



# Larrys Corner

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This is called Larrys Corner because when I teach I stand in the corner so I can see everyone.

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

## Country 2 Step

A country-western partner dance in 4/4 time, traveling smoothly around the line of dance; two step is bursting with fancy twirls executed while traveling across the dance floor. Country two step is the country-western dancer's fancy fox-trot.

Country two step is executed in a forward traveling walking pattern around a counter-clockwise line of dance, using a slow, slow, quick, quick rhythm, or a quick, quick, slow, slow rhythm. Once the dancers become adept at the basics, many impressive spins, wraps, and weaving movements can be added; other two steppers, particularly many folks who grew up on country music in the South and West, feel no pressure to impress, and just enjoy the most popular single spins and smooth traveling momentum of the dance while humming along to the music.

## History

Dances carrying the name 'Two Step' have existed at least since halfway the nineteenth century. In this century the two-step was done for a long time as a cowboy dance. These two-steps use a rhythm that we would now call "triple-step triple-step". The current country (Texas) Two-step is a much more recent development.

Why were the old dances called "TWO STEP"?

There was a dance in the early 1800's called the "valse a deux temps" (two beat waltz). That waltz was rejected by many as appearing "jerky in its movement". The deux temps was done to waltz music at a slightly pressed tempo of 88 measures per minute (the "valse a trois temps" [three beat waltz] was danced at about 66 measures per minute; the "trois temps" is one variation of what today we call "the waltz").

In 1847, in his book "La Danse des Salons", Henri Cellarius expressed his regrets about the use of the term "deux temps" stating that the dance would be better accepted if it were called "deux pas" (two step) as the term better described the step of the dance (he also suggested that the trois temps would be better

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called the "trois pas" - "three step"). Subsequent to his use of the term, many other authors used the term "two step". I have not yet found an earlier usage.

Before describing the step, here are some conventions:

- a "step" will indicate a movement of a foot which has a weight change [NOTE: I use this narrow definition as it suffices here.]
- a "STEP" will be a "dance step" which may be composed of one or more steps or STEPs
- examples:
  - o a glissade is a STEP composed of one gliding step
  - o a chasse is a STEP composed of two steps, one foot closes to the other, chasing the other which takes the weight; it may be described as a coupe STEP followed by a glissade STEP
  - o a waltz STEP is composed of three steps [exceptions: hesitation waltz and (depending on perspective) 5/4 waltz]

A condensed description - combined from various 19th Century sources - of the "two step" is to execute a glissade STEP followed by a chasse STEP. Hence the "two step" is a "two STEP" composed of a glissade STEP and a chasse STEP. In simpler terminology, this is "step close step". (Some people prefer to think of chasse as "step close" ... for them the two STEPs are a chasse STEP followed by a glissade STEP.)

Various sources point out that the "two step" can be done in a variety of time signatures - not just 3/4 - and to a variety of rhythms.

Many "two step dances" exist, all having this "two STEP" pattern as a major component, and to different rhythms; in more recent times, some have altered the chasse to be a passing step (e.g. some Texas two step dancers use "step step step step" rather than "step close step step" yet both use the rhythm QQSS). When embellishments are removed, many dance STEPs have the two step as part of the basic step pattern: among others are the polka, Schottische, a wide variety of dances called "XXX two step" (replace XXX with your favorite - Texas, NC, Boston, Nightclub, etc).

The late 19th/early 20th-century two-step is step forward on the first foot, close the other foot up to it in third position behind, then step forward on the first foot again. Done walking forward, backward, or turning. (This two-step, in my opinion, ranks among the easiest social dances ever invented.) With a number of variations that included other movements, but this is the basic. Done at least until the mid 1920s, when Arthur Murray mentioned in one of his manuals that the two-step was still done in the smaller cities, but not in New York. What he really thought was old-fashioned was probably ragtime music, because he urged dancers with an urge to do the two-step to do it to fox trot music, instantly becoming up-to-date.

The late-19th/early 20th-century two-step is directly derived from the polka. The Victorian polka is hop, step, close, step (counted & 1 & 2). The two-step merely omits the hop (it actually has three steps, not two).

The Galop (which became fashionable in the mid 19th century) is also related to the polka. The Galop step in its purest form is a chasse (slide-cut) with no turn. As this has obvious limitations a polka step was done when the couple wanted to turn.

The Redowa is an ancestor of the box-step waltz, with a long first step, done in 3/4 time. It is not at all the same as a two-step. However, the polka-redowa is a different form, being a polka step done to 3/4 time. Some Victorian manuals appear to omit the initial hop in the polka-redowa, which would make this a two-step done to 3/4 time.

The waltz a deux temps, which became fashionable in the mid-19th century, is another 3/4 time dance related to the two-step. "Deux temps" means "two movements" (a slide, then a chasse), not two steps. A number of dance manual authors complained about the translation of "deux temps" as "two steps" and the resulting con-

fusion for dance students.

The two-step was danced to both "rags," such as Scott Joplin's, and marches such as Sousa's. The one-step (a march walk) was done to the same tunes. There is a lot of turn-of-the-century sheet music labeled "one step or two-step." If it's played fast it's a one-step. If it's played slower it's a two-step.

The Cakewalk, the Turkey trot, and other "Animal dances" such as the Grizzly bear are boisterous parents of the one-step. They were similar with the two-step, rather than evolving into it (and all involve the basic two-step as part of their step repertoire). As merely being boisterous was perceived by some people as scandalous, or at least undignified, the one-step was an attempt to refine these dances.

The early Fox trot (first seen around 1914) combined steps from the two-step, the one-step, and the tango.

