

The Fundamentals of
Good Ballroom
DANCING



LOUISE BROOKS

**THE FUNDAMENTALS OF
GOOD BALLROOM
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by
LOUISE BROOKS

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FOREWORD

AS THE TITLE INDICATES, this booklet is restricted solely to the outline and review of those basic fundamentals that are the essence of good dancing wherever discriminating people gather. The steps and principles outlined are those taught and practiced in Miss Brooks' own school and those generally recognized by the leading exponents of ballroom Dancing.

Regardless of one's knowledge of dancing, the application of the fundamentals outlined in these pages will permit anyone to improve his or her dancing immeasurably and give the sureness and poise that comes from a firm foundation of propriety and taste.

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WHY DANCE?

Dancing is as old as history. People of antiquity would have answered the question as we shall, for the instinct to "cut a rug" and synchronize bodily action with the rhythm of music has been common to all ages.

Ballroom dancing's foremost contribution is a social one. It is virtually the only recreation in which social and physical recreation are combined with music to provide an ideal socializing medium. The holiday dance, the club dance and the formal balls are more than events where we undertake certain mechanical movements in unison; they are occasions when we meet the people we know and want to know, and join with them in the keen appreciation of a stimulating activity—that is, if we know how!

Dancing is fun. As we are elated and made to feel superbly competent by an excellent game of golf or tennis, so does the ability to dance with smooth, powerful, grace gives us confidence and pleasure as well as the admiration of others. When the band strikes up, get up! It's easier than tapping your foot, and much less embarrassing.

Dancing is the front line enemy of overweight and age. The Correct dancing step will not tolerate excess weight; hips and legs simply vanish when the muscles are toned and tempered by this exercise. And, unlike tiresome calisthenics, it is fun. You have your cake and eat it, look younger, feel younger and are younger!

The physical grace that results from the perfect muscular coordination that correct dancing

provides is a charm much rarer and more desirable than superficial beauty. In the last analysis, dancing beautifully depends upon nothing more involved than the ability to stand, walk and move beautifully. Complete physical assurance and its consequent mental freedom, go hand in hand, and together they unite to produce the truly beautiful, charming woman and the man of distinction.

Ward McAllister, the one time social arbiter of New York society, who wrote that the members of his famous Four Hundred were those who possessed the ability to be at ease in the ballroom, once said that not more than ten of his 400 could gracefully cross a ballroom floor alone. There is no record, but it is safe to say that those ten could also enter a drawing room, or dance, just as gracefully.

A last and important answer to our question, "Why Dance?" can be stated quite simply—you have to. Even though you are something of a hermit, sometime, somewhere, you will be called upon and expected to give a creditable showing. And that may be the one moment in your life when there is nothing you desire more than the favorable opinion of a person, or persons, whose respect and admiration you value.

For young men and women, good dancing is of course indispensable. The never ending succession of dances and balls may seem trivial to thoughtless parents, but they are vital to these young men and women, whose success or failure in making their early contacts may influence their entire lives. As Emily Post says, "The great ballroom success, first and foremost dances well. All

things being more or less equal, the girl who dances best has the most partners. Let a daughter of Venus or an heiress of Midas dance badly, and she might better stay home", and the same statement could apply to young men. How cruel, and yet when we consider how little effort, attention and study of the correct fundamentals is required, we can only say that there is always a reason for poor dancing, but never an excuse.

BEFORE YOU DANCE

Most careless and ungainly dancing is due to lack of forethought. Everyone realizes that to attain any skill in any recreation he must learn a few basic fundamentals and then conscientiously put them into practice. Yet not one dancer in ten gives any serious thought to the subject. He or she expects to get up when the music starts and make a creditable showing without any practice or attention whatsoever to the fundamentals. Like anything else, good dancing, must be learned.

Before you get up to dance, **listen to the music.** Be certain that you know the appropriate steps to go with it. Waltzes, fox-trots, and rumbas are easily identified by their accent beats, as will be shown later.

Get the rhythm firmly in mind before you take the floor. Many, men especially, violate this rule, and as a result stumble through the first few bars before they get into the proper swing.

If unavoidably caught on the floor by music unsuitable to either partner, the woman should take the initiative and ask to be excused. If you would be completely at ease on all occasions and enjoy the latest dances, learn the appropriate steps.

