

## Components

Is there a way to make learning to dance easier? We think that recognizing some **Components** which are used in many figures in many different Rhythms can help dancers transfer their dance knowledge more readily to new figures and Rhythms. Several which are used very frequently are described below:

- **Side-Close** (p. 1)
- **Chassé** (p. 6)
- **Other Turns** (p. 12)
- **Box** (p. 3)
- **Switch Turn and Switch Rock** (p. 8)
- **Hip Twist** (p. 17)
- **Rock** (p. 4)
- **Underarm Turn** (p. 9)

## How Components Work

The notion of **components** can be introduced on the first day of dance instruction. For example, in our **Lesson 1** (Social Foxtrot) two figures are introduced. First, *Walk, Walk, Run, Run*: with all passing steps taken like *normal walking steps* only with differentiated timing: a **Walk** takes *two* counts and a **Run** takes *one*, so the timing pattern is described as Slow, Slow, Quick, Quick (SSQQ).

It is also helpful to point out on day one of instruction that *dancing is moving to music*. One *steps* (or *begins steps*) *as they hear the beats of music*. Dancers need to learn to *anticipate* when those beats will occur so their stepping matches the music and the characteristics of the specific Rhythm when taking steps (See the documents on “**Timing**” as well as **Lesson 8**). Each dance rhythm uses music where the beats occur at a fairly consistent pattern which allows dancers to predict the beats accurately.

After dancers are familiar with that basic figure (called “Foxtrot Runs” or “Foxtrot Running Steps”), which is essentially like walking, first two *slow* Walks (Walk-2 can be considered a **component** also) and then two *quick* Walks, they learn they can *replace* the **component** “Run-Run” (QQ) with the **component** “Side-Close.” See also **Lesson 9. Components**, then, are recognizable sequences of movement/steps (or a movement and an action) which can be put together like Lego Blocks to form a huge number of figures, so learning to recognize them can reduce the complexity of the many figures and Rhythms available in dancing! **Components** are the building blocks of dancing!

## Side-Close

A **Side** is a movement to one’s side and taking weight. The body *moves to the side in preparation to step*, so as dancers *hear the beat of music* the foot “hits the floor” beneath one’s shoulder and then body weight moves over that foot during the “space” *before* the next change of weight which accompanies the next *sound* of music. Therefore, the *size* of the **Side** step depends on how much *energy* is put into *moving* by pushing the *standing* foot against the floor. Because the *standing leg* provides the impetus to move, it is sometimes called the *dancing leg*.

**Close** is a step of the opposite (or newly free) foot placed *next to the standing foot and taking weight*. The body wants to return to a balanced position with both feet beneath the body.

When the *left* foot begins the **Side-Close**, or “is free,” the direction of the **Side** step is to the *left*. When the *right* foot is free, the direction is to the *right*. A series of **Side-Closes** would be continuous movement in the same direction. Most folks have experienced walking as a series of **Side-Closes**, such as when moving to a seat in a theater or moving closer to others for a group picture.

## How Is Side-Close Used?

Besides simply stepping to one’s side, this **component** can be changed in many ways:

- **Timing:** as *two Slow* steps; as *two Quick* steps; as *one Slow* (usually the first step) *and one Quick*, and with *two changes of weight during one count* (sometimes with both taking the same amount of time and other times the first weight change taking more time than the second).
- **Size of Step:** A normal step to the side generally lands below one's shoulder, the shortest step would be a Step-in-Place. A very long step sometimes gets another name: **Lunge**.
- **Adding a Turn:** When *full weight* is over a foot, the body is in balance so one can turn to a new direction (no *extra* weight change is made). The turn might be modest such as *swiveling* the foot approximately an eighth of a turn; or it can be a usual size of 3/8 of a turn in the Standard/Smooth Rhythms or 1/4 of a turn in Rumba and Cha Cha. There are occasions when the turn is one-half or even a full turn (a **spin**) which is often assisted by a "wind-up" or turning the upper body an eighth of a turn in the *opposite direction first* to garner extra momentum to make the turn more easily. A turn can also be made by placing the foot so it points in a new direction prior to taking weight on a step (so without a swivel). When body weight arrives over the foot, the body wants to adjust itself so the entire body is in a harmonious position.
- **Characteristic of the Rhythm:** All steps are not taken in the same way; the *body* moves differently in different Rhythms. For example, a **Side-Draw-Close** in Waltz has "rise and fall" ("Side-Draw" is *one* weight change across *two* counts of music; the knee is bent as one steps to the side then the foot slides along the floor in the "draw" action, and dancers end with a straight leg. Rise and fall, then, refers to whether the dancers are at full height or lower), and a **Side-Close** in Rumba and Cha Cha uses "merengue side walks" (See the **Concepts** document). Learning *Characteristics* of a rhythm and how to implement them refines and enriches one's dancing.

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The above represents how a **Side-Close** *itself* can be varied. There are many *more changes* which can be made by **replacing part** of the **component** such as in the following:

- **Direction:** Replace the **Side** with a *Forward* step (becomes *Forward-Close*), with a *Back* step (equals *Back-Close*), by *Crossing a foot in front of the other diagonally forward* (yields *Cross-in-Front – Close*), by *Crossing diagonally back* (so *Cross-in-Back - Close*), or by *taking weight in place* (*Step-in-Place – Close*). All of these directions are possible beginning with either foot. And since each **component** ends with a *Close*, the next movement would begin with the opposite foot.
- **Replacing the Close with a Touch:** A **Touch** is an action where the free foot is moved next to the standing foot but *no weight is taken* with results such as *Side-Touch*, *Forward-Touch*, and *Back-Touch*. And if a particular *action* replaces the *Touch*, one can produce *Side-Point*, *Side-Knee*, *Side-Kick* and so on with other actions (as well as replacing the *direction* of the **Side** step). Since *actions* such as a **Touch** do not take weight, the following movement or action therefore begins with the same foot that performed the action.
- **Adding a fourth change of weight:** Side-Close Twice, Stairs (Side-Close, Forward-Close or Forward-Close, Side-Close), Scoot (Forward-Close, Forward-Close), Vine (Side/Swivel-Cross Behind, Side/Swivel-Cross in Front), Limp (Side/bend knees-Cross Behind - twice) or Front Limp (Side/bend knees-Cross in Front – twice). Also see **Volta** action in the section on Turns.
- **Changing the order of the Side and Touch** creates many more possibilities. For example, a *Step-Point* can become a *Point-Step*. So the *order* of cues is important to notice.

