

# 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.

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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



Barb and Larry

## Comments from Barb Johnson

Having a bad day, got up on the wrong side of the bed, feeling depressed, things are not going well in general. We all have our days. Try an inexpensive therapy session, called help thy self, going to the club and working out is good, but this is better. Go out and dance at least 45 minutes or longer, it works. I've been there, found that dancing does make a person feel better, you forget the bad day, and enjoy the new one. It may cost \$8 or so, you have nothing to lose except money but gain peace of mind. Cheapest self therapy I know of, most of all, it's fun, you may walk out a new person, I did many times.

**HELPFUL HINT:** If you use Spray Deodorant and it gets on your clothing, use an old nylon to wipe it off. I tried and it works great.

## Dance Frame

When taking a closed position hold you need to have balance and a stable frame. A good hold must allow each partner to stay balanced and not interfere with movement down the floor - Leaders, don't hold the lady like you are a vise - a good hold must have some toned flex/give to allow adjustment inside the hold. Especially in turns is it necessary for both partners to stay on their left side and not to interfere with their partner's movement. In a good hold every partner has his/her own territory. If you enter your partners territory you risk war, or at least crushed toes!

Most dancers have gone through a spaghetti phase, followed by a "Stiff as a board phase" before realizing what the proper toned frame feels like. The dance frame is the foundation of your dancing - "If the foundation is weak, the house will collapse" Don't be a "busy body" - a quiet body allows woman to distinguish leads, and looks much better. A stable frame is important because it maximizes the couple's signal-to-noise ratio - maximizes the amount of useful information that can be transmitted between their bodies. When the man leads, he prefaces all his steps with his momentum; for example, if he plans to step left on count 1, he puts his body weight a tiny bit leftward, a tiny fraction of a second before

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count 1. In this way, he tells the woman where to step next, so that she can step as much with him as possible. But if either of the partners has a soft, spaghetti-like frame, the man's momentum can't be transmitted to the woman, because there's no conduit - no solid connection between their bodies - for the information to travel along. In other words, the connection between them is so noisy that the signal gets lost. Try this exercise: dancing either rumba or mambo, randomly switch between basics and cucarachas. Just before you switch, put your weight in the direction you're about to travel almost enough to fall over. "No, in real dancing you don't put so much weight into it; this is just an illustration." Can you see how your partner would feel that? That's what I'm talking about, only subtler. On the other hand, it's also bad to have too firm a frame, because then you either can't lead properly or can't react properly and you will always be throwing yourself and your partner off balance because there is no give to it - and you'll look like a mechanical robot. For example, if your firm frame extends all the way down your torso, you'll have a very difficult time stepping outside partner, because you're trying to keep not only your shoulders but also your navels parallel define frame as "the minimum tone required to achieve position and maintain it."

How are you to lead or read a lead without a good frame? When a leader moves his hand, he isn't just moving her hand, but he is moving all of her. If we don't maintain a good frame, body leads won't work either.

You will achieve a better sense of dance frame by practicing while holding a light card chair. It forces you to retain a dance frame, not twist, collapse, drop an arm, or shape out of alignment. It also gives you a feeling of moving in-line with a partner. Use the chair mostly for problems that you are having with Rumba and Waltz. For Swing (no, I don't recommend that you try open moves holding a chair in one hand, but) this technique will help with closed moves such as back-spot turns and Lindys (whips).

What we usually think of as good "styling" is really a matter of good "technique". If we follow a few simple technique rules, we will automatically look like we have good styling. The number one rule, for both leaders and followers, being: Never break your frame!! That is, never let any part of your arm get behind your shoulder, whether you are in closed or open position. For example, say you are progressing down the line of dance and want to extend your free arm back from the line of dance as a styling gesture at some break point. We are usually taught in beginning classes to progress facing down the line of dance. So what most people end up doing is keeping their body facing forward down the line of dance and extending their hand back behind them. This however breaks the frame and doesn't look good.

