



Larry's Corner

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Aol

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

Balance

Bend your knees a little while keeping your upper body and shoulders square (don't lean back). Try this balance exercise: Now that you are in this position, have someone else push evenly on both your shoulders and you will notice that you can maintain your balance much better than if you are stiff with knees locked."

Good balance is essential to good dancing. Keep your weight over the balls of your feet. Do not lean back or forward, except for some figures. In general, have a comfortable and stable position over your feet and be able to move in any direction instantly without having to drastically shift your weight to be able to move in the opposite direction - keep your feet close together on turns, don't spread eagle to be grounded, be elegant." You can maintain your spins even when your partner is leading you poorly. Followers who are more in control of their own weight can do more things - that's part of why people who are in balance can do more.

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Confusing Nomenclature

In Ballet, there are "inside" and "outside" turns and steps. Outside moves or turns are ones where you could think of yourself as traveling backwards; e.g. stand on your left foot and spin clockwise. Inside moves are ones where you travel forward; e.g. stand on your left foot and spin anti-clockwise.

An "outside" turn is one in which the direction of the turn is the same as the foot that you pivot on: a left outside turn pivots on the left foot, and a right outside turn pivots on the right foot. When you want to turn in the direction of the pivot foot, that first step to place the pivot foot is away from (outside) your body.

An "inside" turn is one in which the turn direction is the opposite of the pivot foot: a left inside turn pivots on the right foot and vice versa. When you place your right foot to pivot on it to turn left, you step the foot across the body, toward or past your spine, which is inside the body.

These above definitions are the ones Hutch gives in Swing Dancer. Nevertheless, you often cannot get the same answer from instructors about why a turn is called an "Inside" or "Outside" turn. Some instructors base their definition on hand/arm positions relative to the body. This means the same direction of turning has different names depending on which of hand you're holding, and that's silly. Hands and arms have nothing to do with it. For example, a lady dancing a figure eight in nightclub two-step dances two outside turns in a row, the first pivoting on her right foot (which she places on count 2), and the second on her left (placed on count 4). The handhold is the same throughout.

If you're pivoting down the line of dance, you're doing a sequence of alternating inside and outside turns. Again, it's not a particularly useful way to think about it, but yes, it's accurate.

Because they are so mishandled and thrown

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We received a Letter from Duane that is interesting and a good profile of someone who is putting a lot of time and effort into becoming a good dancer.

Hi! I'm Duane. I got into the dance scene about three years ago when a friend of mine encouraged me to go with a group of people to a West Coast Swing Class. It was the first dance class I had ever taken. Most people start awkwardly with two left feet. Well, I was so awkward I felt like I had Three left feet. I didn't know I was learning one of the harder dances. I almost quit early in the process, but decided to stick with it. Now I'm really glad that I did! Other dances I've learned have come quite easily for me.

So, I've been at this for three years now. I'm pretty new to dancing compared to other people who have been doing this for much longer than I have. I used to dance that "free style" stuff for more than twenty years. I rarely dance that way anymore. If someone doesn't know any dance at all, I'll show her a basic step or two—just enough to get her moving on the dance floor and having fun. I've done this with some women, and when they learn the step and have fun, I feel good. I'll dance with anyone, no matter her skill level. I dance with some who are more skilled than I am. I can learn and get good feedback from them. I have also danced with those who have never danced before. I try to help them have fun, thank them for dancing with me, and I really hope to dance with them again.

In the past year, I've also learned East Coast Swing, Night Club 2- Step as well as just a little Cha-Cha, Waltz, Foxtrot and Zydeco / Cajun. In the near future, I want to improve at Waltz and Cha-Cha. Foxtrot, too! I really need to work on those. The more dances I learn, the more time I spend on the dance floor, and less time sitting. You know, before I learned all this dance stuff, I thought Promenade was a fruit drink!

I really enjoy dancing. It's probably my favorite hobby, among a couple other things. I enjoy the positive feedback and compliments I get from women I dance with. The compliments help build my confidence. Dancing is one of the most fun things I do. Dancing is fun and inexpensive too, if you can't afford to spend much money.

I really enjoy all the people I meet and dance with. I really look forward to each dance night. See you at the dances!!

Duane Lundgren

P.S. SUGGESTION: When you are dancing on a crowded dance floor, please be considerate of other dancers, and don't take-up so much space on the dance floor. GENTLEMEN-You will not impress your dance partner if you send her crashing or bumping into other people. I've seen dancers get hurt because of this. We all want to use a lot of space, but we must be considerate and adjust how much space we use to the situation. The point is to HAVE FUN. That can be done even in a small dance space. After all—it's more COZY that way, right?!