One can think of most dancing as variations of the **Side-Close** since dancing is taking *one* step (change of weight) or *action* (movement without a weight change) at a time. Additionally, learning several other **components** can be very useful to recognize since they occur so frequently in dancing.

**Box**

The two-measure **Box** figure is a **component** which for the **Lead** is danced either as **Side-Close - Forward**; **Side-Close - Back**; (introduced at Phase I Two-Step with QQS; QQS; timing which is also used in a Round Dance Rumba Box) or **Forward - Side-Close**; **Back - Side-Close**; (introduced at Phase I Waltz with 1,2,3; 1,2,3; timing and at Phase III Foxtrot with SQQ; SQQ; timing). Note that regardless of the timing used, “Forward” is always on a Slow (or dominant) count so dancers need to recognize the Rhythm they are dancing so they begin in the appropriate direction and with the characteristic timing pattern (the music itself assists with the timing). See the document **The Box Component**.

In addition to the starting direction and timing, the **Box** can be *modified* in many ways:

- Reversing the order of measures (Reverse Box)
- Beginning with the opposite foot from normal (In the USA the **Lead** generally begins with the left foot and the **Follow** with the right. In Europe, often they begin with the opposite foot.)
- Inserting another **component** between measures (Broken Box, Traveling Box)
- Dancing independently/not in Closed Position (Open Box, Solo Turning Box)
- Adding a turn on the Slow count: Left-turning Box or Right-turning Box (Note:  $\frac{1}{4}$  turns are used; in Round Dancing these figures take *four* measures to make a very large box path on the floor, whereas in ballroom only *two* measures are used so that dancers can continue to progress toward Line of Dance.)
- The **Lead** dancing a Box while the **Follow** moves in a circular path with an **underarm turn** (Interrupted Box)

Often a **Half Box** (one measure) is used:

- Half Box Forward or Half Box Back
- Beginning with a Forward or Back step which turns  $\frac{3}{8}$  *left-face* (LF) & often done in pairs with two measures (Two Left Turns). It moves *forward* turning left when the left foot is free and moves *back* turning left when the right foot is free and either measure can be first.
- Beginning with a Forward or Back step which turns  $\frac{3}{8}$  *right-face* (RF) & often done in pairs with two measures (Two Right turns). It moves *back* turning right when the left foot is free and moves *forward* turning right when the right foot is free. While *two measures* typically begins with **lead's** left and **Follow's** right foot, the order of measures can be reversed.

From a **Side-Close, Forward**:

- Replace the **Forward** with a **Side** (Side-Close – Side = Side Two-Step or, with quicker timing, Chassé)
- Replace the **Side** with a **Forward** (Forward-Close - Forward = Forward Two-Step)
- Replace the **Forward** with a **Crossing Step** (Side-Close – Cross in Front = Scissors)
- Change the *order* of the Scissors (Cross in Front – Side-Close = Twinkle)
- Make a circular path with Two Forward Two-Steps (Circle Away and Together)
- Replace the **Close of a Forward Two-Step** with a **Cross Behind** = Forward-Lock – Forward (aka Forward Chassé especially when the timing is quicker).
- Cross Line of Dance (**Follow** moving in front of **Lead** under joined hands during a Forward Two-Step = Lace Across, and returning to original position = Lace Back).

And just modest changes to a figure with a **Box component** can create other figures!

- Replace the **Close** (third change of weight) in a Left- or Right-Turning Box with a **Forward** or **Back** step (e.g., Forward/Turn – Side – Back; Back/Turn – Side – Forward; Forward/Turn – Side – Back; Back/Turn – Side – Forward = Diamond Turns).

The term *amalgamation* is used to identify a smooth transition from one figure to the next with a single name. A four-measure “Turning Box” or “Diamond Turns” can be considered an **amalgamation**. And “Lace Up” is a four-measure **amalgamation** including Lace Across; Forward Two-Step; Lace Back; Forward Two-Step. Having one cue for four measures gives the cuer a short break and dancers time to pay more attention to the *music*.

Occasionally in an **amalgamation** the *last* step in one figure *doubles* (is exactly the same) as the *first* step in the subsequent measure, so it can be helpful to notice such an overlap as dancers identify the specific **components**.

## Rocks (Rock-Recover)

A “**Rock Step**” is an *interrupted walk* in the indicated direction where usually *partial weight remains on the other foot which remains “in place”* so weight can easily be returned to the original position. Thus, it is often described as **Rock – Recover**. It is performed with two weight changes, usually occurring over two counts, though the timing can vary with a **Quick Rock** (one count, with half a count for the **Rock** and the other half for the **Recover**) and a **Slow Rock** (four counts, two for the **Rock** and two for the **Recover**). In ballroom Latins it is called a “Checked Walk” and the **Recover** is described as “Recover Body.”

A **Rock-Recover** can be thought of as modified from **Side-Close** with substitutions for *each* change of weight.

One can have a **Rock-Forward, Recover**, a **Rock-Back, Recover**, a **Rock-Side, Recover**, or a **Cross-Rock, Recover**. Because the legs move differently in a **Rock** than in a regular **Walk**, it is helpful to include the term “**Rock**” as part of a cue. In other words, the body moves differently in **Rock-Forward, Recover** vs. **Forward-Recover**. (In **Forward-Recover** *full* weight is taken on the **Forward** step and the free foot *moves* to the instep of the standing foot before it is moved back to its former position; whereas in the **Rock-Forward, Recover** there is *partial* weight on the **Forward** step and the other foot *remains in place with partial weight*.)

Almost always each **Rock** is followed with a **Recover**; however there are exceptions, such as in **Rock-3**. The second **Rock** becomes the **Recover** for the first one; the third step is the **Recover** for the second **Rock**, though the third weight change is not a **Rock**, but simply indicates that there are three weight changes in the figure.

There are **Rocks** in every Rhythm, so exactly how they are danced is influenced by the characteristics of the various Rhythms. A Side – Rock Back-Recover = a Side Balance in Phase I Waltz. A Left-Rock Turn is introduced in our **Lesson 3** Social Foxtrot which is very similar to the Hesitation Left Turn in Waltz (**Lesson 5**). A **Corte** in Tango is a Rock – Recover. There are **Rocks** in many **Underarm Turns** (also see that **component** below). There is a Rock in Paso Doble (one Rocks Back with a Pressline and subsequently takes weight on the foot that “pressed”). The Contra Check is a Rock - Recover, as is the Check in Check and Weave. In Foxtrot and Waltz, because of the flight and rise and fall, the free leg does not always remain in place in the Rock, but may advance toward the standing leg (because of gravity) and then move away, changing direction to take weight in an action called a “Brush.” But it is a modified **Rock-Recover**. Thus, the Hover action can be thought of as a modified **Rock, Recover**.