However, if while your feet are facing forward, you turn your upper body to the side, then you can hit the same arm pose by just extending your arm to the side. In this case your frame is not broken, it looks good, and you are facing the audience which also makes for good presentation. A good way to keep from breaking your frame is for the leader to always keep his belt buckle facing the follower and to do what ever it took in foot work to accomplish this.

The thing to do is to always keep the navels of the leader and the follower pointing to each other where possible. In a WCS under arm pass, the leader should turn his body as the follower passes by so that his body is always facing hers.

Closed Dance Position: Followers, don't keep your left hand all the way around your partner's shoulder blade, where any backward motion on his part could throw you off-balance. Another problem with keeping your hand around the shoulder blade is that it's pretty much impossible for your partner to get you into a right turn, leading with his right hand only. Now, he needs to crank you around (break that grip you have on him) with his left hand. This makes stuff like simultaneous right turns impossible. (E.g., in WCS do a tuck turn, led only with the right hand, and both partners do a right spin out.) Plus the arm around your partner's shoulder makes it look like the lady is hanging on her partner. The follower should keep her left hand on the "front" side of the shoulder/upper arm joint, as it allows for a wider variety of alternatives. An even better example is when you start a whip, release the left hand on 4 normal fifth step, then on six you snake your hand up off the right shoulder so you can do an elbow catch to stop and reverse the followers spin. If the follower has the hook in you, you'd better do it real gentle like and be prepared to abort the move. When the follower first puts a hook like that on me, I might mention it in passing. If it comes back later, I'll attempt the elbow catch whip to illustrate just why it is so important not to hook. That usually fixes it for the rest of the dance because the follower realizes how easy it is to accidentally wind up with a hurt arm.

## Don't be a "busy body"

Leaders, watch where your hand is on the followers back, especially during 8-count whips. Do not put your hand low on her back, it is painful after a few swing outs. Place your hand in the center of the follower's back between the shoulder blades and maintain proper ballroom dance position. Create a form fitting dance space between you and your partner by combining hand placement, arm tension, and posture. You will immediately notice a tremendous increase in momentum if you dance this way. This will provide you with the ability to do 8-count whips more efficiently to faster music. And women, don't forget to really travel out on the swing out. It is at least 50% your responsibility to get out there quickly so the next figure can be executed effortlessly."

## East Coast Swing

The lead for ECS is so clear that no lady can resist doing a rock step. During the triple-step, triple-step, or Side left Side side right the man and lady are parallel, not in a V shape. Then the man opens up into a V (half promenade) for the rock step. The man is to place his right hand in the middle of the lady's back, not on her shoulder blade. Then to "open" the lady from parallel to the V, the man lowers his right elbow, and to "close" the lady back to parallel, he raises his right elbow.

Many students first learn the basic swing rock step in class as a 'move back' then a 'move forward'. When dancing with a partner you may find that this leaves you jerking your partner or positioned too far apart to control the next step. An instructor may show you a different way to perform the rock step 'change weight' without moving the body back and forward by keeping the step under your center. If you understand the technique from class, and can execute it, then take it home and practice it. In addition to practicing the swing rock step (instead of the "rocky" step), one can practice controlled triple steps (not the I'm-falling-to-the-left steps), 'digging' the feet into the floor (not bouncing to the side) and 'grounding' (not wobbling) can all be taken home and practiced (AFTER you see the correct technique demonstrated in class).

**"DO NOT LEAN BACK WHEN YOU DO A ROCK-STEP. DO NOT THROW YOUR WEIGHT AGAINST YOUR PARTNER. THIS WEARS THEM OUT. KEEP YOUR BALANCE ON TOP OF YOURSELF OR SLIGHTLY FORWARD WHEN YOU DO THE 'ROCK' STEP."**

Do not rock backwards more than six inches when you rock step. That is, rock back so that the toe of one foot is even with the heel of the other foot. Think of it more as 'step step' instead of rock step. And, in a crowded dance hall, do not rock step at all, just 'step step' underneath yourself (in place)." Beginning leaders and followers often do

a rock-step improperly (takes too long and looks funny) because they take too large of a step and move all of their weight onto the rocking foot (leaning back). When you do a rock step, your body should not move and the rock is a small check step on the ball of the foot. A quick fix for leaning backwards is simply to take smaller steps and keep your balance forward (which has the added benefit of keeping you closer to your partner - thus you won't feel like you are running through every figure off balance!).

