

Should we dance the figures or dance the dance?

by Harold & Meredith Sears

Quick! Can you describe the difference between a Change of Direction and a Hesitation Change? Do you step forward or back? Do you turn left or right? How much of a turn?



Somehow, small figures like these seem difficult to get into our heads. A big figure, like a Diamond Turn or a Chase with Peek-A-Boo, we know, and it flows along smoothly, measure after measure. But those little ones somehow sift down to the bottom of the basket and get lost.

But maybe it doesn't matter. Meredith and I are beginning to think that we really don't have to memorize every detail of every little figure. We only need *some* details, plus some broad generalizations.

Change of Direction, Hesitation Change—

Before we go any further, let's look up these two figures and discover which is which. By next week, we will have forgotten again, but for now, we'll get them straight.

To do a Change of Direction, we might begin in closed position, facing line and wall, with lead feet free. The man steps forward on his left foot and the woman back right. In Foxtrot, we would do this step on the "slow" with man's right-shoulder lead beginning to turn left. On the first "quick," he steps side and forward right turning left up to 1/4, and on the second "quick," we draw the lead foot to the trail foot and touch.

The Hesitation Change usually begins in closed position facing reverse line of dance. The man steps back on his left foot (woman forward right) turning to the right. We then step to the side on our

trail feet, continuing to turn up to a total of $1/2$, and draw the lead feet to the trail feet and touch.

Again, we don't really need to memorize all these details. We *do* need to remember that these figures are composed of only two steps, and that each of these figures turns at least a little. A generalization that is helpful is that many ordinary turns tend to match the step that we take — step forward left and we turn left, forward right and we turn right. Does that seem familiar? If you do it in your kitchen, does it feel normal and comfortable?

But the truly important generalization is that small figures, like a Hesitation Change, are not so much stand-alone figures, which must be executed "properly" — they are links between the figures before and after. They are the stitching that holds together the bigger figures of the dance, and they should be executed in a way that makes those figures, before and after, flow smoothly. So, if the cue is Hesitation Change to an Open Telemark, dance the Hesitation Change so that you end facing line and center. Turn it however much it takes to get from where you are to where you need to be. If the cue is Hesitation Change to a Three Step, then dance the Hesitation Change a little bigger yet, to face line of dance.

What is the difference between a Change of Direction and a Hesitation Change? Between a Cross Hesitation and a Drag Hesitation? What is a Heel Pull? In a way, it doesn't matter. Each is a bit of an interlude between larger pieces. Take those two steps and turn in such a way that the next figure flows well. Don't obsess about the individual figure. Dance the sequence. Dance the dance.