And the **Rock** in Bolero (and in a **Whisk** in standard Rhythms) is a step directly beneath the body, but the free foot “drifts” (moves forward or back depending on the direction of the subsequent step) so it *appears* that the **Rock** was large, and the next step is the **Recover**. In the case of the **Whisk** in Standard/Smooth Rhythms, the **Rock** is the *last* change of weight in one measure and the **Recover** is the *first* weight change in the next! Also see **Whisk** below.

There are many, many ways that **Rocks** are found in various Rhythms!

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A limited number of **Rocks** with unique names explained below are found in three versions of our Cha Cha routines “Another Saturday Night.”

**Slip Rock**. Since a *slip* is a movement of the foot, generally by the **Lead** to provide room for the **Follow** to move without obstruction, when that action is part of a **Rock** the **component** can be called a **Slip Rock**; the **Slip** occurs before the **Recover**. Following a normal **Rock**, the **Lead** moves his foot prior to his **Recover**. In our routines, the **Slip Rock** (his foot moving to the side) occurs in the Phase 4 and 5 versions of “Another Saturday Night” in the second measure of the Alemana (Part A, measure 6) so the **Follow** can **Recover** normally and end in Banjo Position.

In a figure such as a Cross Body, the **Follow** can do a **slip** action by pointing her foot between **Lead’s** feet as she **Recovers**. The **Slip Rock** is also found as part of the **component Slip Chassé** in the first measure of the Alemana (see below).

**Turning Rock**. In this **component** there is a turn, or change of direction during the **Rock** and/or **Recover**, and it can occur in a variety of ways. In the New Yorker in all three versions, after **swiveling**  $\frac{1}{4}$  to face a new direction at the end of the previous measure, dancers **Rock** forward then **Recover** *straight back* and when weight is fully over that foot, they turn their bodies and place their foot to face partner (with a minimal swivel on weighted foot).

There is a **Turning Rock component** in the Reverse Turn and Underarm Turn (in our Cha Chas in Part B measures 7 and 8 in Phase 4 and in measure 7 in Phase 5) known as a **Switch Rock** (see below).

In Part B measure 2-4 in Phase 4 and 5, both dancers **Rock Back** on the diagonal (e.g., with their left foot) and **Recover** to face the Wall so mostly their *body* turns slightly (to the right) as they **Recover**. The more advanced technique in measure 4 described in the Phase 6 version has the same **Rock Back** on the diagonal as versions Phase 4 & 5 and the **Recover** involves the right foot swiveling so dancers’ whole body rotates right-face as the left foot is placed forward in a Pressline, creating a “wind-up” for the **Follow’s Hip Twist** (see below).

In Phase 6 the **Lead** initiates a Natural Opening Out for the **Follow**. He rotates his *body* right-face (turns his upper body) as he **Rocks** forward and continues to turn his body right-face after taking weight. Then he rotates his body left-face before and after his **Recover**. The **Follow** must be on his right side with space for him to step straight forward to be able to lead her Opening Out. This occurs in Phase 6 Part A, Measure 3 and Measure 7 (two different positions: Banjo and Shadow) so the turning action actually begins at the end of the measure (count 4&) preceding the Opening Out.

And a **Turning Rock** is found in Start a Cross Body (Phase 6, Part A, Measure 1) where the **Lead Rocks** forward and turns left-face  $\frac{1}{4}$  as he **Recovers** back with his toe placed at a different angle (his foot may also **slip** back if needed) to create a clear path for the **Follow**. **Leads** always adjust when needed.

**Quick Rock**. This **component** is a **Rock-Recover** which has two changes of weight on *one* count of music, so is twice as fast as a normal **Rock-Recover**. While it could be danced in any direction, in our Cha Cha routines, we included it in Part B, measure 8 of the Phase 5 and 6 versions as part of the cue “Man Back to Aida with/Quick Rock to Face. In this measure dancers both dance a **Rock-Back/Recover-turning to Face**, and **Side**. Note that while the cue has a ”Face” as the last word, the turn actually occurs *after* full weight is on the **Recover** so dancers can step to the **Side**. The **component Quick Rock** includes a Rock and Recover on the two halves of Beat 3 (3/&).

It might also be called a “Ball-Change” since there is insufficient time for the foot to lower to a “flat” position. The **Recover** in that cue is indicated by the word “change.” The **Quick-Rock** here is part of a **Chassé** called a **Whisk Chassé** (see below). There is another **Quick Rock** in the **Whisk Chassé** in Phase 6, Part A.

**Hip Rock**. This **Rock** can be considered an exception to the other **Rocks**, because dancers think of the **hips** moving instead of the feet, though it is helpful to have the feet apart somewhat and body weight is assumed first by one leg and then the other. When dancers first encounter a **Hip Rock** they tend to simply move their hips to one side and then to the other. While that might be fine, there is danger in that technique since moving the hips too far to the side can cause the hip to become dislocated (hips are not designed to move very far out to the side). In the exaggerated pose with hips to the side bodies are also very distorted with the top half of the body slanted one way and the bottom half slanted in the opposite direction.

As dancers refine their technique, they learn that in **hip rocks** the hips make a path like a *figure-8*. We have included **Hip Rocks** (two beats) as part of the Ending in all three versions of "Another Saturday Night." To perform it, dancers first slant their hips and move them so on count "one" the forward hip *ends* above the *toe of their lead foot* (**Lead's** left and **Follow's** right) and weight is above this foot. They then *rotate* the hips in an arc (**Leads** moving hips *counterclockwise* and **Follows** moving hips *clockwise*) so the hip on that side ends above the *heel* of the same foot on the "and" count so the hips end on the opposite slant with weight still on that side. Then they move the hips in a *straight* (diagonal) line so the opposite hip is *above the toe of their trail foot* (**Lead's** right and **Follow's** left) which occurs at count "two" and weight shifts to the trail foot. Then they *rotate* their hips in the opposite direction (**Leads** *clockwise* and **Follows** *counterclockwise*) ending with that hip above their *heel* on that side of the body on the "and" count.

The second **Rock** is the **Recover** for the first **Rock**, and replacing a **Recover** following the second **Rock** dancers "Brush" their free leg, which in Cha Cha means that the knee of the free leg moves in front of the knee of the standing leg so that they gain equilibrium before the next movement.

**Hip Rocks** can be made with both legs straight throughout until the Brush, or dancers can bend and straighten the knees which creates a slight elevation at the center of the arc as hips rotate back, creating a larger-appearing **Hip Rock**.

