



# 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 about, just write it up and give to Barb or Larry. I enjoy writing something for you.

Come Dance With Us

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## Chachacha

The **cha-cha-cha** (in Spanish **cha-cha-chá** and also known simply as **the cha-cha**) is a style of dance music.

In 1951, Cuban composer and violinist Enrique Jorrín introduced the *cha-cha-chá* to Cuban dance floors while playing with Orquesta América.

According to Jorrín, the sound made by the shoes of the dancers on the floor sounded like "cha-cha-cha", while they tried to follow the new rhythm that, at the beginning, was simply called "mambo-rumba". In 1953, his *La Engañadora* and *Silver Star* became recorded hits. In early days, this dance and its music were both known as "triple mambo" or "mambo with guiro rhythm".

## Chachacha Dance Steps

Chachacha is danced over two measures of 4/4. Dancers usually use a pattern of 8 counts across two bars to describe the basic step. Count 1 step in place, leader's left foot, follower's right.

Count 2 leader makes a break step backward on the right foot, follower steps forward on the left.

Count 3 the leader steps in-place on the left, follower on the right.

On "4-and-5" the leader makes two quick steps and steps in place: right-left-right.

Count 6 the leader breaks forward on the left

Count 7 steps in place on the right, and

Count 8-and-1 the small "cha cha" steps return to the start of the cycle.

As a matter of etiquette, some leaders start on 6 to avoid the first step stepping away from the partner, symbolizing rejection.

The Cha-Cha-Cha falls on 4-and-5 and on 8-and-1. Because this does not gel with the conventional ways of subdividing rhythms, i.e. it spans the end of one bar and the beginning of the next, some schools call it "Cha cha" enabling the teacher to call out "1 2 3 cha-cha 5 6 7 cha-cha"

The Cha-Cha part of the rhythm is a compact chasse.

The forward step of the cha-cha is: instead of the leader stepping forward on his right foot he puts his left foot to his right while the follower does the same but she puts her right foot to her left, then they both step back in and do the three steps on the spot. This can be repeated as many times as you want rotating sides. The backward step of the cha-cha is pretty much the same as the forward step but instead of using you're inside foot and stepping forward you use your outside foot and step backwards. The cha-cha turn is: the leader does a basic cha-cha step but when he/she does the three cha-cha's on the spot he does them while moving to the side then he/she does it again moving back to his original position. While he/she does this the follower does a normal step but instead of the three cha-cha-cha's he/she does two quick turns whichever way the leader is going then he/she does it again to end up back in his/her original position.

The tempo of the cha-cha is 128 beats per minute

It is danced to medium tempo music

The dance was popular in the 1950's

The cha-cha was created in Cuba by a Cuban violinist called Enrique Jorrin in 1954 When dancing the cha-cha very small steps are needed because of its rhythm. The cha-cha part of the rhythm is a series of small gliding steps that barely touch the floor. A huge variety of fancy footwork can be added to the dance. Weight has to be moved carefully to make motions look gliding. The cha-cha includes a lot of hip motion. The pelvis is held in one position and left free for this motion. Even though the cha-cha uses smaller steps, dancers in competitions usually make their movement slightly longer to travel across the floor. The Cha-cha became hugely popular in the United States as did the mambo in the 1950s. Dancers began inventing new steps and turns to win competitions.

### **Chachacha International Dance Steps**

Chachacha is one of the five dances of the "Latin American" program of international ballroom competitions (where it is officially but erroneously known as "Cha cha"). The basis of the modern dance was laid down in the 1960s by [Walter Laird](#) and other top competitors of the time. The basic pattern involves a checked forward step with the left foot retaining part weight on the right foot, the knee of the right leg being allowed to flex and close to the back of the left knee, the left leg having straightened just prior to receiving part weight. This step is taken on the second beat of the bar. Weight is returned to the right leg on the second step (beat three.) The fourth beat is split in two so the count of the next three steps is 4-and-1. These three steps constitute the Cha-cha chasse. A step to the side is taken with the left foot, the right foot is half closed to the left foot (typically leaving both feet under the hips or perhaps closed together), and finally there is a last step to the left with