All these Victorian and Edwardian dances had many step sequences/variants which had their own names. Even the basic dance forms were renamed by dance teachers for marketing purposes. (For example, the Castles called the one-step the "Castle Walk;" Maurice Mouvet, a contemporary competitor, called it the "Maurice Walk;" but it's the same dance.)

In the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s, there was a revival of "old-fashioned" dances, such as the sequences for various dance forms the Victorians and Edwardians used (which became known as "sequence dances" and I believe became associated with specific tunes in this revival). (Square dance also experienced a revival.) Could it be that modern country & western dance began as part of this movement?

## Texas Two-step

The two-step that is now the main dance in country and western probably comes out of Texas. However, the exact history, as of so many dances, is unclear. A certain connection with (American) Foxtrot is very likely: both have the same 6-count basic rhythm.

In the late 70's to early 80's a group of instructors that were running a disco dance school changed with the trend and moved into teaching Country and Western. Enter Exclusive Dance Clubs. This would have followed the movie "Urban Cowboy" which came out in 1979? I think. The teachers and dance directors had a background in teaching ballroom. So a lot of the early patterns on the syllabus were founded in Foxtrot.

Exclusive Dance Clubs and staff formalized many of the roughly existing patterns and then added and created a bunch more. The main contribution would be weave patterns, spin tunnels, etc. Along comes UCWDC, somewhat late in the game. But none the less, a strong player.

I learned to two-step 30 years ago. Which predates Exclusive and UCWDC. And it had been around long before that. But the similarities in the two dance's, Bronze Foxtrot and Two-step are very apparent. There are many patterns especially in the beginning parts of 2-step that are and were taken from Bronze American Foxtrot. The misleading part of the argument is that 2-step, as we know it today, was taught in the late 70's and early 80's like a bronze Foxtrot.

This is mainly because the first teachers trying to make a buck at it were former ballroom instructors that applied the knowledge that they already had. The weave or more correctly whip pattern was taken from the swing or jitterbug influence. Then formalized for teaching purpose's. Spin tunnels, We B. Wrappin's, Wrap and rondes, a whole bunch of stuff you probably dance originated in Houston In the early 80's. Probably before you had even learned your first 2-step.

The common misconception is that when the teachers applied what they knew about foxtrot to teaching basic 2-step everyone got the idea that 2-step derived from foxtrot. But in reality only a few patterns did. And in those days there was no rotational patterns, only couples doing closed continuous turns down to the next corner of the dance floor and then breaking into a jitterbug. [David Appel]

*A lot of credit for the country and western craze in Houston should be given to Eddie Lopez.*

Eddie Lopez owned the most popular chain of studios in the Houston area called Exclusive Dance Club which is now no longer in business. In its hey-day Exclusive boasted close to 12 different studios and many well known dancers either taught, or learned in these studios; including Joyce Clarkson (of Evening Star Boots), Laurie and Larry Sepulvado, Mary Hoedeman, Eddie Griffith, and many more that I can't think of right now. I took lessons from Hartells Dance World studio that became Fred Astaire Studios, was located on Nicollet Avenue in 1978-82. The two step that is generally seen on the UCWDC circuit today is essentially the same as what was being taught nearly 15 years ago! I recall watching very early videos of "major" C/W competitions from the late 80's and thinking no one was doing a "real" two step--I wasn't sure what they were doing, but it wasn't "genuine" from my perspective. After all, I'd learned the dance in TEXAS, in HOUSTON, from the motherland of country dancing!

There is a syllabus that has been hammered out with some cooperation between the many studios in the Houston area. This cooperation was an attempt to develop some minimal standards of instruction and content to eliminate the typical conflicts that can arise about who's teaching the real thing. It was an effort that was successful in my opinion; look at competition videos from 1987 and compare them with current performances. What started in Houston is now generally recognized as THE two step.

By the way, in ALL Houston studios, the two step starts with the slow steps (SSQQ) rather than the quick steps (QQSS). In most cases and with most music, this still makes sense and is more than just a relic from the fox-trot.

*One of the defining moments is the movie "Urban Cowboy" (with John Travolta) which was shot at Gilley's, a bar in Houston TX, actually Pasadena, a SE suburb of Houston.*

## **Two-step, Texas two-step, Rhythm two-step, Double two-step, Triple two-step, Nightclub two-step, Disco two-step**

Two-step and Texas Two-step usually refer to the Quick-Quick Slow-Slow or Slow-Slow Quick-Quick Two-step, done to fairly fast music (at least 170bpm).

The terms Double Two-step and Triple Two-step are both applied to a progressive dance with the Triple-step Triple-step Walk-walk rhythm. This is sometimes called Progressive Swing because it is like a traveling East Coast Swing; the names Houston Shuffle, Swing on the Move, and Norfolk are also used for it. This dance is mostly done from Kansas to Texas with some of the surrounding states, music is slower than for Texas Two-step: typically 120bpm.

The Rhythm Two-step is almost stationary: the rhythm is Step forward, Touch, Step backward, Touch, Walk Walk. It is almost exclusively done in Arizona. Its music is in tempo between Triple Two-step and Texas Two-step.

Nightclub two-step (also called California two-step, or Disco two-step) has nothing to do with any of the above two-steps. It is a dance with a 4-count pattern, done to slow pop music.

One person who's often credited with inventing it, Buddy Schiwimmer, says about why he called it two-step: "We thought of taking two steps with the left foot and then two steps with the right foot like this (leader's part):

Left & Left -- Right & Right. or  
1 & 2 - 3 & 4 -

That's where the name Two Step came from."

Quite confusingly, among certain swing and hustle dancers, this dance is simply known as 'two-step'.