



Larrys Corner

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If you want to read dance stories they are under Headlines or Larrys 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.

Come Dance With Us

Dance Etiquette Protocol:

Dancing has its own culture. If you want to join a group of dancers and enjoy their company, it is a good idea to follow the accepted customs of their dance group. One of the ways you get accepted into a group is by the way you're dressed.

How formally should we dress at a dance? The general rule is this: the more formal the dance, the more formal the outfit. For example, if you are invited to a

formal charity ball, anything less than a tuxedo for men or ball gown for women would be inappropriate. On the other hand, at a dance lesson at your local studio, there is usually no need to dress formally.

A little common sense goes a long way. Also, if in doubt, follow the crowd! See what others do and follow suit. If all else fails, you can always ask the dance organizers about the dress code.

Below I give a guideline and explanation for dress code, which you may see on invitations and announcements, as well as a general idea of what to wear at different dance venues.

White tie: White tie is the most formal category of dressing. For the gentleman, it means a black tailcoat with matching trousers trimmed by ribbon of braid or satin on the outside of each trouser leg, a white pique' tie, white pique' single or double-breasted vest, and a wing-collar shirt with a stiff pique' front. White gloves are nice optional accessories for gentlemen. The lady appears in a ball gown, which is an evening dress with a full skirt, possibly with open back and low neck line. Elbow-length gloves are a nice addition for the lady.

Black tie: Gentlemen in black tuxedo coat, trousers trimmed with satin ribbon along the outside of the legs, cummerbund and bow tie. The phrase "black tie" does not refer to the color of the tie. In fact colorful ties (with matching cummerbunds) are very popular. Ladies appear in ball gowns.

Black tie optional: Same as above, except gentlemen have the option of wearing a regular suit with a tie (bow tie preferred), and ladies wear a cocktail gown or dinner dress. Long to full-length skirts are preferred; short skirts are not recommended.

Formal: Gentlemen in suit and tie (nowadays a sport coat is often an acceptable replacement for a full suit), ladies in cocktail gown or evening dress.

Semi-formal: Applies to most dances at studios, universities, and dance halls. Gentlemen in dress slacks with dress shirt and tie, jacket is optional. Other options include a vest or a sweater that shows the tie. At the lower end of formality, these events can be attended without a tie, e.g. with a turtleneck and jacket. Ladies in evening dress or dinner dress, but other chic outfits are also acceptable (like flowing pants, etc.)

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Informal: Applies to practice dances, workshops, and dance lessons. Dress for comfort, but stay away from shorts, tank tops, and sneakers. Gentlemen can wear solid color T-shirts, turtlenecks, mock turtlenecks, and cotton slacks. Ladies have a much wider set of clothing options. Use your imagination and sense of fashion. Don't forget your dance shoes!

Country/Western: Country western attire varies according to different regions, but generally it is acceptable to go in blue or black jeans (not stone-washed) and cowboy boots. Make sure that the boots will not mark the dance floor. If you wear a hat, it is best to take it off when going on the floor. Note that country western folks can be very sensitive about their hats. It is improper to touch or otherwise handle someone's hat, even if it sits on a table. For a lady to pick up and put on a gentleman's hat is considered very flirtatious.

Milonga: (Argentine Tango) For both ladies and gentlemen, black or dark themes are preferred.

Latin: This refers to venues that specialize in Salsa, Merengue, Cumbia, etc. For gentlemen, any button-up shirt, solid T-shirt or mock turtleneck, dress slacks, and dance shoes. Jackets are nice, but a vest can be even more stylish. Unlike most other dance venues, bright and colorful outfits for gentlemen are acceptable, although dark themes are more common. Ladies can (and often do) wear sexy outfits: both short skirts and longer slit skirts are popular. Low necklines and exposed midriffs are not uncommon.

Swing: There are no strict rules for swing outfits. Both the Gentleman and the Lady wear outfits that are reasonably neat and chic, although often not very formal. Many types of swing are fast-paced and athletic, so wearing suitable clothing is essential. For example, the Lady would be well advised to stay away from short, tight skirts. See also the next section on [Comfort and Safety](#). A cute trend, especially in Lindy Hop circles, is to wear vintage outfits from the 1930's and 40's. But this is not done everywhere and is not at all a requirement.

Hustle Rock Steps In Hustle

Although both Eastern have more or less similar basic patterns, There are significant differences: Between Eastern Swing and Hustle.

In Hustle, "1 2" are the coast and deceleration phase. The turnaround occurs around the end of 1. The "&3" is the launch/impulse phase. Firstly, the follower's step on count 2 is a step back (except in turns) and should be used to stop body movement at the end of the slot. The & is a step together, compressing and

planting the feet in order to push forward on count 3.