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around, the terms inside and outside have become meaningless. Simply stating whether the lady turns to the right or the left and on which counts is a better way of stating direction of turn. Unfortunately, this was too simple for the people who wrote the International Style Syllabi:

Under current (Int'l style) usage, "natural" and "reverse" refer to the direction of the turn (right and left, respectively). In Waltz, for example, a "reverse" turn takes two measures and (for the man) consists of a left outside turn (counts 1 2), a foot close (3), a left inside turn (4 5) and another foot close (6). A natural turn is (at this level of abstraction) exactly the same but on the alternate foot. In this context, thinking "inside" and "outside" doesn't help much, which is why people generally don't.

As a completely different definition of the terms inside and outside, we can use them to define orientation relative to the couple, from the man's point of view (as maintainer of frame and action). For example, the term "outside" in an Outside Spin (in waltz, quickstep or whatever) refers to the fact that the leader starts with a step outside his partner in Outside Partner Position. In other words his right foot steps to his left of the followers right foot instead of between her feet (inside). The terms inside and outside (of a turn) can ALSO refer to the position of one partner relative to the axis of the turn. A dance couple is normally connected through the hold (frame etc.) and builds a unity (at least in standard dancing). When a couple turns, each partner moves on a circular trace around a center of rotation. This center may be inside the couple, it may also be outside the couple. For example, when dancing a natural turn in waltz, the rotation center is outside, when dancing a pivot it will be inside the couple. The partner who is closer to the rotation axis is on the "inside of the turn", he has a shorter way to move. The other partner is on the "outside of the turn", he has a longer way around. All actions that turn between two steps have different radii of the circular movements. The position inside or outside of the turn can change very fast and sometimes between two steps (example: double reverse spin).

Foot Positions For Turns And Spins

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.

First and fourth foot positions are unstable but third and fifth foot positions are stable. A spin "prep" automatically puts the follower in third or fifth position, which makes her more stable going into a spin. Some instructors teach to lead right on the beat, which for a spin would put the women in an unstable foot position to start the spin with. And that leads generally need to come right before the beat so the follower is in the correct position when she commits her weight to that foot on the beat. But the followers can put themselves in a more stable foot position before starting a spin even if the leader put them in first position. This takes some practice to learn to do at full speed.

Body Positions For Turns And Spins

There are different techniques with different advantages and disadvantages. For example in two step where you progress down the line of dance with the follower doing multiple spins (connected at the hands, not free spins) and the leader keeping up with her.

The way people are usually taught to do this move is for the leader to keep his body facing forward down the line of dance, and while keeping this forward foot pattern going, turn the follower at his side. This has the advantage of being easy for the beginner to learn to do - he just keeps his basic footwork and body position going while moving his arm to spin the follower. The disadvantage is that he will break his frame with this technique, i.e., his arm has to go behind his shoulder to move her through the spin. Any anytime you break your frame, it takes more arm force to move the follower, which will in turn make her more unstable. But beginners usually put a lot of basics between moves, so she has time to regain her balance if needed before going on to the next move.

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A more advanced technique for this move is for the leader to turn his body towards the follower while she is spinning. The advantage of this technique is that he doesn't have to break his frame while leading the spins. It is thus easier for him to execute the spin lead, the lead is less forceful, more stable for the follower and just plain easier to follow. The disadvantage is that the leader has a much more complicated foot pattern and body position to learn. He has to move in one direction while his body is facing another. And he has to use third and fifth foot position steps, with some foot crossings rather than just walking forward. (It's similar to that closed grapevine move but with the follower spinning.) This is often too much for a beginner, but the good competitors use this technique because once you learn the footwork and body position, it is much easier to execute and has good presentation.

Practicing Turns And Spins

Unlike teaching her to follow turns with minimalist leads, you can't help her spin better by leading lots of them. In fact, a funny thing about spins is that after a short while, often just a few minutes and a few "good ones", the more you practice them, the worse they get in that practice session. So when you notice them deteriorating, it's time to stop. You'll probably find that the next time you practice them, they're a lot better.

Finally, "mental practice" helps. In a study with basketball players, where one group actually went out and practiced free throws, while the other group just visualized practicing them and doing them really well, the two groups improved by about the same amount? Doing BOTH actual practice and visualization works even better. So, in addition to really practicing, spend a few minutes each day visualizing yourself doing spins and turns really well.

You'll be surprised!

Come Dance With Us

[Http://www.comedancewithus.com](http://www.comedancewithus.com)

We started a new Web site Bulletin Board, Photos and stories for Dancing.

If you have questions about dancing, learned a new dance step, have dance clothes or shoes you are not using and want to sell, or need you can use the Bulletin board.

If you want to see photos of Minneapolis, MN dancers, you can go to the Photo Gallery.

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

Larry L Ablin and Barb Johnson

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. Starting Nightclub 2 step 6/1/2004

Teach Ballroom at Jefferson Community Ed on Thursday at 26th and Hennepin 612-668-2740
Lakeville Class Century Junior High 952-985-4610

Prior lake class Grainwood Elementary 952-440-2930

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Web <http://www.dancempls.com> for where to dance in Minneapolis, MN

Web <http://www.comedancewithus.com> for Bulletin board, Photos, and Dance stories.