Try to absorb the feeling or mood of the music. The ability to do this and then interpret the mood is an accomplishment that makes a good dancer a superb dancer.

The Rumba is gay and daring; the Tango, moody and insinuating. The waltz has a free, lilting quality duplicated in no other dance. Fox-trots provide an immense variety of moods and

offer the skilled interpreter no end of opportunity. The change of bodily movement to accord with the mood of music is almost imperceptible. Light, rapid music will inspire the dance with crispness, while more languorous time is appropriately interpreted with slightly longer steps and an almost intangible alteration of the muscular impulse behind each step.

Desirable as this ability is, it is dangerous for the novice to attempt, for if overdone, it can easily become clownish. Generally speaking, it will come more easily to those of sensitive and imaginative natures, who, strangely enough, are most often the ones lacking necessary confidence in themselves. Once they have mastered the infinitely more simple fundamentals, they almost invariably make wonderful dancers.

Know a few steps well. Two or three correctly performed steps are worth a bushel of the aimless stops and starts that are the despair of every woman. It is not the variety of steps, but their execution that makes a good dancer. There are many men who dance rarely and know little more than simple fox-trot walks and turns, yet dance beautifully because they have learned them thoroughly. Nothing will give you more confidence than the certainty that what you do, you do well.

Since the woman must be able to follow any man, it is necessary for her to know at least the rudiments of a great many steps. If she equips herself with the fundamental steps of the popular

dances and knows the secret of maintaining balance and muscular control through use of the Basic Step, she can follow any twist and turn her partner can conceive.

An important point that women rarely think of, is their psychological attitude immediately preceding the dance. During the short walk to the floor she is the center of attraction, and it goes without saying that if she possesses that quality of physical awareness that is the basis of all grace, she will excite admiration and probably dance divinely. If, when reaching the floor, she turns to her partner balanced, poised and relaxed, she will inspire him with confidence. The professional trick of walking to the floor in time with the music is an excellent habit for both men and women to cultivate. The rhythm and feel of the music is thus assimilated by the time the couple reach the floor, and the initial steps become a graceful continuation of the approach.

BEFORE YOU DANCE, REMEMBER:

1. A little forethought will give you confidence;
2. Listen to and judge the music;
3. Get the rhythm firmly in mind;
4. Absorb the feel or mood of the music;
5. Know a few steps well;
6. Approach the floor rhythmically and with confidence.

THE DANCING POSITION

On the initial dancing position and its essential maintenance, depends the cooperative success of the subsequent steps. If the question is approached perfectly naturally and sensibly, it ceases to be a problem, for the correct position is that which is easiest and produces the desired harmonious results.

But some men and women are shy; some are bold and rude; some are afraid they will offend; others are literally weak with terror every time they get up to dance. As long as this is so, we will have men and women who direct all their efforts to avoiding and fighting each other, whereas they should bend their efforts toward cooperation.

In all dances, **face your partner squarely.** That most common of errors, the angled stance, is usually inspired by a desire to escape toe trodding by dancing between each others feet. As a result, the dancers' feet travel in different lines and inevitably clash.

Stand erect, balanced and at ease. The most ludicrous sight on a dance floor is the woman who attempts to evade her partner by throwing her posterior far astern.

The correct position for the waltz and fox-trot is essentially the same, though the former is slightly more open. While the partner's bodies are parallel, their faces are turned slightly so that they look over each others shoulders. The man's left arm and the woman's right are extended com-

fortably at shoulder level with a **slight** bend in the elbows. The extended arms serve as an aid to balance and help the man to lead. Two common faults are cramping the arms too close to the body and the exertion of pressure against the partner's arm. Think of the extended arms as wings, not something to lean on. They should extend freely on an imaginary line between the partners.

The hands are clasped in a "reverse handshake." Interlacing of the fingers is unnecessary and sometimes awkward.

The man's right hand should be placed **lightly** at the back of the woman's waist, where it serves as a key to balance, unity, and sometimes as a guide. Mr. Big's common fault is attempting to embrace the woman's entire body, pulling her off balance and setting both partners at an uncomfortable angle. The woman's right hand rests on the man's shoulder, the most comfortable position depending upon their comparative heights.

Alike in the position of the extended arms, are the Tango and Rumba. As in all dances, the hands are centered on a line between the bodies, but the arms are bent upward at the elbow—like the policeman stopping traffic. The woman's fingers are together and point loosely upward, while the man's clasp extends over them.

