

RUMBA CHARACTERISTICS

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The following is a collection of ideas to assist you in comfortable dancing and are not meant as absolutes. Many of the following items may help with the overall comfort and confidence. These are not meant to be absolutes.

History: The word rumba comes from the Spanish word *rumbear* which means to party. Rumba originated from Cuba and contains both African and Caribbean influences due to the importation of African slaves to South America and the Caribbean. In its original form the rumba was very fast, extremely erotic, and totally uninhibited. The woman would perform sensuous movements of the hip, chest, and shoulders to lure the man in and then she backs off when he takes her seriously. The Cubans refined this version to be less uninhibited making it slower and less overtly flirtatious, giving birth to the dance known as the *son*. A few of the other versions of the rumba include: *beguine*, *bolero* (very slow & lilting), *calypso*, *columbia* (male solo dance), *danzon* (slower than *son*), *guagira*, *guaguancó* (male pursuit, women run), *guaracha*, *jambú*, *naningo*, and *yambú* (very slow, no much hip movement).



The rumba reached the United States in the late 1920s and was again toned down. There is a rumor that Arthur Murray was the one who watered down the rumba because he did not believe that we would ever want to move our hips like the Latinos.

The dance still retains the sexual flavor, with the woman alternating between trying to lure the man in with her sexual charms and keeping the man at bay, and the man showing his masculinity and trying to entice the woman to do his bidding.

Rhythm & Timing: Rumba is generally done in 4/4 timing with 28-32 bars per minute. Rumba is a Latin dance and contains plenty of percussion including a continuous flow of eighth notes. Slower tempos allow the dancer the opportunity to “feel” and react to the music.

Typically, round dancers begin on beat 1 of the music (1,2, 3-4 QQS), while international style ballroom dancers wait until beat 2 (2, 3, 4-1 QQS). There are also two major schools of American ballroom dancers, the Fred Astaire studios that teach rumba as SQQ, and the Arthur Murray studios that teach QQS. Whatever timing you use should really be determined by the where the music breaks.

Latin Hold & Footwork: Please see the previous clinic notes on the Latin Hold and Latin Footwork. These notes can also be found on: http://www.ctkr.com/#Clinic_Notes.

Latin Hips: The hips in Rumba will move automatically as a result of correct foot and leg action, but you can direct this action, thereby making it less chaotic and more pleasing to the eye, especially the eye of your partner. Gently guide your hip motion into a figure eight. For each step taken, the same hip does a circular motion as weight is taken onto that foot, the left hip moves in a counterclockwise direction and the right hip will move in a clockwise direction. As an example, in more detail: Step forward with your left foot while moving the left hip forward as weight is

transferred onto the left foot, the left hip continues to move in a counterclockwise direction. Recover back onto the right foot and the right hip moves forward as weight is transferred onto the right foot, the right hip continues to move in a clockwise direction.

Forward Checked Action: (International Style) Try this action for forward moving steps that will be checked and reversed. This action allows the couple to move slightly further apart from each other, giving a nice looking change of pace.

Man moving forward:

Man: forward, recover, side & slightly back

Woman: back, recover, side

Woman moving forward:

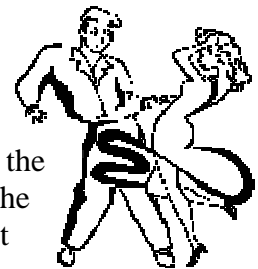
Man: back, recover, side

Woman: forward, recover, side & slightly back

Rise & Fall: Rumba is a very level dance that employs linear and circular movements but not much upward or downward movement.

Sway: Rumba does employ some body sway. It is generally used by the man to assist the woman in achieving different positions and figures, such as in the woman's spiral preceding a rope spin.

Leads: In addition to the information listed in The Latin Hold there are two types of leads used by the man in Latin dances, physical leads and shaping leads. **Physical Leads** – these happen as a result of contact between the man and the woman, generally through a slight bit of tension in the arm(s). Most of the time, in order to get the best results the man should aim this pressure towards the woman's center of gravity (her hips), as opposed to other parts of her body, but there are exceptions. For example when in fan position, in order to indicate to the woman to close her feet at the beginning of the next figure, he exerts a gentle pressure towards the woman's center of gravity and slightly to his side with his left hand.



Shaping Leads – the man shapes his body and/or arm to indicate to the woman the direction and/or position required. For example, the man can use his body shaping to indicate to the woman the direction and timing of a spiral.