does it mean that you want to pop straight up in Waltz. But it does give you an idea of where you want to place the emphasis, in order to get the right character.

Oh, I just got one more idea. But I may hear back from some people on it. (1) Stand with your feet flat, weight over middle- to back of foot: TANGO. (2) Shift weight forward slightly and rise ever so slightly: VIE. WALTZ (3) Rise higher, about half way to 3/4 up on balls of feet: FOXTROT (4) Rise almost all the way (as high as you comfortably go): WALTZ (5) Hop up off the ground completely: QUICK-STEP.

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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