The Rumba is a dance of open position, about six inches separating the partners, so the man's right hand is conveniently placed at the woman's waist. Placing her hand on the man's right arm just above the elbow, the woman's forearm rests on the man's.

In the Tango, the man's hand is placed just beneath the woman's shoulder blade, where it provides the leading guide. The distance between the dancers varies constantly, but is usually near that of the waltz.

REMEMBER THE IMPORTANT POINTS:

1. Face your partner squarely, balanced and erect;
2. Never arch away from nor press your partner;
3. Do not attempt to dance between your partner's feet;
4. Don't exert pressure against your partner's extended arm;
5. Maintain your own balance.

MOVEMENT AND DIRECTION

The fundamentals of movement and direction are closely allied to, and depend upon, the position of the dancers. As long as the dancers maintain perfect position they are not likely to become seriously involved in mistakes of movement, for as long as dancers begin their steps from, and maintain, the essential position outlined in the previous chapter, they will at least arrive at the same destination simultaneously. Their steps will be in unity because the position will not permit independent action of the feet and legs; they must move together.

Remember first that on any dance floor the direction of all dancers follows a circle **around the floor to the left**. If all dancers remembered this and moved in this direction, the worst of collisions would amount to no more than a gentle contact with a couple going the same way. Of course, our "fancy dancers" must stop squarely in the traffic stream to jitter a jig, and launch a mad whirl in any convenient direction. Even dancers who know better sometimes get into the habit of falling into cross-traffic spins and whirls. The most that we can do is to avoid such couples and encourage by word and action the movement in straight lines around the floor.

The intelligent and unhampered movement of the partners is the responsibility of the man. If he does not know what he intends to do, no woman can follow him, for he will give no indication of his next step.

GOOD DANCING

A word about dancing in general before we take up the individual steps and music of the various dances.

The fundamentals of good dancing are not dictated by a stodgy social order intent on forcing its arbitrary rulings upon all who dance. They are nothing more than the application of common sense and the existant ideals of controlled, beautiful coordination.

You do not refrain from the mad excesses of the jitter-bug because Mrs. Snobawful glares at you, but because such styles easily become coarse. Neither do you refrain from kicking your feet in the air because so-and-so says it isn't correct; it's simply because there is no room to spare on the average floor, and most people don't like to be kicked unexpectedly. The well-defined direction of the couple is necessary if we are to avoid the collisions brought on by aimless cross-current whirls.

When your dancing instructor tells you to face your partner squarely and toe straight ahead in direct line with your partner's foot, you can understand, without taking his word for it, that this is the only method by which you and your partner can move easily and naturally in the same direction and in perfect unison. Dancers who toe between each other's feet are like a train, half of which is on the track, the other half dangling around the side, without direction. Dancing constantly on the half toe does more than destroy

the balance and smoothness of the dance; it takes the strength of Samson to maintain a constant balance on the half toe, and this fault, placing a terrific strain on the calf muscles, is the reason why many dancers tire quickly.

In the fox-trot, a man begins his basic fox-trot step with the left foot because most women are accustomed to following with their right. While there is no law against doing otherwise, it will be found that compliance with such common usages will make leading and following much less of a task.

Every dancing instructor is plagued with statements such as, "I saw Fred Astair do it this way!" or "Mickey Rooney and Ginger Rogers don't do it like you teach!" In connection with exhibition dancing let's remember this—anything goes. If you can pick up your partner and whirl her around your head gracefully, you are privileged to do so—providing you are in a vaudeville act, in the movies, or every other dancer on the floor has been paid to stay out of the way. If you saw the same professional dancers not on exhibition, but during an ordinary social dance, you would be amazed at the utter simplicity of their steps.

As a dancer you are not so much interested in the tricky steps concocted by Jojo Jumbo at the Ha Ha Club as the fundamental percepts that are in perfect taste, no matter where you may be.

FOLLOWING

If the man knows what he is going to do, few women will have trouble following him. However, few men know what their next step will be, and to those women to whom following does not come easily, a problem is presented that seems to have no solution.

