

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



Body Leads

Proper leading is accomplished by leading with the body, not the arms. If you maintain a proper arm-body connection, when the leader's body moves, the body-arm arm-body connection causes the follower's body to move.

In West Coast Swing, this requires the leader to move (backwards) in the same direction as the follower on beat 1; the leader typically moves (forward) in the same direction as the follower on beat 4. A typical improper lead in an underarm pass occurs when the man moves sideways while pulling the lady forward. (Except in the authentic Texas push/whip style where the lead is a pure arm lead.) Try leading side pass/underarm pass/etc. by facing cross-slot with your feet tight together and just move your upper body ("lean") to lead. That's a real body lead. You will often see moves, like 'sleaze' moves and rhythm changes, and think that they must have been choreographed because they just couldn't possibly be led. But as your body-leading abilities improve you will find that you can indeed lead more of these apparently choreographed moves.

Leading with the arms instead of the body is not only wrong from a basic lead/follow standpoint, but it results in bad body lines, which will make your dancing look awful.

It's possible to lead with only the arm exactly as if leading with the body, without the leads being painful. But, this is so much harder to do than it looks that many (most?) teachers recommend against it. Watch the people around you. People are used to waving their hands around at high speeds. If you try to lead with your hands you will probably move them far faster than you can move your tummy. Since this is also faster than your partner can move her body, if she tries to stay connected to her hand then something will get pulled apart and this is where pain can occur. You probably don't notice how fast you move your hands. If you learn to follow, you will notice how fast other leaders try move their hands (as well as a lot of other problems that can occur with leading in general.) If you lead with your body, then

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your lead will automatically be scaled to an acceleration and velocity at which humans can comfortably move themselves. This almost guarantees a more comfortable lead. The situation where it's useful for the leader to move his lead hand separate from his body is where he is moving his hand less than his body, such as maintaining a stable balance point while doing a solo body syncopation or ripple.

Body leads are easier to follow. And in most cases less painful. Body leads do not inherently extend the slot in WCS! Body leads, like arm leads, can be light or strong. A "light" body lead does not have to extend the slot. The size of the back step and the body placement determines the strength of the lead. As a matter of fact the better you get at body leads the smaller your steps become. As a dancer first learns to use his body to lead, his steps will be longer and larger. This will make for a much longer slot... in the beginning. As the leader grows in skill and really learns to use his body rather than his arms, he will find that the length of his step is not as important as where his body is in relation to his foot. Hopefully his body is over his foot, and that his foot is in the proper position (in his own slot)

I believe that most people will find, when they examine how they do arm leads in a short slot, that they use a body lead to get the follower moving for the first few inches, and then they take up the rest of the slack by bending the arm more. It's conservation of momentum, equal and opposite force, etc. If the leader accelerates the follower toward him, then an equal force will also accelerate him toward the follower. If he doesn't pre or post compensate, then he will crash into her. One way to pre-compensate is to first use the floor to accelerate himself backwards and then transfer this momentum to the lady, e.g. a body lead.

Various types of hand-on-waist checks in WCS, Cha-cha, and other dances, involve -- at first glance -- the leader moving in one direction while he leads the follower to move in the opposite direction. Once again, careful examination shows that the person who leads well performs a brief body lead, moving in the same direction as the follower for a few inches, and then changes direction and completes the lead with the arm.

The leader should be leading with his body. The follower shouldn't be watching his body (look at his face, even if his body might be better looking), but instead reading his body lead from whatever you have in contact, which is usually just some fingers. One handed leads (physical contact in one hand, such as is the case most of the time in swing) can be done as body leads, just as dance frame leads (by which I

mean about five points of contact, as in strict international style waltz/foxtrot/quickstep) can be. While either set of contact's can be led from the center or with the arms and hands, leading from the center is clearly preferable.

As far as leading in general, leading with your body (center, frame) is the most efficient and clear lead there is. I do not believe that you can get the same results with a hand lead either one or two hands as you can with a body lead I think hand leads can be very confusing. Those who truly believe that hand leads are better could try blindfolding their follower and see if she can follow the lead... I use this as another form of learning how to lead. If you can lead someone through a pattern using just the lead and feel, then it's working. Unfortunately this method won't work well if the follower isn't following. After 25 years teaching I have found that the body leads using the center in any dance work much more often and are not only clearer but much more pleasurable to follow. "You must receive to believe"

Lead/follow cues, in the smooth dances, come from the man's body position and the direction of his movement, and a bit from the rest of his frame, including arms. (note: he does NOT just push his partner around with his arms!) In Latin, the lead comes from a strong connection through the man's right and lady's left arms, and eye contact/visual cues are extremely important and are used as a lead technique as well.

