



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

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East Coast Swing Introduction

Are you ready to be cool? If so, the Swing is a "must learn" dance. As a non-progressive dance, the Swing is convenient on any jam-packed floor. From its origin in 1927, the Lindy paved the way for many more swing-style dances which developed, including the American Swing, Boogie-Woogie, Hustle, Jitterbug, Jive, Rock and Roll, and West Coast Swing. With post-war exuberance filling the air, it wasn't long before youthful energy was unleashed on the streets...dancing! Characterized by jumps, spins, turns and throw-outs, the Lindy was seen on dance floors all across America. Today, the Lindy has undergone many alterations and has been toned down and incorporated into a ballroom format known most commonly as the Swing.

Description of East Coast Swing

When your mom and dad talk about swing dancing to the music of Elvis Presley and Chuck Berry back in the 50's, this is the dance they were doing. Also called The Jitterbug, East Coast Swing is the official "sock hop" swing dance for jump blues. East Coast Swing is a circular, rotating swing dance that has many wraps, tunnels, and turns. The basic step is: Step, Step, Rock step. Or triple step, triple step, rock step. The music is diverse and includes oldies (Elvis and Chuck Berry), jump blues, country, big band, and top 40. East Coast Swing is a versatile dance suitable for both the ballroom and the bar room. With a wide range of music to choose from you can swing to almost anything. Swing music is written in 4/4 time with a tempo of 145-170 beats per minute. Since this is a quick dance, the steps should be small and light. The basic step is tough at first. Fortunately, it's like learning to jump rope: initially it's awkward, but eventually it becomes smooth and nearly effortless.

Music

Like the Fox Trot, the Swing is written in 4/4 time with the first and third beats accented. There are three basic patterns that you can choose from: the Single Swing, Double Swing and Triple Swing. The main difference between the three types comes in the first 4 counts of the music. In the Single Swing, the steps are Slow-Slow-quick-quick, or Step-Step-Back-Rock. Try saying this. Remember, the Slow (S) is twice as long as the quick (q) step. On the Double Swing, the steps are quick-quick-quick-quick-quick-quick or Step-Touch-Step-Touch-Back-Rock. Say this out loud as you move your feet. Finally, the Triple Swing is quick-n-quick quick-n-quick quick-quick or Tri-ple-Step-Tri-ple-Step-Back-Rock. As you can see, you will always be doing a back rock. If the music is fast, you should probably stick with a Single or Double Swing so you don't exhaust yourself. If the music is a little slower, try the Triple Swing.

Let's Dance

To begin, stand in an upright position facing your partner. You will be assuming a two-hand hold in Open Swing Position. Since this is a quick dance, steps should be small and light. The knees should be relaxed and flexed slightly.

Triple Step

Now for the triple step! The triple step consists of a series of three small steps. Let's try it. Stand in place with your feet together. Pretend you are a child having a temper tantrum and stomp your feet in place: 1-2-3...1-2-3...LRL...RLR. Keep doing this, accenting count 1 and count 3. That's the basic rhythm. Now for some styling. You probably have been placing full weight down over your entire foot. This makes for a heavy dance, especially if you have really fast music. What you want to achieve is a light, bouncy step. Keeping your knees soft and slightly bent (flexed) try doing the triple steps again, lightly and on the ball of your foot. It should feel a little springy, sort of like a diving board. If you have some space, try triple-stepping around. You can move any way you want: forward, backward, side-ways, or in a circle.

Back Rock

You will come across terms like "back rock" and "triple step" during the Swing. A back rock will either follow a step, a step-touch or a triple step. The man, who always begins his sequence on the LF (left foot), will always rock back on the LF as well. The woman will begin and rock back on the RF (right foot). For a practice exercise, stand in place with your feet together. Take one step forward with either foot. Your feet should now be in a line with the forward foot approximately 8 inches in front of the other. Maintain your balance. Now, begin rocking back and forth, transferring your body weight from one foot to the other. When you rock forward, your back foot should leave the ground slightly but return to its original place. Likewise, when you rock backward, your front foot should leave the ground slightly and then return to its original place. Try rocking back and forth a few times.

Swing Style

There are some basic styling points that should be mentioned. The Swing is a fast, exuberant dance, so you must maintain control or you'll wind up sprawled out on the dance floor! To maintain balance, a firm hand grip is essential. In Two-Hand Position, the man extends his arms forward with palms up. The woman then places her hands palms down in her partner's hands. Think of your fingers as a hook. By cupping in with your fingers, a firm hold can be achieved and adequate tension and control will be maintained. In addition to a firm hand grip, it is essential that the forearm is held firmly for better body communication between the dancers. Remember, the Swing is fast and lively. Think of your arms as rudders. They must be firm in order to know which way to go. If you have floppy arms, you won't be able to respond to your partner's lead quickly. Don't be flustered if you don't "get it" the first time. Read through and practice. The "feel" of the rhythm will come and you'll be swinging before you know it.

Beginner's Mistakes in East Coast Swing

The biggest problem is taking steps that are too large. Keep the steps small, especially the "rock step." In addition, close the feet on the "and" of the triple step.

East Coast Swing is danced almost exclusively on the balls of the feet and almost exclusively in third foot position. The "triple steps" should be taken by striking the floor with the inside edge of the ball of the foot. The triple steps are also a "digging" action as opposed to a "bouncing off the floor" action. As a triple step is taken to the left, the hips remain to the right. As a triple step is taken to the right, the hips switch to, and stay to, the left. In the "rock step," the spine stays in front of the "rocking" foot. The lilt comes from straightening the knee rather than from jumping. Lilt and energy are important.

Also, do not over-extend the arms or jerk arms from their sockets. Keep the dance compact.