

T. P. T.

By Barbara & Jim German

Have you noticed how willing dancers are to share their expertise with other dancers? Instructors have that quality too. We are so willing to share our ideas and experiences and pass them along to others. In writing this article for you, we need to give special thanks and credit to Dick and Karen Fisher for sharing a neat approach to helping dancers achieve the tough concept of foot pressure when dancing the rumba and cha.

But first, before we get into that:

The rumba has several characteristics. First, in normal “closed” or left open facing position, the feet are approximately 6 – 8 inches apart and the toes are slightly turned out (Charlie Chaplain style for the men and Mary Poppins style for the ladies). To achieve this look, we could think of our bodies facing noon on the clock. Then, the left toe would point approximately 10 o’clock and the right toe would point approximately 2 o’clock. To start the forward half of the basic, the man will have his weight on his right foot (toes pointed at 10 and 2) with a slightly relaxed knee. On the first quick, he will draw the left foot toward the supporting foot (right foot) and forward. The toe of the left foot will maintain contact with the floor as it moves, the heel will be released, and the movement will end with weight on whole foot and the heel of the left foot in front of the right foot (toes still pointing at 10 and 2). The heel of the right foot has released from the floor and the toe of the right foot is still in contact with the floor. The second quick is a recover step with the man’s weight transferring back to the toe of the right foot then to whole foot. The heel of the left foot has been released from the floor but the toe is still in contact with the floor. The third step, a slow, will return the left foot to its starting position. This is achieved by keeping toe contact with the floor and drawing the left foot toward the right foot and then sideways with the left toe pointing at 10 o’clock. As the left foot arrives, the body weight will move from toe to ball to whole foot. At this point the heel of the right foot has been released and the toe is in contact with the floor. The back half of the basic is similar with the right foot moving toward the left then back to end with the heel behind the left foot. Step 2 is a recover to the left foot and step 3 is a side step. The lady’s foot action is very similar to the man’s and starts with the man’s back half-basic. Throughout the movement, there is a forward poise maintained in the body. A lot to think about, but here are some tricks, “training aides”, we used at a rumba clinic that will provide immediate feedback for the dancer.

First, Barbara secured a fringed ribbon across the lady’s chest. The lady was to keep the fringe forward, not lying on her chest. By keeping the material forward the ladies achieved forward poise. (Note: the head is upright over the shoulders while the chest is forward.) While Barbara was busy securing fringed ribbon, I was passing out two squares of toilet paper to each person. That’s the kind of job I get! Now each person put a square of toilet paper under the big toe of each foot. The couples took dance position with the men creating forward poise to complement the lady’s forward poise. Now, we learned to move our feet forward, back and side without losing pressure with the floor. (Our coach has suggested to us that 10 to 20 percent of the weight can be kept on the non-supporting foot.) As we progressed to the basic, each person had to concentrate on poise (the lady’s fringe) and the square of paper under the toe. The dancers could immediately tell when their foot lifted off the floor or forward poise was forgotten. (Is your fringe laying flat?) In the beginning, there were squares of toilet paper all over the floor. But with very little practice, all couples were able to keep their paper squares under their toes and dance to music the basic, basic to fan, alemana, and hockey stick. So a lot of fun was had with **T. P. T. - Toilet Paper Tricks** and a little fringe.

In the afternoon we taught our phase IV rumba, "VASCA Rumba". After the teach and practice, I again passed out squares of toilet paper to each dancer. Barbara cued the dance and fun was had by all. Many dancers were able to keep their toes in contact with the floor for quite a bit of the dance. Others were having fun trying to recapture their square of paper and still dance. All dancers indicated they really learned forward poise and toe contact while having a lot of fun. We enjoyed the day and welcome each of you, in the privacy of your home or at your club, to get out the toilet paper and practice toe pressure with the floor as you dance rumba.