

# LEAD! FOLLOW!

*This is a compilation of information from a variety of source - written, video, & personal contacts. This information below is not meant to be absolute. Your experiences may vary - Chris & Terri Cantrell*

*We may appear to be taking a break from the articles on balance, but the issues discussed in this article are more easily experimented with when both of the partners are balanced alone and as a couple.*

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## TO LEAD OR NOT TO LEAD, THAT IS THE QUESTION:

Dancing with a partner is a two-way conversation through the dance frame so make sure that your conversation is kept clear and concise. A good lead enables the woman to detect the speed, direction, and feel of a figure early enough to respond appropriately. The man's arms & upper body should create a firm frame in which the woman is gently held. Both partners need to keep some tension (pressure) in the arms. (Additional information on arms can be found in past issues of the DRDC DIXIE Newsletter or online at [http://www.ctr.com/#Clinic\\_Notes](http://www.ctr.com/#Clinic_Notes)). They also need to have "tone" in their arms by using the muscles in the upper arm to keep the arms in position. Avoid the notorious "spaghetti" (limp arms) or the "ram rod" (lead arms held too stiffly, generally with a straight elbow). Men, even if you are a beginner, you can still lead effectively, if you stand erect and keep a firm forward pressure towards your partner.



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## ROTATING FIGURES:

There are two main types of rotating figures, those turning to the right (natural) and those turning to the left (reverse). The direction of turn determines when the rotation should begin. The rotation for right turning figures begins early, on the last part of the SLOW count. Left turning figure are best executed with a delayed turn beginning on the first QUICK count and continuing through the first part of the 3<sup>rd</sup> step (beat 4). In both cases, the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> step is used to make final body alignment adjustments, ground your body (regain your balance, if needed), and gather your feet together for the next measure or figure.

One trick to the smooth execution of a rotating figure is to "**Lead Direction, Before Rotation.**" Your first order of business is to get your bodies moving in a straight line before you even consider rotating. A body in motion is much easier to convince to turn than if you try to rotate from a dead stop.

The first step of the figure is typically used to communicate to your partner the direction of flow and the speed. This gives the woman time to respond to your 'lead' and get out of the way, thus clearing an opening for you to move into.

The second step in most rotating figures is where the majority of the turning takes place. Extending the time spent on the second step slightly will help make rotating figures easier, more fluid, and will tend to be a more balanced position for the man & the woman. Use the last part of the SLOW count to start

the rotation for right/natural turning figures or extend the rotation into the 2<sup>nd</sup> QUICK count (beat 4) for left/reverse turning figures.

The third step is the “get your act together step”. Use this step to finish any rotation still needed and return to a neutral, well balanced position in preparation for the next measure.

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## **WAIT FOR YOUR PARTNER:**

Another trick to comfortable dancing is that it is very important for both partners to be aware of the action that needs to be accomplished by their partner on each figure. In some cases this involves one of the members of the partnership to momentarily delay the taking of a step, in order to wait for their partner to complete their action(s).

A few figure examples when the man needs to delay include: Pickup, Double Reverse Spin, Telespin, Split Ronde... The trick to the Pickup is timing when the woman should be picked up. The turning/folding action of the woman begins just after taking weight on the inside foot (man’s right; woman’s left) and is completed during the 2<sup>nd</sup> step. Men, be wary of picking your partner up too abruptly.

Women also have figures that they need to wait for the man. A few of these figures include: Half Natural Turn, Spin Turn, Impetus... In the Half Natural Turn, the woman needs to wait until the man has folded in front of her before committing to her 2<sup>nd</sup> step. In some figures, e.g. Spin Turn or Outside Spin, the woman can make use of brushing the free foot to the weighted foot just prior to weight being taken for the 3<sup>rd</sup> step. This brush helps stabilize the couple and gives her a delay thus giving the man a little extra time to get into position.

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*All of the above go into successful leading and following. We hope some of these ideas help make dancing as a couple more comfortable and enjoyable. Happy Dancing!*