The most overlooked difference is that the follower's part in Hustle is not a Swing style rock-step but actually a coaster step; that is, her last two steps (&3) are "close-forward," not the "back-replace" of a rock-step. (The man may do a "side" on the & when the lady does her close or "together"). The close-forward on the &3 in Hustle moves forward. If you rock-step you move backwards instead of forwards - causing the partners to pull apart, ripping the arm out of your partner's shoulder and/or poor styling with silly hopping (your body can't move back on the 1 because your arms are stretched out so you hop in the air and take the step anyway). Many people (usually used to Swing) who first try Hustle tend to use back-replace steps instead of together-forward, rush the timing with a "2 a3" instead of "2 & 3", and hop. Their styling greatly improves by slowing down and using the & (instead of a 1/16 note "a") to plant the foot together prior to taking the forward step on 3. When doing Hustle, you can improve your style by staying level (i.e. don't hop) and making sure the time between the "two" and the "and" is the same as the time between the "and" and the "three". Relax and take your time on the "and" so you can get a good foot plant and push off for a nice smooth movement.

There is a difference between: stepping back instead of together, and moving your center back.

If a rock-step is understood as 'step back right, replace left' then we will probably agree that this is not the way Hustle is supposed to be done. 'Step back right, replace left' may work for a stationary pattern, but leaves the woman with no momentum to get to the other end of the slot in slotted patterns. For patterns like the open and closed basic, where the woman has to move from one end of the slot to the other the idea is to start moving her center forward before the end of "&" step, instead of letting it float back. The apogee of the woman's backward motion may be somewhere between the beginning and end of the "&" step. But she has to start accelerating forward much earlier than this in order to dissipate her backward momentum.

But when a beginning lady Hustle dancer steps back on the & count, she may be stepping back and moving her CG back on the & count. This is what causes the jerkiness. In fact such jerkiness is easily caused without stepping back on the & count -- if she merely moves her body back with her foot on the & count, thus losing the forward lean.

If the woman is moving her center backward on "&" (WRONG!) - The return on "3" from such a rock back is likely to make her hop in the air. You shouldn't be

trying to get extension on the "&." If the woman's weight is still going backward on the "&" step, she has very little time to reverse herself and accelerate forward for the next step (a usually a big step forward). Although it is possible to do this and be smooth, many women when using a rock back on the "&" step, yank their partners back with them or end up not moving anywhere on the following forward step.

What good lady Hustle dancers do:

As she steps back with her left foot on the 2 count, her body is leaning forward, and her CG (center of gravity) is slightly ahead of her left foot.

On the & count she brings her right foot back to both feet are about side by side. At this point she is leaning forward and is on her toes, and her CG is above or a little ahead of her toe. Her forward motion doesn't begin significantly before the & count, but she is already leaning forward when the & count occurs.

Now she moves, by stepping forward with her left foot on the 3 count. Since she is already leaning forward, she can push with her right foot and gain momentum quickly. The force due to change of momentum is primarily exerted against the floor at an angle, not against her partner. The way to reproduce this in slow motion is to face a wall and lean against it with your hands. Now do a coaster step while still leaning forward.

Now, it is possible for the & step to be back and the subsequent "3" to go forward. Some ladies don't do a together step, but rather a back in 3rd or maybe even 5th position. Her "3" is then definitely forward. This works and can be used to nicely accent the music. But, the later the backwards motion is reversed, the more POWER it takes to get going forward in time for the "3". So now it's possible to see how an expert dancer could actually step back (a little) on the & count: She steps back with her foot, but her body still leans forward without moving back and no momentum is lost. She will need to lean a bit more to compensate.

We place the foot slightly back as in the "ball" of a ball-change. In this case, placing the foot slightly behind the woman's center actually helps her move forward. The woman does not ordinarily take her center back unless the man has deliberately led an explosion or extension. In fact, the woman putting the right foot slightly behind her center actually helps give her forward momentum. She's now leaning forward and has gravity working for her, not just the flex of her ankle.

The Hustle followers around here do not rock - they take a small back step on the right on & and then a strong forward walk on the left on 3 - technically a ball-change, not a rock step. The trick is not to take the weight back over the right foot. In fact, consider this - doesn't a slight back step as described above make the woman LIGHTER going into 3? When she picks up her left foot, if the right foot is slightly behind her, she will actually fall forward slightly, whereas if she takes her & in place, she is relying just on the leverage motion of her foot & ankle and the man's lead. If she goes slightly back on &, then gravity is working for her as well.

So, in Hustle, the emphasis is on the strong forward step on the lady's left foot on 3. I can practically guarantee you that if you teach beginners to concentrate on the strong "3" step instead of worrying about the exact foot placement of the "&" step, you'll get the desired result: the truly novice dancers will, in all likelihood, take the "&" in place or only very slightly back. The more experienced dancers who understand how ball-changes work, may add the slight back break. I teach students not to think about the "&" steps. If they concentrate on the step AFTER the "&", then they concentrate on where their CG needs to be, and they take the "&" step in such a way that they are in the right place for the next step. If they're in the right place on the next step, who cares where the "&" is? When you are really dancing, footwork is the result of your body action.