Following is not a matter of "gift" or mind reading. There are definite physical cues that give the woman advance information concerning her partner's next step. The five principle ways of determining the next steps are:

1. Pull or pressure on the extended arm;
2. Pull or pressure at the back or waist;
3. Contact at the leg during long steps;
4. Pressure on chest;
5. Knowledge of commonly used step sequences.

All good women dancers sense these cues automatically, and any woman can follow well if she devotes some effort to cultivating her perception of them.

She must first learn to relax. This means keeping her own balance perfectly and letting the man dominate. If she knows the principles of the Basic Step, she can quickly transfer her weight to either foot and thus follow the most unexpected of leads.

Never fight against the lead. The dance will end in a battle for domination. Your relaxation will give the man confidence and his dancing will improve. Most men fancy themselves good dancers. If you follow them well, you have proved their point for them and have earned their eternal

gratitude. Follow, tho it kills you—then underscore his weaknesses in this booklet and mail it to him. It will be a favor.

Remember that relaxing is **not** collapsing. The dance hold is to keep you in an exact position in relation to your partner. Do not let the right arm hang limp in the man's hand like a sprig of parsley. Maintain **your own** arm position so that when your partner steers you, you will move easily in one piece.

THE BASIC RULES FOR ALL BALLROOM DANCING

1. **Never take your feet off** the floor.
2. Move on the **Ball of the Foot**, always coming to rest on the **whole foot**.
3. Toe **Straight Ahead**. Always keep your feet parallel to the direction you are moving.
4. Men especially: **Keep Time**. There is **no** such thing as "out of rhythm" dancing!

LEADING

A glance at the preceding chapter will show that good leading depends upon the man's ability to give positive indication of his next move. If he is unsure, hesitates, or changes direction at the last moment, his partner will be rendered helpless. She cannot be expected to follow a step that the leader himself cannot predict.

Know what you are going to do. Know a few steps so well that their mechanical execution is automatic. You may then devote yourself entirely to your partner and the music.

Start Every Dance with Simple Steps. Beginning the dance with a straight fox-trot step, or square, will give your partner a chance to become familiar with your style and timing. If you feel that she is capable of following well, you may later attempt more intricate routines, but never lead her into a new sequence unless you know she can follow it well.

Know the Music. Be certain that you can establish and maintain the correct rhythm. If in doubt, count it out to yourself.

Let Your Partner Maintain Her Own Balance. Never hold her tightly, pull her forward or force her to stand at an angle by attempting a full-waist embrace.

Let the Music Lead You. Never rush the time, or drag against it.

Watch Where You are Going. Devote some attention to judging distances. Don't wait until you are hopelessly trapped in a corner.

THE FOX-TROT

Because of its popularity, fox-trot music is easy to identify, but its tempo and mood is so varied that occasionally one has difficulty picking out the characteristic beat.

The acid test for all music is counting: If the music says ONE - two - THREE - four, with the accent on the capitalized words, you may be certain that a fox-trot is being played, or at least a fox-trot may be danced to its accompaniment.

Two fundamental steps are needed to dance the fox-trot: The straight forward, or backward, step (two steps to the measure) and the Quick Step.

We may consider the forward (or backward) basic fox-trot sequence completed in six counts. Standing erect, feet together, the man moves straight forward during the sequence—always beginning on the left foot.

Feet:	L	R	L	R
He Steps:	Slow	Slow	Quick	Quick
Counting:	1-2	3-4	1	2
She Steps:	R	L	R	L

Or we may say: Long, Long, Short, Short.

Notice the procedure is the same for the woman except that she **always starts on her right foot**. She is usually moving backward, an achievement more difficult to execute gracefully unless the Basic Step outlined later has been mastered.

Remember, always, to keep the forward movement **smooth and continuous**. A good dancer will glide across the floor with no perceptible effort or **break in speed**.

The Square is a fox-trot sequence incorporating a close step, and is useful in changing direction.

	L	R	L	R	L	R
He Steps:	Forward	Side	Close	Backward	Side	Close
Counting:	1-2	3	4	1-2	3	4
She Steps:	Backward	Side	Close	Forward	Side	Close
	R	L	R	L	R	L

Or we may say: Slow, Quick, Quick, Slow, Quick, Quick.

Stepping in the above manner, one will see that he moves in an almost perfect square; hence the name. Keep this pattern perfect, taking the backward steps **straight back**.

It will be seen that the basic fox-trot step will move you in any forward or backward direction, and the two-step square will change your direction.

