

Telemark, Feather, and Three Step
First of a Three Part Series
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Believe it or not, one of the most difficult figure combinations in Foxtrot is the Telemark, Feather, and Three Step. This combination is found in many round dances and moves the couple from starting diagonal center to ending line of dance. Since many dancers are so familiar with the combination, why take the time to look at it again. Would you believe this is probably **the most practiced** combination in Foxtrot by Ballroom dancers and Competitors? Every step has some body action to take into consideration. So if we can pick a couple of points to help us then it's worth taking another look. First, let's take an overview of this combination then look some of the specifics, which may help us.

As an overview, the Foxtrot combination of Telemark, Feather, and Three Step will move from facing DC to end LOD. While the distance is only a 1/8 of a turn to the right, this combination will take the long way around and will complete a 7/8 turn to the left. The Telemark will start facing DC and end with the man backing LOD with his left foot toward DW in semi-closed (promenade) position. The Feather will commence from Promenade with the man's left foot toward DW to end facing DW in contra position. Then, the Three Step will start from facing DW to end facing LOD in closed dance position. Only step 1 of the Telemark, and step 3 of the Three Step, are in closed dance position. The dancer is executing 7 of the 9 steps in other than closed dance position. If the Telemark is preceded by the Feather step, then 8 of the 9 steps are in other than closed dance position. (In dance our "security blanket" is closed dance position. This combination has us out of closed position for almost three measures of music. A long time!) Adding a 7/8 turn to the left and you begin to see why this combination can become difficult.

In the article we wrote last year " She is on Her Heels", a fairly detail discussion was presented on the lady's heel turn. We will not review the heel turn but will look at steps 2 and 3. As you know, step 2 of the Telemark ends with the lady on her toes and preparing to step forward. The man is up on the ball of his right foot having finished up to a 3/8 left turn preparing to step primarily back leading the lady to begin her step forward. At the beginning of step 3, the man will want to start his movement backing LOD. This is necessary to lead the lady to step forward (toward LOD) and keeps their bodies in a good dance position or in a good relationship to each other. Once the man has started his movement back, he will point his left foot toward diagonal wall, transfer his weight to the ball of his left foot, and change his head position to semi-closed or promenade. His body will be toward his lady rather than diagonal wall. This is a situation where the man's body has turned less than the direction of his left foot. While the man's body may turn slightly toward the left, because of the pointing of his left foot, his primary body objective is toward his partner. For this discussion, we could say his body is facing between wall and diagonal reverse wall or about a 1/4 of a turn less than his left foot. The man's left foot back on step 3 is not a true diagonal step. The pointing of the left foot at the end of step 3 makes this step a more back and a little side prior to taking weight.

The lady will begin step 3 by stepping forward on the ball of her right foot keeping her hips to the man. Her head may be slightly to the left or facing more LOD since her toes are facing LOD. The lady will feel the man's body moving back then begin to turn very slightly. This will lead the lady to take a longer step with her right foot in order to keep her right hip in front of the man's. She will also change her head position slightly to achieve semi (promenade) position. The lady does not know what ending the man is leading until the end of step 3. The man could start step 3 back and continue back completing a Reverse Turn. The man could also elect to point his left foot more toward LOD and take his hip a little more away from the lady to lead a Tele-type figure (Telespin, Telefeather, Teleweave). The Telemark-To-Semi ending falls between these two endings. In order to finish step 3, the man will collect his right foot under his hip and lower onto the whole of his left foot. His body will begin to face more wall with his left foot toward DW in semi (promenade) position. The lady will follow the man's lead and collect her left foot under her hip and lower onto her right foot in semi (promenade) position. (This is not the normal ending where man completes the turn but it is the position needed for entry into the Feather.)

You can see how the lead, movement, and foot placement are very critical to the Telemark family (Reverse Turn, Telemark, or Tele-type). The more attention and practice we give to the body position and movement of the Telemark, the better the feeling and the easier the dancing. Thank goodness we have a Cuer to

inform us as to the following figure so we can end the Telemark properly.

The rewards for a good Telemark are many. This is a tough figure with an entry for the man to lead the heel turn and now an exit for one of three possible following figures. Look at how many times we dance the Telemark during an evening. It just takes some understanding and practice (maybe 15-20 times before the feel and consistency start to develop). In the next article, we will look at the Feather part of this combination.