**Switch Rock**. This is a very useful **component** which is used in many figures including some **Underarm Turns** and is described below in the **Switch Turn** section.

## Chassés

What may have been the first **Chassé** is a **Side/Close, Side** (also called a **Side Chassé**). Steps are made similar to those in a Side Two-Step, but they occur *twice as fast* (they require *two* counts instead of four, creating timing Q/aQ or Q/&Q instead of QQS). The term **Chassé** originated in ballet, with the term meaning "chase" in French. It describes a second step *directly in line* with the first which occurs so rapidly that it literally knocks the first step further in that direction and is followed by a third step also made on the *same straight path*.

Two other Chassés also fit the classical French definition:

**Forward Chassé** which in Round Dancing is described as Forward/**Lock**, Forward (the front of the locking knee or lower leg is pressed against the forward leg). In ballroom Quickstep and Waltz it is often called just *Forward Lock*. And

**Back Chassé** which is the same as a Back/**Lock**, Back (the back of the locking knee or lower leg is pressed against the back leg). In ballroom this is often called *Back Lock* in Quickstep and Waltz.

In recent years **Chassé** has come to mean three changes of weight with "syncopated" timing usually of "Quick-And, Quick" or "Quick-a, Quick" using two counts of music. Either of those timing patterns can be used in Cha Cha, and the latter is the preferred timing for Jive/East Coast Swing. Since the music in Quickstep is so fast, Chassés in Round Dance Quicksteps typically use QQS timing. They can even be found with timing such as Slow, /a, Slow. Thus, there are numerous additional **Chassés** and even more Rhythms where they occur. When they are danced, they are performed in accordance with the characteristics of their respective Rhythm. Many three-step sequences could be interpreted as a **Chassé**.

**Compact Chassé**. Probably the most simple of the **Chassé** variations, dancers Step-in-Place/Step-in-Place, Side (or Close/Step-in-Place, Side). It can begin with either foot. The **Lead** is often taught to perform his steps in the figure Alemana using this variation of **Chassé** in both measures. It often is replaced with a **Rondé Chassé** or **Slip Chassé** in the first measure and a **Hip Twist Chassé** in the second.

**Slip Chassé** (aka Slip Close Chassé). Often used by the **Lead** in the first measure of the Alemana so that he is in a good position (not so far apart) to lead an **Underarm Turn**. After his Rock Forward Left, Recover Right, his **Chassé** is Rock Back with full weight on his left foot, then he **slips** (by drawing the right foot back slightly, taking weight), and he ends by Closing his left foot. Note that even when the word “Close” is included, the Close is the *last* weight change.

**Running Chassé** (aka Merengue Runs). This **component** is created by taking three *passing* steps forward with Q/&, Q timing. A refinement in taking forward steps is placing the *outside* edge of the ball of the foot on the floor first and rolling full weight onto the ball of the foot. This Chassé can begin with either foot and can be made either forward or back. When moving backwards, the *inside* edge of the ball of the foot reaches the floor first. **Running Chassés** occur in all three versions in the Wheel in our Cha Cha routines.

**Whisk Chassé**. Defined as Rock Cross in Back/Recover to face, Side (or Rock Back/ Recover to face, Side) is used in our Cha Cha Phase 5 version in the Man Back to Aida with Quick Rock to Face for both partners as well as in Phase 6 in Advanced Hip Twist with Quick Rock & Pullback for the **Lead**. For the **Lead**, the first **Whisk Chassé** begins with a Rock Back with his right foot; the second uses the Cross-in-Back with his left foot/ Recover and ends with a Lunge to his side.

**Rondé Chassé**. Typically following a **Rock Forward** left, **Recover** right, the **Lead** uses the **Rondé Chassé**. He rondés his left foot counterclockwise (moves it in a semi-circle) prior to Crossing in Back/Side, Side. All five steps constitute the *figure Rondé Chassé*. Sometimes it is cued “with a **Rondé Chassé ending**” for the **Lead**.

**Hip Twist Chassé**. Typically following a **Rock Back** right, **Recover** left, the **Lead** swivels LF (starting the Hip Twist Chassé), the right foot crosses in front swiveling RF/ Closing left and swiveling LF, Side. All five steps constitute the *figure Hip Twist Chassé* and sometimes it is cued “with a **Hip Twist Chassé ending**” for the **Lead**.

**Turning Chassé** (aka Volta Cross Chassé, which WDSF defines as either Side/Cross in Front, Side & Back **OR** Cross in Front/Side, Cross in Front) This is a variation of a **Side Chassé** which *turns* so is much more comfortable on the body than attempting curves with strict side steps using the **Side Chassé**, since it doesn't require steps with toes pointed in (pigeon-toed) which the body does not like to do. The term “Volta” originated as a word meaning “Turn.”

The turn curves either clockwise or counterclockwise, depending upon which foot begins and which version is used. For example, beginning with a side step with the right foot, the curve is counterclockwise; when the right foot begins with a crossing step, or forward ending across, the curve is clockwise. The weighted foot may swivel. The third weight change can vary in its placement but generally it continues the curving path. The crossing action is known by various names: Cross in Front, a Volta, a Latin Cross, a French Cross, and a Viennese Cross which are all comparable, though in different Rhythms how the body is used can vary.

Also see the **Volta** under **Turns** below.

**Chassé w/Spin.** This version of **Chassé** is used in Jive/East Coast Swing in the Turns called Change (Places) Right to Left and Change (Places) Left to Right. It occurs as part of the *first measure* of either of those figures. In Change Right to Left the **Follow** dances a **Side Chassé** and after taking weight on the third step (on the “and” count) she **Spins** right-face beneath the hands to do another Chassé to end facing partner. In **Change Left to Right** her steps are more forward and after taking weight on the third step of the Chassé she **spins left-face** (on the “and” count) beneath joined hands to do another Chassé to end facing partner. In both cases her spin is on her right foot.

## Switch Turn – Switch Rock

Sometimes called a "delayed forward walk turning" in ballroom, the **component** called **Switch Turn** facilitates turns by using a "wind-up," creating continual balance, and snappy turns. Essentially it is a step forward which turns one-half while leaving the other foot in place on the floor. A left foot stepping forward turns right-face; a right foot turns left-face.

If one's body is essentially “square” and the dancer steps straight forward by placing the foot on the same track where it starts, and brings the opposite foot next to the standing foot, the weighted leg/hip becomes the pivot point for the turn so the majority of body weight rotates around that axis point which places the body out of balance as one turns (this is especially problematic for women whose majority weight is at the hips) and in some instances the dancer could end out of alignment with the partner (right foot not pointing between partner's feet). The **Switch Turn** solves these difficulties.