There's something which seems to be near-universal behavior among beginners in ECS: the leader (often the follower too, but almost always the leader) will tend to take an immense back step on the "rock", and plant their entire weight on the left foot. Of course if the music is at all fast, this makes it virtually impossible to recover on the right foot in time with the music, and things break down from there. Even when the instructor repeatedly emphasizes and demonstrates a small back step with weight on the ball, it takes more than one session to sink in. Since this is such a common problem, here are some good teaching approaches to help people work through it. Have the partners put the proper rocking foot back in open position, and just keep rock-stepping for a while. It simultaneously works on the proper tone (getting the rubber band action in the arms), and keeping the heel up. Once they've gotten used to just the rock-step, I get them to do basics, paying close attention to the rock-steps. It works fairly well.



## Swing Clubs

East Meets West; 952-949-3016; 1st and 3rd Friday Dance at Dancesport in Hopkins 816 1/2 Main St.

Minnesota West Coast Swing; 651-731-9768; 2nd and 4th Friday Dance at B-Dale Club South of the Dale and Cty. B in St. Paul.

TC Rebels Swing club; Hotline number 952-941-0906; Dances are at Everett McClay VFW on frontage road of 494 by Mall of America.

When dancing West Coast Swing be sure to line your slot with the boards on the floor. If no boards then line up with length of room

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Singles all Together has Ballroom lessons on Monday night 8 pm at the Lenox Center in St Louis Park.

Singles all Together West Coast Swing on Tuesday night 8 pm at Medina Ballroom.

Larry L Ablin

Help's at Singles All Together dance class on Monday night, at Lenox center on Minnetonka Blvd in St Louis Park.

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

Teach Ballroom at Jefferson Community Ed on Wednesday at 26th and Hennepin 612-668-2740 Next class starts 10/9/2003 630-830 8 weeks

Phone: 952-891-9014 Email: [dancempls@earthlink.net](mailto:dancempls@earthlink.net)

## Dance Etiquette

Line of Dance is counter clockwise around the room for dances that move, like Foxtrot, and Waltz.

People who aren't moving like Rock and roll, Rumba, or Swing Dance in the middle of the room.

If you bump into someone, say sorry.

If you step on partner, say your sorry, then forget it. (Don't rag on it.)

Finish the song you started dancing to, before excusing yourself.

Don't do a step that requires kicking, on a crowded floor.

# THANK GOD IM SINGLE DANCE LESSON

*Where:*

**Thank God I'm Single dances**  
Call the hotline 763-503-5444 for location or <http://www.tgisdances.com> web page

*When:*

**Free dance lesson with paid admission Every saturday 1 hour Before Dance usually 730 pm starting in May**

- ◆ 1st and 3rd Saturday will be East Coast Swing
- ◆ 2nd and 4th saturday will be Nightclub 2 step
  
- ◆ If there are more than 4 satudays in a month we will teach other dances

## Dance etiquette offenders

Bulldog: One who does step or kick, no matter who is in the way.

Chatter box: One who is always talking. (Social talk ok but not constantly)

Crooner: One who sings or hums with music.

Debater: One who talks politics or religion while dancing.

Iceberg: One with no smile ( At least look like your having fun.)

Jolly Extrovert: One who is cheerful with surrounding people, but forgets his own partner.

Lead foot: One who can't seem to lift one's feet from the floor.

Octopus: One who holds the partner everywhere but the correct dance position.

Quitter: Suddenly tired 1/2 way through song. (Finish Song)

Sherman tank: The Leader leads her, but she isn't moving.

Truck driver: One who steers the partner like he drives.

Wrong way charlie: Clockwise traveler. (Against line of dance)