

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



Inside this issue:

Tips For Followers

Spotting

Leading Turns About Her Axis

East Coast Swing

Swing Clubs

Dance Etiquette

Tips For Followers

1. Clear your mind and concentrate on your partner. Especially at the beginning of the dance, listen to the music generally but avoid counting beats or analyzing the music until you get started. Stop analyzing anything except the signals your leader is conveying. Don't think of anything specific - if you have to think consciously about step patterns, you are not yet at the level of thought process that enables you to follow "effortlessly". Open your mind to the messages that are being sent to you by your partner, first and foremost. (If you are not getting any messages you've got a problem!) One aspect of dancing is communication: if the lady "has beans in her ears" she cannot follow no matter how clearly the man leads. A follower follows her partner in many different ways. His body motion, hand pressure at her back/side, visual cues from his feet and where he moves a free hand; that is a tremendous amount to keep track of and respond to in a short time. In addition to the body leads and signals coming through the arms and hands, signaling happens with subtle movements of eyes, head, etc. As women gain dance experience and knowledge of their partners, they tend to pick up the finer signals and respond without even thinking about it. A good follower will compliment the dance style of the leader she is dancing with. At the end of this story I will list some things to pay attention to so you can follow easier.

1 2. Once the dance starts and you are reasonably comfortable with the fact that you are following be on the lookout for CHANGE. do not get complacent to the fact that you are following a particular pattern - keep your mind completely open to the next (logical) thing that your leader will convey but do not anticipate either the change or the new pattern that is coming. A follower must have a receptive state of mind; no heavy thinking allowed. Keeping your mind ready and open so you can follow takes practice. It is particularly difficult if you have had a disturbing event happen immediately preceding your dancing. Passionate thoughts do not help your following... avoid them at all cost! You will make a large leap when you begin to trust leaders more and learn that it is not the follower's role to know every pattern. In fact, thinking that you know this stuff is almost more a handicap than dancing with the assumption that you didn't know what was coming up. Some of the best ballroom dance followers I have danced with had no lessons but learned from following anyone.

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[\(Continued from page 1\)](#)

In West Coast Swing it helps if the lady has seen the step before but not anticipate.

3. In addition to the above mental state of mind, you must be constantly balanced so that you can respond to your partner's lead. The state of being balanced is one of the absolute criteria that enables you to respond when your partner leads. Balance is very difficult to teach to a student who lacks it. Dancing independently until you are capable of keeping your body moving easily, and wearing sufficiently flexible, well fitting, comfortable dance shoes will help. The best way to keep from sliding when coming onto a foot is to already have the body weight over the foot when the foot stops moving. In other words, when you step forward, move forward with the body, rather than sticking the leg out first. Then, just place the foot underneath where the body ends up.

4. Commit your weight immediately each time you step on a foot rather than having your weight split between feet for a moment, which is what we tend to do when walking. This makes the follower much more ready to follow instantly.

5. In ballroom dances, a good follower uses there eyes to make there self keenly aware of alignments in the ballroom. Use your current alignment to narrow the logical choice of figures available while simultaneously keeping your mind open to the leader's next choice of figure - it is a technique the leader uses also.

In summary, there are 3 Laws for Followers:

1. Never hold on
2. Never let go
3. Don't think, do it.

I think we need some refinement of the laws specifically for WCS

- 3.) Don't think, do it... but use some common sense
- 4.) Spot down the slot
- 5.) Keep an eye on your leader

The leader has to think about floor craft, choreography and musical interpretation. On the contrary, the follower must learn not to think about those things independently, but rather to follow. Suspending the impulse to worry about where you are going and what you are doing and how the timing ought to be is the first great challenge in learning to follow.

The lady will find that she can follow almost anything by paying attention to mans right arm. Leaders right hand will have the palm on ladies side, fingers right under ladies shoulder blade. Right elbow at 45 degrees to body. Ladies left hand will have fingers on top or front of mans shoulder, Thumb in front of shoulder and palm on mans arm. Left arm resting lightly on mans

arm. Mans left hand is used to fine tune the steps such as Underarm turns.