Regarding back steps vs. steps in place on the "and": "It all depends on how the guy leads it." Lady takes a slight back step, as she feels that helps propel her forward better. She also has very much the style in which the woman tucks or kicks her left foot on "1" and then steps on &2, making it & tuck & 2 3.

Regarding closing on the '&' versus stepping back: I suspect those of us who disapprove of stepping back are thinking primarily of people who only use the &, and not the preceding (2) step, to reverse direction. Typically, people who do this will lower the heel on the step before the '&'. All of the reversal of direction then occurs on the &.

At 120 bpm, and a velocity change from -1.2m/sec to +1.2m/sec (based on covering a four foot slot in two beats), the acceleration is $(1.2\text{m/sec} + 1.2\text{m/sec}) / (0.25\text{sec})$, or 9.6m/sec^2 , or 0.98 g's. To do this without pulling on one's partner or using the floor, one would have to lean at about 45 degrees from vertical. Many who use this technique instead pull on their partners. In fact, if the lady is 120 lb, and doesn't use the floor, the pull will be 117 lb! Even if one takes a 30 degree lean, about 50 lb of help is still needed from

partner. No wonder this technique doesn't seem very smooth.

If one uses both the '&' and the (2) step preceding the '&' to reverse direction, the required acceleration is halved (because twice as much time is available - velocity equals acceleration times time). Not using the floor at all, this requires a lean of about 25 degrees from vertical to avoid pulling on one's partner, which is considerably more achievable. In this case, one's center of gravity is stationary at the point where the '&' foot is placed, so it is natural to take the '&' as a 'together' step - though minor variations, such as a third or even fifth position placement, would achieve basically the same effect.

In effect what is happening is that a rock step is being taken over two steps, and the dancer will appear to hang in the air with the toes of both feet on the floor well behind the center of gravity. The difficulty of teaching this to beginners is probably why the 'back on the &' took hold as sling Hustle spread out from New York. In Boston as recently as five years ago, everyone did the 'rock back' footwork. Now almost everyone does the 'feet together' footwork - fortunately for leaders who don't like being jerked around.

A lot of beginners topple back and forth when first trying to dance Hustle to faster music or in larger slots, in part because they're picking up some (head-over-heels) angular momentum that they haven't yet learned to control. When walking, and particularly while dancing, people push at odd angles off the floor. They pick up angular momentum (i.e. they temporarily start to rotate heels over head about their center of gravity), but they compensate somewhere else in the dance.

In Hustle the woman's foot shoots back quickly on -and-, and then she steps forward on -three-. What happens, is that her foot moving back quickly on -and- carries a lot of angular momentum (in the heels over head direction). When she puts it down, she pushes forward at a very steep angle - as though she were leaning over 50 or 60 degrees, but she doesn't fall over because the net result is that she loses the angular momentum she already had. She ends up moving forward with no angular momentum without actually having lost her balance, and without having pulled tremendously hard on her partner. I get the impression that some of the elastic parts of the leg actually help reduce the amount of work the muscles need to do by just acting like springs (that's part of why it feels comfortable to dance at certain speeds).

Of course, it becomes important that the woman should have decided where she is going a bit earlier

than when she starts to take the -and- step so that she knows how fast to push back her foot. So either there should be a convention or a lead by then... Regarding the lead, one is actually starting to lead the lady to come back on the count before the &. If you don't do this lead, and the lady is not on autopilot, she will not reverse direction, but instead fly off towards the edge of the dance floor. With this lead, she will decelerate and be hanging in the air as described in the previous paragraph on the '&'; she then has no choice but to step forward on the following step. In NY Hustle, no further lead is necessary at this point (although it is reassuring); if none is given, the lady is still correct in coming forward rather than falling on her face.

Now, opposite to everything we have said, the Miami style of Hustle has the woman raising her left leg into a little tuck before coming forward, and she is very much set back with her weight fully on her right foot. In fact, I'm not sure that they don't slightly change the count as habit to accentuate this. In watching them, it seems like they hold at the end of the slot an incredibly long time.

It is quite common to let the woman hold a brief line on her right foot starting on "&" and holding through "3". She then comes forward on "&2", making the syncopation & (3) & 1 2. Or, if held even longer, the syncopation can change to & (3) 1 & 2. Also, if led properly, the line can be hit ON "3" rather than on the preceding "&", making possible the syncopations 3 & 1 2 and 3 1 & 2. As long as the woman makes four weight changes, all of these are legitimate syncopations.

Some count 12&3. His partner did the following break almost constantly:

& 3 & 1 (and then 2 is FL as normal)

BR Pfl RL FR

Kind of looks like a WCS break, huh?

& Back with right foot; 3 Point forward with left foot;
& Replace (apply weight onto) left foot; 1 Forward with right foot