To turn, the man leads as follows: After his basic forward fox-trot sequence, Long, Long, Short, Short, he begins his square on the left foot, turning to the left. (Turn your head left and turn in that direction.)

Going forward: Long, Long, Short, Short; (now turning to left.)

	L	R	L
Forward,	Side,	Close	
	R	L	R

Then:

Backward,	Side,	Close	
	R	L	R

The dancer has pivoted slightly on first his left then his right foot in this square sequence and will be ready to begin on his left foot when he comes out of the turn.

THE WALTZ

The waltz is among the most beautiful of dances. It is often made ludicrous and bouncy by dancers who continually dance on the half-toe. They rise and fall like nutshells in a heavy sea. The Basic Step is essential for smoothness in this dance.

The music is simple and easy to follow: it says, ONE - two - three, ONE - two - three. ONE is the accented beat.

The Square demonstrates the waltz technique best. Starting on the left foot, (women right) the sequence is:

	L	R	L	R	L	R
He Steps:	Forward	Side	Close	Backward	Side	Close
Counting:	1	2	3	1	2	3
She Steps:	Backward	Side	Close	Forward	Side	Close
	R	L	R	L	R	L

As in all Squares, the sequence will take the partners in an imaginary square, which may be turned if direction is to be changed. The step taken on the count ONE is longer than the other and imparts the long sweeping effect to this dance. **But the waltz tempo is even.** The first beat is **not** prolonged. Do not come to a dead stop on the close step; keep the body-weight moving smoothly over the center of balance.

To dance forward; (men)

Start on the left foot, do half a square:

	L	R	L
Forward,	Side,	Close	
	1	2	3

Then instead of stepping **back** with the right foot as in the square, you step:

R	L	R
Forward,	Side,	Close
1	2	3

After you have learned to dance forward, making your close step to the side, straighten out the step by making the close step straight ahead. You will find the side close step useful, but the forward close step produces a smoother, smarter waltz.

The entire waltz is done with the **one** basic waltz sequence:

Step, Step, Close; Step, Step, Close.

or,

Long,	Short,	Short,
1	2	3

in the forward step.

THE TANGO

One of the easiest and most graceful of dances, the Tango, is much abused. For those who love dancing for dancing's sake and those to whom the expression of music and mood comes easily, it is unquestionably **the** ballroom dance.

The music says, ONE - two - three - four, FIVE - six - seven - eight. There is a heavy pulse on the accented notes that makes the music easy to identify and gives the dance its moody quality. Most patterns are done in two measures.

Three foundation steps are necessary to maneuver on any floor: we shall call them the Forward Close, Forward Cross, and Basic Tango.

As always, on the left foot, in the Forward Close:

	L.	R.	L.	R.	L.
He Steps:	Forward,	Forward,	Forward,	Side,	Close
Counting:	1-2	3-4	5	6	7-8
She Steps:	Backw'd,	Backw'd,	Backw'd,	Side,	Close
	R.	L.	R.	L.	R.

Or we may say: Slow, Slow, Quick, Quick, Slow.

In the Forward Cross, the man steps to the side with his left foot (count 1-2), then brings his right foot across in front over his left (3-4), letting the right foot rest on the left side of his left foot. This position is attained on the count of "four". On "five", the heel of the crossed right foot comes down, taking the weight and straightening the right knee so it snaps the left foot and leg backward. The left foot swings out from behind

and drives straight forward on the **same** count.

Remember the two actions on the same beat (5): the right heel comes down and the left foot swings forward. On "six", the right foot sidesteps in line with the left. As in the Forward Close, "seven" and "eight" bring the left foot over against the right in the final closing step.

	L.	R.	L.	R.	L.
He Steps:	Side,	Cross,	Forward,	Side,	Close
Counting:	1-2	3-4	5	6	7-8
She Steps:	Side,	Cross,	Backward,	Side,	Close
	R.	L.	R.	L.	R.

All of the simple Tango steps follow the cadence. Slow, Slow, Quick, Quick, Slow. Each pattern is completed on the eighth count, and the man leads into the next step with his left foot. There are exceptions. One of them is the Tango Basic, in which each consecutive eight count sequence will be found to begin on a different foot due to the odd number of steps. The Tango Basic sequence should therefore be done an even number of times (two or four is enough) so that it will end on the right foot, making it possible to begin the next step on the left.