The **Switch Turn** technique includes several elements occurring in rapid succession:

- **Creating a wind-up of the body:** If the right foot is free, the dancer has just stepped with the left foot so the *left hip is forward*, so *as the dancer moves* (body and right leg) forward her *right shoulder and hip begin back*. While the body has the “left-side leading,” the right shoulder is further back than the hips (in other words, dancers do not rotate their shoulders back and *then* move, which is a “no no.” Rather the right shoulder *ends* back because the body *moves away* from the shoulder), so the body has a strong contra body posture and the shoulders are slanted an eighth of a turn opposite the direction of the turn which provides added momentum *for* the turn.
- **Placing the foot:** One's foot always reaches the place where it will land prior to taking weight. In this case it is placed *beyond the standing foot* so it is on a new track (to the left of the left foot) and the outside edge of the ball of the foot touches the floor. With legs straight, the thighs are pressed tightly together.
- **Moving the body above the foot and turning:** The dancer moves the body forward and turns (in this example, left-face on the ball of the right foot), ending with body weight above the right hip. The (left) foot *remains on the floor* so the leg acts like a bicycle kick-stand providing added stability. The (left) foot rotates on the ball/toe of the foot remaining at the same place on the floor.

## Following the Switch Turn

The step following a **Switch Turn** is a *back step*. In the above example, the left foot would then move back so the left shoulder continues to rotate (left-face) so it “leads” the back step. In our Cha Cha routines the **Switch turn Component** is found in the **Follow's** part of Man Back to Aida (Phase 5 and 6, Part B, Measure 8) and Finish Cross Body to Fan and Out to Facing Fan (Phase 6, Part A, Measures 4 and 8).

## Creating the Switch Rock (= Switch Turn + Recover)

The **component Switch Turn** is more commonly followed by a **Recover** (instead of a back step), so the two changes of weight become **Rock Forward/Turn, Recover**. For example, the dancer steps forward with the left

foot so the right shoulder is forward and turns right-face. Instead of taking the next step back, the dancer regains weight on the right foot which was left on the floor. In this example the right shoulder then moves forward so there is a “right side lead” as one **Recovers** to the right foot.

The **component Switch Rock** can also be used in **Underarm Turns** (both left and right). It is introduced in our Phase 4 Cha Cha in many figures: the Alemana, Chase, Spot Turn, Underarm Turn, and Reverse Turn, as well as in our Phase 5 Cha Cha in the Passing Chase Full Turn and the Opposite Spot Turn demonstrating how often it can be used and thus how useful it is. Because it is **Follows** who performs the Underarm Turn and Reverse Turn, they use the **Switch Rock** more often than **Leads**, but both use this **component**.

### Alternate Technique Replacing the Switch Rock

An alternate technique for this turn is that one steps forward as a normal Walk and during the turn brings the other foot next to the newly-standing foot without weight (a Touch) followed by a second walking step forward (approximately to the place where a Recover would be) and completes the step by bringing the free foot next to the newly-standing foot. This technique requires that a dancer establish a new balance point for the body prior to turning so as not to lose balance during the turn, so it is considered a *more advanced technique*. Either technique is acceptable and dancers may choose which they prefer as they perform turns where a **Switch Rock** is described.

See below for choices for using the body (and hips) during a **Switch Rock** in the section on **Hip Twist**.

## **Underarm Turns and Other Turns**

Many figures in partnership dancing involve turns, and there are a number of **components** and **concepts** related to those turns. Some of the **components** involve **Underarm Turns** *per se* and others are done with dancers **remaining in Closed Position** as a single unit to change places in the Hall and/or to **alter their position** relative to each other.

Topics described below include the very large category of **Underarm Turns**, with emphasis on the **Alemana Turn** vs. **Underarm Turn**, the **Twirl**, and the **Riff** Turn.

In the category of **Other Turns** are other notable **components** (besides the **Hip Twist** which is treated separately) which relate to dancing as a unit while remaining in Closed Position (or a variation of it) including **Left Turns** vs. **Right Turns**, **Maneuver** and **Pickup**, **Pivot** and **Slip Pivot**, **Volta** and **Whisk**, and **Swivel**.

There are also other figures where turns are made in such a way that dancers trade places and/or positions in specific ways which are all composed of familiar **components** so dancers can enjoy finding them in figures such as Roll Across, Lace Up, In and Out Runs, Flip Flop, Arm to Arm, Samba Runs, Change Sides, Traveling Door, Shuffling Door, Strolling Vine, Cross Body, Trade Places, Whip, Chase with Underarm Pass, The Square, Passing Cross Chassé, Pull Pass, and others.

## Underarm Turns

Round Dancing uses the **component Underarm Turn** in most Rhythms. While they all have in common that the **Follow** moves under joined *hands* while turning, specific variations of **Underarm Turns** relate to the Rhythm's timing, the path the feet make including which foot is used to begin the turn, the number of weight changes required, the direction of the turn (either right-face or left-face), as well as the character of how the body moves in the specific Rhythm. In ballroom, the categories are sometimes described as curving, switching, or traveling.

Beginning dancers tend to believe that the **Lead** raises the **Follow's** hand so that she can perform an **Underarm Turn**, but knowledgeable dancers realize that *both partners* have the responsibility to create them: the **Lead** provides a *signal* with his body language to *invite* the **Follow** to turn and she *receives* the signal, then she

*responds* as he *supports* her action. Clear, timely, “readable” signals help immensely. Understanding those responsibilities as well as using *tone in the arms* and a concept called a “*push connection*” are other important ingredients explained in the document “**Leading Underarm Turns.**”

When ideas are implemented related to doing underarm turns as equal partners, dancers use a very similar technique when leading turns, regardless of the direction or number of steps, so it is worthwhile learning. In all cases, the **component** can be called “underarm turn,” but it is important to know that the turns are actually made beneath the joined *hands*, not beneath a portion of one’s *arm*. Even the French “*a la main*,” pronounced AH-LA-MAH (the origin of our “Alemana,” and which is a right-face **underarm turn**) translates to “with the hand.” The **Follow** moves beneath joined *hands* which are directly above her head.

Additionally, as dancers perform the turns, the *paths* their feet make should be *harmonious*, such as on the **Rock** portion their feet should be on *parallel* tracks. If the **Follow** is guided to step toward **Line of Dance**, the **Lead** should likewise **Rock** toward **Line of Dance**; if his path is on the diagonal, the **Follow**’s path should likewise be on the *same* diagonal. Whatever direction they move, their paths should be parallel.