A man's leads originate with his body, NOT with his hands nor arms. The hands and arms provide

- 1) the connection to the body and
- 2) fine tuning example indication of a loop or an arch, to continue or to stop spinning, etc. In open facing position in most any ballroom dance the man provides the lead by having a solid but not stiff frame and tone in his arms slightly relaxed and not tensed muscle. The "gross" leads are made with the body i.e. position, direction, distance, and the "fine tuning" is done with the arms only minimally with the hands. Granted, in beginning east-coast swing, most patterns involve mostly "fine tuning" since it is often done in a relatively small spot on the dance floor.

Leaders or followers should never lean back or forward except in figures such as a lunge or contra-check.

However, a slight body angle backwards or forwards is used to create a pulling or pushing force. West coast swing has a slight body angle backwards to

create the connection between partners. By the way, to get the proper feeling of "hanging back", stand straight up in front of a counter/table/door, etc. just so you can hold it while standing straight. Then move your feet 4" forward keeping your body in the same place. Your arm will have a slight tone, and your arm and body will be connected all the way to your feet. Good connection on the anchor-step will allow both bodies move together as a single connected unit on count 1.



A lead always comes from the body - i.e. the leader moves his center of gravity (cg), and the follower will follow providing there is good frame on both parts. The arms just connect the bodies.

From closed position as in waltz, if the leader moves his cg forward, his feet will move, and the follower will also start to move, her cg (body) and then feet. To start from open position as in WCS, if the leader moves his cg backward, his feet should follow. The moving of his whole body (starting at cg) should be the lead for the follower to move forward, not the pulling of the arm. You



often see a WCS leader pulling (leading) the woman down the slot while he is moving immediately to the side. Actually in this move, the lead is the very first part of the move; the leader's cg initially moves straight back before he steps to the side. From a purely lead and follow standpoint the leader's cg (and body) must actually be moving backwards to start.

Then after the follower is moving, he can step to the side. (The step to the side will be back a bit also).

I find that, for me, body leads start turning into arm leads when followers don't power themselves down the slot.

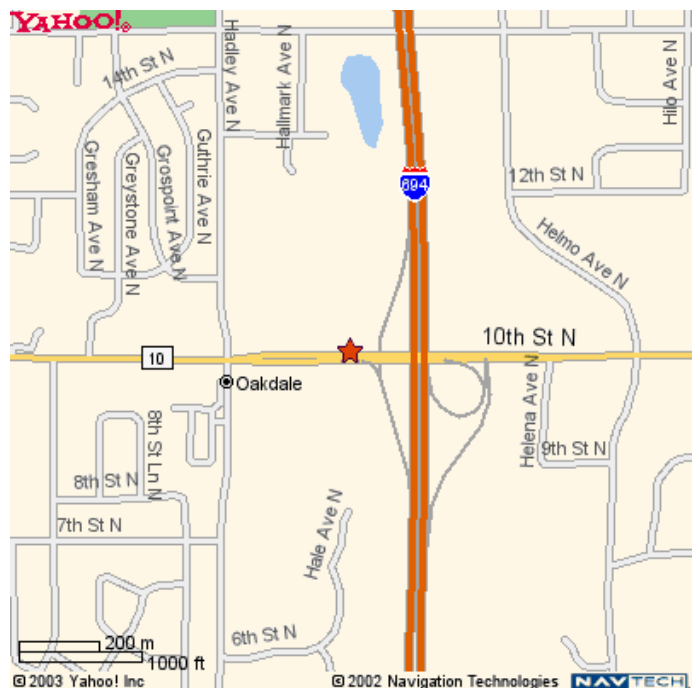
When a follower feels like a dead weight, she starts to get treated like one, being pushed and pulled instead of led.

(I'm not saying this is right, but it is what happens under "combat conditions".) Unfortunately, once arm leading starts, it tends to carry over to the next dance. Even if follower #2 is responsive, so it feels better to the leader, SHE still feels my high arm

tension and may stiffen up in response. Now she is harder to lead and the leader may apply more muscle. A hard cycle to break.

Oh, one thing about leaders learning to follow: unless they are being led by members of the Russian weight lifting team, there is no way most men will ever feel the intimidation women commonly experience. And if it's a leader/follower role reversal -- well, how many guys worry about being woman-handled?

Unfortunately, there is often positive reinforcement of bad dancing habits. When I've danced with women whose regular partners favor arm leads, these women don't respond quite as well to body leads (i.e., she won't recognize it as a lead unless she feels the leader's arm contract). Then if her regular partner tries body leads, she doesn't quite follow, he gets frustrated and reverts to the arm lead that she responds to. **It's a great argument for dancing around with a lot of different people.**



Twin City Rebels New location Twin City Ballroom

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 Twin City Ballroom

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

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 Niteclub 2 Step 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

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

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.

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)