Movement is in a straight line, straight ahead or back.

He Steps:	L	R	L	R	L	R	L	R	L	R
Counting:	1-2	3-4	5	6	7-8;	1-2	3-4	5	6	7-8
She Steps:	R	L	R	L	R	L	R	L	R	L

or,

Slow,	Slow	Quick,	Quick,	Slow.
1-2	3-4	5	6	7-8
L	R	L	R	L

or,

Long,	Long,	Short,	Short,	Long.
L	R	L	R	L

Nine out of ten dancers will count the last "Slow" of the first sequence as the first "Slow" of the following, and thus turn the Tango into a fox-trot. Watch for this mistake. Since it will consistently throw the entry into the next sequence on the wrong foot, it is ruinous.

Although the feet come to a complete rest after the close steps, which hold for a beat, there is a smooth flow of body movement that welds the steps together. This is most difficult to achieve, and without it the dance tends to become jerky. Do not writhe exaggeratedly preparing for the next step. Let your weight flow smoothly and ever so slightly in the new direction.

PRACTICE

Before we take up the Basic Step, let us make up our minds to carry out the cardinal rule of all good dancers, CONSCIENTIOUS PRACTICE.

This does not necessarily mean arduous hours with a partner and the constant supervision of a dancing instructor. Your instructor can show you the mechanics of each step, and, if competent, can illustrate the delicate shadings of muscular control required to dance and move gracefully, but you, and you alone, must apply the knowledge he gives you. As in any recreation, there is no substitute for repetition of the correct fundamentals. Gradually the muscles will respond powerfully and smoothly until their reactions to the music and your partner become automatic.

Your practice requires no more than a few minutes a day, and enough floor space in which to walk a few feet. Music is unnecessary, and, until you have mastered the fundamentals, a partner is a handicap.

Remember it is just as easy to learn the wrong habits as it is to learn the right. Be certain that you are cultivating the correct movements.

First, analyze the steps, part by part; then perform them slowly, counting out the proper time. Try to become conscious of the movement and pull in the important hip and thigh muscles.

After a few hours practice by yourself, you will be amazed at the progress you have made. Your practice will give you confidence and inspire a freedom and ease that can be attained in no other manner.

THE BASIC STEP

Throughout this booklet we have constantly alluded to the Basic Step; with good reason, for it is the most important single element in the three popular dances we have described. Without it you can dance, but never become a good dancer, and there is no professional dancer worthy of the name who does not use it and practice it constantly. It is the only means of insuring absolute smoothness, balance, and minimum effort.

It is unfortunate that the term "good dancing" and consequently, "good ballroom dancing", has a misleading popular connotation that includes fancy foot-work and more than ordinary dexterity. The correct ballroom dance step is nothing more than the correct walking step modified to give greater smoothness. Dancing, like walking, is a matter of transferring the body-weight from one foot to the other.

The Basic Step is **Long, Straight Ahead and Smooth**, and taken almost entirely with the muscles of the hip. Since the dancing step is a continuous shifting of weight from one foot to the other, balance can be maintained only by keeping the body and head directly over the weight-taking foot. It is therefore necessary to toe **Straight Ahead**, for otherwise we must lurch from side to side to maintain balance. Toeing outward leads the feet away from the body in opposite directions. As long as the partners move in parallel lines and keep their feet toeing straight ahead and directly under their bodies, their feet cannot possibly cross.

The weight of the body is carried on the **entire foot**. Movement is made on the **ball of the foot**. The weight-carrying leg **pushes** the moving foot slowly and smoothly forward, and, in the backward step, **pulls** the moving foot back. As the moving foot assumes the weight, the heel comes **down**.

The body cannot be balanced on one leg unless the leg and foot are directly under the center of balance. To fulfill this requirement, the weight of the body must be let down upon the important hip muscles, which, coupled with the powerful muscles of the upper thigh, drive the body into the next step. When the step is done correctly, these muscles of the hip may be felt contracting and relaxing. Their use is limited when steps are taken with the feet apart, for the body-weight is then incorrectly and alternately swayed from side to side over the center of balance.

Stand with your feet together and center a line on the floor or rug between them: toe straight ahead, keeping your feet next to the line. Notice how smoothly you move as the hips assume the weight. In contrast, place your feet several inches to the right and left of the line and note how you must sway awkwardly from side to side in order to keep your balance during a forward or backward step.