Also, their bodies should be close enough that the **Lead** need not strain or distort his body during an **underarm turn** (distorting means having the elbow of his arm which signals the turn extend behind his back, measured by a vertical plane which separates the front of this body from his back **or** having to lean his body forward). The **Follow** has the responsibility to return to face her partner as soon as practical following an **underarm turn**.

### Right-face Turns

Right-face **underarm turns** (made by the **Follow** turning to the *right*) have different names in various Rhythms: an “Underarm Turn,” an “Outside Turn,” a “Right Turn,” an “Alemana Turn,” “Twirl-3,” “Twirl-2,” a “Riff Turn,” “with Outside Turn” (as part of another figure), and “with a *spin*” action (turning essentially on the last step of a **Chassé with Spin**) in Change Right to Left. A right-faced turn with three weight changes can include a **Switch Rock component** (or its alternative) as described above.

### Left-face Turns

Left-face **underarm turns** (made by the **Follow** turning to the *left*) might be called an “Inside Turn,” a “Reverse Turn,” a “Reverse Riff Turn,” “Reverse Twirl-3,” “Reverse Twirl-2,” “with Inside Turn” (as part of another figure), and “with a *spin*” action (turning essentially on the last step of a **Chassé with Spin**) in Change Left to Right. A left-faced turn with three weight changes can include a **Switch Rock component** (or its alternative) as described above.

### Twirl

Used in Rhythms such as Social Foxtrot, Phase II Waltz, and Phase II Two-Step, a **Twirl** is an **underarm turn** in which both dancers progress with their steps moving in a straight line. The numerals 2 and 3 indicate the number of weight changes made in the figure. The **Lead**’s steps are walking steps, generally toward Line of Dance. Both partners moving on parallel paths have the same number of steps and maintain the same distance apart (so the **Follow**’s steps adjust as needed during the **Twirl**). For example, in a Twirl-3 her second step may be either Side or Back depending upon how much she turned on the first step.

When the cue is modified to **Twirl-Vine**, the **Lead** faces his partner and takes his steps like a Vine (aka Grapevine) (Side - Cross Behind if two weight changes and Side – Cross Behind – Side if three weight changes). Such **Twirls** begin with **Lead**’s left foot and **Follow**’s right.

When the direction is (generally) toward *Reverse* Line of Dance, dancers begin with **Lead**’s right and **Follow**’s left feet so the **Follow** **twirls** to her left. These cues include **Reverse Twirl-2**, **Reverse Twirl-3**, **Reverse Twirl-Vine-2**, and **Reverse Twirl-Vine-3**.

**Riff Turn**

A **Riff Turn** with *right* foot free is *right-face* turn; with *left* foot free the turn is *left-face* and is called a Reverse Riff Turn. This turn derives from the ballet “Chaine Turn” (pronounced SHAH – NAY), which is a French word meaning *chain*. The ballet dancer makes a series of half-turns moving to the side with the feet remaining apart so that in each half-turn the path the free foot makes is an arc on one side of the straight line of the path where the feet land.

In Round Dancing typically the dancer steps to the side with the foot pointed in the direction of the turn; the dancer spins  $\frac{3}{4}$  to face the partner (so pointing the foot in the direction of the turn makes the first quarter of one full turn). The second weight change is a **Close** (taking weight next to the standing foot). Therefore, the Riff Turn has two weight changes. This turn is very helpful with a series of consecutive turns. Similar action moving to the left begins with the left foot in the Reverse Riff Turn.

In ballroom these turns are sometimes called “traveling underarm turns,” and a turn which has *three* steps along one straight line and a Close on the second weight change is sometimes called a “three-step turn.” In order to complete one full revolution, the first  $\frac{1}{4}$ -turn begins with pointing the foot in the direction of the turn and that weight change plus the second (a Close) together complete  $\frac{7}{8}$  of a turn. The remaining  $\frac{1}{8}$  of the turn is made by placing the free foot to the side at an angle. This technique allows dancers to readily stop residual rotation without losing balance.

**Alemana**

The Alemana Turn used in Rumba and Cha Cha is an example of an **underarm turn** taking three weight changes; there are similar turns in other Round Dance Rhythms. Often, they (1) include a **Switch Rock** (or the alternative technique described above) and (2) after the third step the **Follow** ends facing partner. Precise paths depend on the rhythm.

In the Alemana Turn (measure two of the *figure* Alemana) the first step for both partners is along the same diagonal with the **Follow** stepping forward with the left foot as described above and the **Lead** stepping back with a **Whisk** action (today some dancers are choosing a Side Cucaracha which also has a foot placement on the same (parallel)diagonal so he can easily continue to face his partner without distorting his body).

The **Follow** does a **Switch Turn** (or returns to approximately the same spot where a Recover step would be using the alternative walking style). The third step in Rumba (which is forward for both dancers) ends in Banjo. The three *points* where **Follow’s** weight changes are *three angles of a triangle* as illustrated below (note that her path, indicated with solid-line arrows, includes *only two sides* of that triangle). In the case of the Cha Cha, after the two points of the **Switch Rock** or alternative, dancers perform a Forward Chassé also ending in Banjo. It is essential that the **Follow** be in Banjo Position in order to lead the Natural Opening Out which often follows an Alemana Turn.