the left foot. Both knees are allowed to be flexed on the count of 'and' as otherwise an increase in height would take place as the feet are brought towards each other. Chachacha is danced without any rise and fall. The length of the steps in the chasse depend very much on the effect the dancer is attempting to make. In general Chachacha steps should be kept compact. While one partner dances the bar just described the other partner dances as follows. A step is taken back on the right foot, the knee being straightened as full weight is taken. The other leg is allowed to remain straight. It is possible it will flex slightly but no deliberate flexing of the free leg is attempted. This is quite different from technique associated with salsa, for instance. On the next beat (beat three) weight is returned to the left leg. Then a Chachacha chasse is danced RLR. Each partner is now in a position to dance the bar their partner just danced. Hence the Chachacha extends over two bars, as does the underlying clave. Because of the action used during the forward step (the one taking only part weight) this basic construction inevitably turns left somewhat. The dancers do not dance in a slot; instead their alignment in the room gradually changes throughout the dance. Hip actions are allowed to occur at the end of every step. For steps taking a single beat the first half of the beat constitutes the foot movement and the second half is taken up by the hip movement.

### **American Style Rhythm**

The Cha-Cha arrived in the U.S in 1954 and sparked a passionate dance craze. It soon superseded the Mambo because it was easier for Americans to learn. Sometimes, the dance was referred to as the "double mambo" because the Chachacha step was flanked by the front and back half of the Mambo basic (step, step, cha-cha-cha, step, step).

Spanish speakers refer to the rhythm and the dance as cha cha cha, with each "cha" referring to one of the hip undulations in the middle of the step. Reportedly, the dance was named after the sound of women's shoes gliding against the floor.

The rhythm was originally created in the early 1950's by Enrique Jorin, a Cuban violinist. It grew out of the Danzon, an older Cuban music and dance form descended from a mix of European and Afro-Cuban styles. Once it arrived in the U.S., the traditional music changed. The characteristic sweet-sounding violins and flutes were often exchanged for big-band instruments such as trumpet, trombone and sax.

Like all the Latin dances, the cha-cha emphasizes hip action and rhythm expressed throughout the body. The music is in 4/4 time and tempo is 30 to 34 bars per minute.

### **Description of Cha-Cha**

The cha cha is similar to rumba and to mambo. The difference is that the "slow" step of the rumba and the mambo is replaced with a triple step.

The step timing is counted 1,2,3, 4&,. Several steps would be counted: 1,2,3, 4&1, 2,3, 4&1, 2,3, 4&1,2, 3. The cha cha may also be counted using quicks and slows. The count using quicks and slows would be: Slow, slow, slow, quick, quick, slow, slow, slow, quick, quick. Notice that five steps are taken to four beats of music. The dance may also be counted: One, two, three, cha cha cha, two, three, Chachacha.

In the music, the heavy beat is the one beat, the first beat of the measure. Chachacha music is written in 4/4 time, with four beats to each measure. The music tempo is 110 to 130 beats per minute.

Difficulty: Moderate

Like so many Latin dances, the Chachacha has its origins in Cuba. It is a more formal dance than some of the

other Latin dances.

#### Leading Instructions

STEP 1: Stand opposite your partner.

STEP 2: Place your right hand high on your partner's back, under her shoulder blade.

STEP 3: Extend your left hand to chest height with your elbow bent and your palm raised.

STEP 4: Grasp your partner's right hand in a loose grip.

STEP 5: Listen to the rhythm of the music when it begins.

STEP 6: Step to the left and slightly backward with your left foot.

STEP 7: Step back with your right foot, rocking up on your left foot as you do so.

STEP 8: Step forward with your right.

STEP 9: Bring your left foot into your right and close your feet together.

STEP 10: Step to the right and slightly forward with your right foot.

STEP 11: Step forward with your left foot, rocking up on your right heel as you do so.

STEP 12: Step back with your right foot.

STEP 13: Step to the left with your left foot and bring your right foot in to close the step.

STEP 14: Repeat.

#### Tips & Warnings

Cha-cha music is composed in 4/4 time. The rhythm is "slow slow quick quick slow." Dancing to each bar of music will take two slow steps, two quick steps, then one slow step. Count your steps as "step step cha-cha step" or "two three four and one."

Keep your upper body stiff and most of the movement concentrated in the pelvis and hips.

Don't move your hips in a Latin swish until you can do the basic steps.

#### Following Instructions

STEP 1: Follow the leader.

STEP 2: Place your left hand on your partner's shoulder.

STEP 3: Place your right hand in your partner's outstretched hand.

STEP 4: Step forward when your partner steps back.

STEP 5: Step back when your partner steps forward.

STEP 6: Mirror your partner's moves as he makes his steps