Neither foot ever leaves the floor! With both feet touching the floor, the dancer can maintain perfect balance. The woman can follow any unexpected change because she can easily shift her weight to either foot. The constant contact of both feet with the floor, coupled with a straight

knee, provides a smooth level of movement and prevents the jerky bobbing up and down caused when there is no constant level of reference.

As the legs alternately assume the weight, the **knees are perfectly straight**. There is a slight bend in the knee of the moving leg as it slides forward or backward past the weight-carrying foot, but it is straightened immediately as it passes and is pushed forward or backward so that each step begins with a straightened leg. The safest rule to follow is: **bend your knees as little as possible**.

REMEMBER

1. Never take your feet off the floor;
2. Assume the weight on the whole foot at the end of each step;
3. Move only on the ball of the foot;
4. Dance (and walk too) only with the hip muscles;
5. Toe straight ahead in your moving direction;
6. Face your partner squarely;
7. Step, always, on a straight leg;
8. Don't dance with your feet and legs apart;
9. Eliminate excess movement of the shoulders and arms;
10. Maintain your own balance.
11. Keep time.

FINALLY

Beautiful movement of any kind is the result of the elimination of all unnecessary muscular effort.

THE RUMBA

The Rumba (or Rhumba) is a Cuban Dance that has grown to such popularity in the States that the better dance bands play Rumbas, fast and slow, almost as much as fox-trots.

The characteristic movement of the Rumba is the hip movement, which is NOT attained with the hip muscles, but is achieved by an exaggerated straightening of the leg as it assumes the body-weight.

The most common fault is the swaying of the hips from the waist.

All Rumba steps are no longer than three inches in length.

The feet move on a straight line close together.

The shoulders remain square and erect without swaying.

The head is held straight.

The man holds his partner at the length of his forearm, his right hand resting at the woman's waist. To find the correct position for his left arm he should drop it to his side, lift it straight up bending his elbow. In that position he clasps his partner's hand, his hand extending over the top of her vertically extended fingers.

Since there is no movement between steps, the Rumba square differs from those described. Each step is complete in itself, and there is a feeling of a definite stop at the end of each movement. The square:

Men:
 L R L R L R
 Forw'd (hold), Side, Close; Back (hold) Side Close
 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4

Women:
 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4
 Back (hold) Side, Close, Forw'd (hold), Side, Close
 R L R L R L

The weight moves immediately from the ball of the foot to the heel on every step. The dancer should feel his weight firmly on his heels, and as the heel comes down, he straightens his knee as much as possible, throwing it back so that the muscles pull at the back of his leg. **Do not force any movement of the moving leg.** Relaxed, it will fall into the correct position, described farther on.

To learn the hip movement of the forward and backward step, stand erect, feet **straight ahead and together.** Now, transfer the weight rhythmically back and forth from the left to right foot, letting the leg that takes the weight straighten so that the hip veers out and the back is curved slightly. The relaxed leg and knee will have an automatic tendency to fall into the space vacated by the backward stretched leg and knee.

This knee movement is very important. Remember the relaxed leg always falls in and over the other (backward stretching) knee.

The forward and backward moving steps of the Rumba are made with **Perfectly Uniform Steps.**

There are **no** two-steps. Each step is about three inches in length and directly forward or backward.

	L.	R.	L.	R.	L.	R.
Men:	Slow,	Quick,	Quick;	Slow,	Quick	Quick
Count:	1-2	3	4	1-2	3	4
Women:	R.	L.	R.	L.	R.	L.

Push forward or backward on the ball of the foot. As the foot takes the weight, it comes down on the heel; the weight-taking knee straightens and goes back as far as possible, swaying the back into an exaggerated position that moves the hip outward smoothly. The straightening of the weight-carrying leg from the exaggerated position to a natural one, lets the free foot swing forward (or backward) into the next step.

Thus:

	L		R	L
	Slow	Hold	Quick,	Quick
	1	2	3	4
Hip Out,	Hip Straightens,		Pulling foot to above quick steps	

The man usually dances forward, using the square to slowly turn to the left when he wishes to change direction. It is the muscular control and jaunty atmosphere that provides the fun and snappy beauty of the Rumba. It is a dance easily made coarse by uncontrolled flopping of the hips, and care should be taken to see that the hip movement is accomplished subtly and with smoothness.