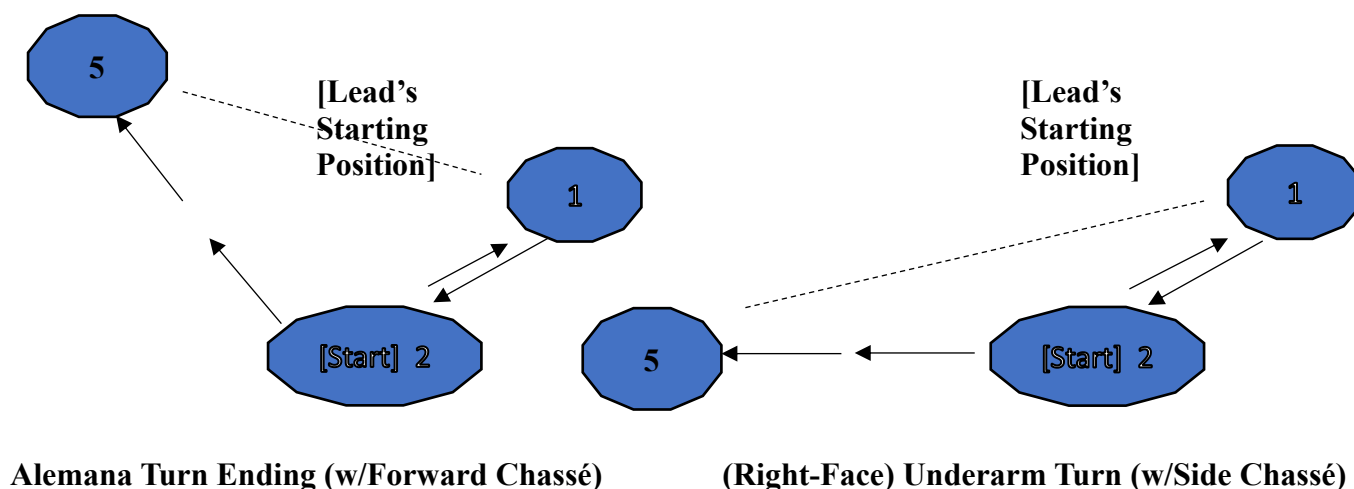
When the two-measure figure Alemana is *choreographed to end facing partner and the Wall*, a **Side** step (in Rumba) or a **Side Chassé** in Cha Cha ends the figure, and the second measure is more accurately described as an “Underarm Turn” (thus a two-measure figure creates an “Alemana with an Underarm Turn” as opposed to an “Alemana” which would end in Banjo). When just one measure is cued, using the terminology “Alemana Turn” vs. “Underarm Turn” clarifies the ending position for dancers.

**Comparing Alemana Turn and Underarm Turn in Cha Cha**

The diagrams below show *only the Follow’s path*; the **Lead** would face the Wall and his partner approximately opposite her “Start” position. The first two “landing spots” of the **Follow’s** path of the **Chassé** (steps 3 and 4 which would take place between landing spots 2 and 5) are omitted from the diagrams.

Notice that the first two weight changes are identical in both figures. (Alternatively, step “2” can “slip” or move slightly.) In Rumba the third “landing spot” would be closer to the other “landing spots,” so the *triangles*

would be more compact but still similarly shaped (the Alemana Turn having approximately one *right* angle vs. the Underarm Turn having an *obtuse* angle at the “Start/2” position).



Some dancers believe that the **Follow's** second weight change does not return to the starting position or even close to it, but rather makes a triangular path *away from the partner* on the *opposite diagonal* (creating a triangle located differently so *every* step makes a *path* of a different “side” of the triangle, and in Rumba likely returning to the starting position on the third weight change), but such a path often means that the distance between partners increases too greatly for a comfortable **underarm turn** on the second weight change so is less desirable, and such a path would likely always end dancers in Closed Position rather than Banjo, so leading a Natural Opening Out would be extremely difficult if not impossible.

As the **Lead** Rocks Back with his right foot on Step 1, his *left* hip should lead; then *as his body moves forward for his Recover*, the right hip stays in place so appears to extend back as he takes his next step. If he moves his right hip back too early, he compromises his left shoulder joint and his left elbow would likely extend behind his body. His action, therefore, is more akin to a **Whisk** (see below).

Return to the previous webpage to see a video of current trends in Rumba for a professional dancing the **Follow's** part of the Alemana Turn using a **Switch Turn**.

## Other Turns

Many of the figures (especially in the Standard/Smooth rhythms) include turns where dancers remain in Closed Position or a variation of it (typically Banjo, aka Outside Partner, or Semi-Closed, aka Promenade). Besides describing left- and right-turns, other words characterize specific turns including **Maneuver** and **Pickup**, **Pivot** and **Slip Pivot**, **Volta** and **Whisk**, **Heel Turn** and **Heel Pull**, and **Swivel**.

## **Left Turns vs. Right Turns**

Round dancing introduces Two Left Turns and Two Right Turns in Waltz at Phase II and in Foxtrot (with the characteristic timing change) at Phase III where the International/American style of Foxtrot is introduced. Dancing in Closed Position and remaining in that position throughout, the cues are given for the **Lead**.

When the **Lead's** left foot begins the sequence, he steps forward turning left-face (and consequently the **Follow's** right foot begins moving back and turns left-face); in the second measure they exchange parts (the

**Lead** steps back with his right foot, turning left-face, and the **Follow** steps forward turning left-face with her left foot). Each half of the figure (one measure) is the **component Half Box** which has  $\frac{3}{8}$  of a turn ( $\frac{1}{4}$  turn is made after weight is taken on the first step of the measure and  $\frac{1}{8}$  turn after the second weight change). That is the amount of turn which can be made comfortably. In refining one's understanding of these turns, the dancer on the *inside of the turn* places the foot so that it points in the direction of the turn on the second weight change, so the foot makes the turn first and then as weight is taken on that foot, the body "completes the turn."

The "inside of the turn" refers to the fact that in each half of the figure each dancer's feet move so the first and last steps are on the edges of a slice of pie. The dancer starting *backwards* is closer to the tip of the pie shape (the common center) so the second step is shorter than the partner's second step. Thus, the dancer *starting back* on a measure is on the "inside of the turn" in that measure.

The third step of each measure is a **Close** which is in keeping with similar turns in ballroom which end with a closing step at the entry level (Bronze). Two such measures complete  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a turn, so in ballroom they typically begin on one diagonal and end on the opposite diagonal so dancers can continue to progress counterclockwise (approximately aligned with Line of Dance).

When the **Lead's** right foot begins a two-measure sequence, he moves forward turning right-face and in the second measure he moves back continuing to turn right-face (the **Follow** does the opposite). Note that since in either figure when the left foot moves forward, the turn is left-face and when the right foot moves forward the turn is right-face (and vice versa for moving backwards), so recognizing which foot is moving in which direction assists in learning the figures. (The two measures of Two Left Turns or Two Right Turns can begin with **Lead's** left or right foot free.)

When two measures of left turns make one full turn ( $\frac{1}{2}$  in each measure), a **Volta** (See **Volta** below), a two-weight-**component**, is substituted for the last two steps (in the first measure for the **Lead** and the second measure for the **Follow**). This is the style of turns typically used in Viennese Turns in Viennese Waltz and Quickstep Rhythms, so the **Volta** action is sometimes called a Viennese Cross. The extra  $\frac{1}{8}$  turn for one partner in each measure is needed to complete a half-turn comfortably.