To move the lady use pressure of

Left	Lady palm on mans shoulder.
Forward	Mans fingers on ladies back.
Right	Mans palm on ladies left side.
Back	Ladies thumb on Mans shoulder.
Cross left foot in front	Man steps to his right w/left shoulder forward
Cross right foot in front	Man steps to his left w/left shoulder forward
Cross left foot in back	Man steps to his right w/left shoulder back
Cross right foot in back	Man steps to his left w/left shoulder forward
Outside Underarm	Mans left hand drawing 9 over ladies head.
Inside Underarm	Mans right hand drawing P over ladies head.



Spotting

Some people say you should spot, i.e. face your partner while your body turns underneath. If you do spot, you need to make sure your shoulder's do not lean or twist, and your head must be straight up with the center of balance exactly over your spine. If you are slightly off, your head can unbalance the turn. To help in this regard, when spotting, look at an object that is high on the wall - not low. Spotting is difficult and can lead to wobbling at first. Probably wobbling is the most common problem people have spinning, and is caused by a bad lead pulling you off balance, not having your center of balance over your feet, or a poorly aligned body. Most of the people who have trouble spinning seem to have a bent or twisted body and tend to wobble. Practicing a paddle turn is a good

way to find your balance and body alignment. Another cause for wobble is if your arms are extended out. If you extend your arms to regain balance during a spin, it will probably throw you off balance even more. You probably want to keep your free wrists at your waist. Practice spotting in slow motion, many times in each direction, concentrating on smooth head rotation from looking over one shoulder to the other, on a vertical axis use a mirror - it's easy to rotate your head about a canted axis, and it looks terrible. Plus your head weighs something like 20 lbs and it's up high, so it's effect on your balance will be magnified. The biggest tip is this: Pick a specific object (like your partners' left eye) and consciously fix your gaze upon it before you initiate your turn. Then as soon as your head begins to come around, you must "lock" back onto it.

Spotting is purely for control and aesthetics. Spotting prevents dizziness; you get dizzy when you see the room going around you, whereas when you spot you only see one thing over and over again. Spotting does not help you provide the impetus for a turn - rather it helps refine your turns - your arms, legs and body provide the impetus. Spotting makes a turn look more precise because it provides you with a horizon and a reference point which help you to stop cleanly and with balance. To really look good doing an UAT, you need to spot before going under, then go under the arm, then pivot around affixing your gaze 180 when coming out. Remember, people primarily look at a dancer's head!

One of the easiest methods to learn how to spot your turns is to do it sitting down in an revolving office chair. Your body doesn't have to do much work and you can concentrate on the spotting exercise. Important safety tip: if you are over-dedicated, you can keep a barf bag on your lap.

Since a follower should always be watching her partner, it's important very early on for the follower to spot her turns. As a leader, I learned to turn long before I started spotting my turns. Usually I would just let my body memory do 1/2, 1, 1&1/2, or 2 turns. When I started working on spinning to closed position I found out that spotting is essential. When you are more aware of your partner, you can dance closer, and you can try more daring moves.

Leading Turns About Her Axis

Turns should be led throughout, and there is always a connection that should be maintained. This is not to imply that it is easy to do any of this correctly. Leaders must stand close to the turning followers, and not be afraid that they are going to get hit by an errant arm or stepped on by an off balance follower. Followers must not travel into, during, or out of turns, (unless they are supposed to be traveling turns).

Followers must be balanced while turning, and not rely on their partner to balance them through their raised arm. Leaders must lower the follower's arm to normal dance position to signal the end of a turn.

The leader does not need to STIR the follower during the spin. STIRRING destabilizes the spinners rotational axis. The linking hands should be centered above the followers head in a comfortable position for both the leader and follower.

The momentum to spin (if needed) is transferred to the follower at the beginning of the spin; usually with the RIGHT hand and always from a position between the shoulders and waist.

If you want the spinner to spin at a point on the floor, do not throw the spinner down what would be a traveling line of dance.

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You will feel a marked difference in how leaders lead turns after they to realize followers need a stable AXIS. In moves with a two-handed hold leaders lead with the hand that's closest to the followers' center point of balance. Example: the

single-double (left pass, with 1 left turn on the first triple, 3/2 right turn on second triple). This can be led completely with the right hand (if you start from regular two-handed hold), while the left hand keeps still, keeping the follower balanced by providing an axis.



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: lablin@earthlink.net
Web <http://www.dancempls.com>

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 kick-
ing, on a crowded floor.

T_{HANK} G_{OD} I'_M S_{INGLE} 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 Saturdays 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)