DANCE FLOOR ETIQUETTE

Before reviewing the special application of good manners on and around the dance floor, let us recognize the fundamental basis of all good behavior, whether on the dance floor, street, or at a dog fight. Good manners are nothing more than the consideration of the feelings and rights of others and the observance of customs that have been recognized because they have standardized and simplified our reactions to social predicaments.

Good dancing is in itself a matter of good manners, but, assuming that you are now a good dancer, (or soon will be) let us review a few of the hundreds of situations that arise wherever people dance.

In restaurants, (night clubs, public halls, informal dances) the man yields the choice seat to the woman, helping her to her seat if the waiter has not already done so. She may leave her coat over the back of her chair if it has not been checked or left in the dressing room. If there are two couples, the women face each other. If a passing lady friend of one of the women stops to say hello, the gentlemen will rise, the women remain seated. If a man should stop to exchange greetings, no one rises. In neither case are introductions necessary unless the person addressed feels that an introduction would be especially appreciated by all concerned. It goes without saying that no woman should stop at a table more than an instant, never allowing the men to stand awkwardly while she engages in a prolonged greeting. A man may ask a stag friend to join the party, if the

friend is known to other members of the group, or if certain the addition to the party will be welcomed by all.

It is the woman's privilege to stop dancing or refuse to dance, but never to request a dance unless she knows her partner intimately. (Or is married to him, in which case it is a demand, not a request.) A man never asks to stop dancing. If the music changes so that he cannot lead well, his partner should tactfully suggest they sit down. "My, these fast dances tire me! Let's sit this one out."

Requesting a dance from one to whom he has been introduced, the man asks, "Shall we dance?" or "Would you care to dance?" The woman will say, "Certainly, I'd like to!" or say nothing at all, simply rising in assent. When the dance is completed, he thanks her, and she will graciously indicate that the pleasure has been hers.

If the woman does not want to dance, she says, "No, thank you, I'm so tired now," or "Let's just listen!" She should never accept a dance with one man after refusing another the same dance.

Such remarks as shown in these examples are only suggestions, and there are hundreds of formulas that will serve as well. If you can convey the thought in your own words, so much the better. Avoid flowery statements and obvious flattery.

"Cutting in" is a practice, which, for better or worse, will probably remain with us. It is often abused. It should never be practiced in public dances, except possibly between members of the same group sitting at the same table. The woman

can never refuse to be cut. The man should never cut in on the same man who cut him. He must wait until a third man intervenes, then he may cut back. It is bad taste for any man to continually cut the same man or woman all evening.

The gentlemen of the old school offer their arms to their partners as they leave the floor, it is not generally practiced now. The partners walk side by side, unless lack of space demands single file, in which case the woman leads. If a path must be cleared, the man leads. Except in cases of emergency, or when it is obvious that the woman needs help, the man never grasps the woman's arm. She may correctly take his at any time, and it would be rude for her to refuse his when he offers it.

Clothes are a matter of taste, geography and custom. To be absolutely sure of what you should wear, find out what the majority of the others wear. The word "formal" has different meanings in different sections of the country. Women may usually take the meaning literally; men should determine the local definition. For men, a dinner jacket or "Tux" is a safe guess, for it is better to err on the conservative side than overdress.

Few men are enchanted by the woman who fires a continual barrage of conversation while she dances. While occasional remarks are not taboo, both men and women should save their conversational charms for the intermission. Friends on the dance floor are given a smile or slight nod of recognition, but the dancers do not stop in the center of the floor for a fireside chat.

The surest way to avoid the side lines is to give your partner and your dance your undivided attention.

RECOMMENDED RECORDS

There are so many excellent recordings on the market, that you will have no difficulty finding many suitable for ballroom dancing.

For practice, pick out records that are not too fast and have strongly accented rhythms. "Hot" music makes better listening than dancing.

Many waltz recordings are played far too fast. That old-timer, "I'm Forever Blowing Bubbles" Wayne King (Victor 25501) is a good practice waltz.

Xavier Cugat's "Siboney" (Victor 26522) is a well timed Rumba; likewise his Tango, "Caminito" (Victor 24387).



Additional copies of this booklet may be obtained from your newsdealer or direct

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