In ballroom a distinction is made as to whether a figure *ends* with a **Close** or a **Passing** (forward or back) step according to the *level* of the dancer. Typically, in ballroom at the intermediate or **Silver level** the third step of a turning measure may pass (or end with "open legs"). In the Foxtrot rhythm (Phase IV) when similar left- and right-faced turns are used, they include a **Heel Turn** or **Heel Pull** (see below) for the dancer on the *inside of the turn*, and the third step is a passing step. These two-measure turns are called Natural Turn (which turn right-face) and Reverse Turn (which turn left-face), and when just one measure is used, it is called "Half Natural" or "Half Reverse Turn." Additionally, the Natural Turn begins with the **Lead's** *right* foot.

If a passing (or side) step is used on the second weight change instead of a closing step (a **Heel Turn** or **Heel Pull**), the word "Open" is added to indicate the change as in Open Reverse Turn and Open Natural.

## Maneuver and Pickup

The terms **Maneuver** and **Pickup** are **components** used in Round Dancing (though not ballroom) to indicate that dancers are changing position and/or ending in Closed Position with the **Lead** facing a specific direction.

A **maneuver** is similar to the first measure of a Natural (right-faced) Turn which begins with the **Lead's** right foot where he steps forward turning right-face and continues turning to do two additional weight changes (**Side-Close**) to *end facing Reverse Line of Dance* with his lead foot free. When beginning in Closed Position the **Follow** does a normal right-face turn measure (without a **heel turn**) beginning with her left foot. If beginning in

Semi-Closed (Promenade) Position, the **Follow** steps *forward* blending to Closed Position for her **Side-Close**. The right-face turn is most comfortable when it turns only 3/8.

A **maneuver** can also be abbreviated to the first step where the **Lead** ends facing Reverse Line of Dance with his lead foot free at the end of *one* weight change and is often followed by a Pivot-2 (cued “Maneuver-1 - Pivot-2”).

**Pickup** is a term used in Round Dancing to indicate a change from Semi-Closed (Promenade) Position to Closed Position, generally to perform the next figure moving toward Line of Dance. While in beginning dancing **Leads** are sometimes instructed to shorten their forward step with their right foot so **Follows** can fold left-face in front of them on their left foot, a refinement of technique makes this figure more harmonious.

As dancers assume body contact as they advance in their dancing, when in Semi-Closed position the **Lead's** right foot and the **Follow's** left foot are on the *same track*, and the **Follow's** leg is *behind* the **Lead's**. Therefore, it is impossible for the **Follow** to “fold” in front of the **Lead** because his leg does not permit her to do so. Additionally, the length of his step should not change. Instead, as the **Lead** steps forward with his right foot he must rotate his hips *right-face* 1/8 (his shoulders are already in position; this likely is different from what he had previously done) so the **Follow** can rotate her body *left-face* to end in Closed Position. The most they can turn is to end *on the diagonal* with the **Lead facing Diagonal Line and Wall**. Further adjustment to move toward Line of Dance can occur when weight is fully on **Lead's** right and **Follow's** left feet in preparation for the next measure.

## Pivot and Slip Pivot

Generally a **pivot** is a **component** comprised of one forward (or back) step accompanied by a turn of ½. In the **Pivot-2 figure** there are two weight changes with the **pivot action** on each step. This figure is a *right-faced* turn with dancers making one complete turn in two steps (so ½ turn with each step). Typically, the dancer whose right foot is free extends *between* partner's feet while the partner's left leg extends *back* to make each half turn. In the second weight change they exchange parts.

In making the transition from a forward step to a back step, as one steps forward at the beginning of the count with the right leg, half-way through the free leg reaches the right leg (as normal), the turn is made, and immediately the left leg begins extending back so that it is poised to take weight and turn on the second count. In other words, the leg and foot moves in a continuous straight line. Alternatively, dancers can maintain their legs apart (with inside of right thigh touching the comparable part of partner's leg) as they turn so their opposite leg is in position to take the next weight change.

When folks have difficulty doing **pivots**, one reason is that they do not extend the right leg sufficiently forward. The step should be made with a heel lead (as all steps in the Standard/Smooth categories should when the right leg is between partner's feet) so that one's heel is adjacent to the ball of partner's left foot. That allows dancers to swivel on the ball of the foot so that after the turn they remain in an effective Closed Position with the right foot pointing between partner's feet. A second reason might be that on the left foot they step to the *side* instead of stepping *back*. A step to the side makes their body be a “closed door” inhibiting the partner to go through; a back step allows the body to slant which “opens the door” for the partner's forward step.

When using normal foot action of “rolling through the foot,” the back step with the left foot begins with the toe on the floor followed by the ball of the foot and then the heel; the turn is made on the heel of the left foot, and then the foot “rolls” again so the ball of the left foot reaches the floor to push off to propel the right leg and foot forward. Some dancers abbreviate the foot articulation and pivot on the ball of the left foot.

There is **pivot** action in a Spin Turn. When the cue is **Pivot-3**, the third weight change reflects a position change to step forward in Semi-Closed Position rather than a **pivot** action.

The Pivot can also turn left-face with the cue **Reverse Pivot**. The Lilt Pivot also turns left-face. The **Pivot** can also become part of another figure, for example, in a Double Reverse Overspin, an additional step is made (the **Lead** stepping forward with his left foot and the **Follow** stepping back with her right) to **pivot** an additional ½ left-face. Also the **Follow** performs a left-face **pivot** action in figures such as a Double Telemark and Telespin.

A **Slip Pivot** includes a left-face **pivot**. Defined as a figure, it begins in Semi-Closed and after three changes of weight ends in Banjo. On the first step the **Lead** steps back with his left foot while turning his body right-face to Closed Position (the **Follow** also steps back as she turns left-face). That releases his right leg for him to **Slip** his right foot slightly back to allow the **Follow** to continue turning left-face to step “forward,” pointing her left foot between his feet. They then **pivot** left-face together, and that turn (their feet swiveling) allows her left toe to end pointed outside his right foot in its normal position. He then steps forward with his left foot and she steps back with her right foot in Banjo or Closed Position. The name of the figure combines the necessary actions.

## Volta and Whisk

**Volta** action originated from a word meaning to turn (though there are times these days that it has no turn). The action is a *side* step or a *forward* step which *ends side after the body turns* so that the opposite foot can slide to cross *in front of* the weighted foot, somewhat like a side “lock.” That action is constant regardless of where it occurs, though there are other body actions pertaining to the specific Rhythm where it occurs. The action sometimes appears to have the knees bent, and is likely the action which created the Two-Step “front limp.”

The action is extremely common in the Samba rhythm (**Volta**, Circular **Volta**, Criss Cross **Volta**, Curving **Volta**, Maypole, Spot **Volta**, Traveling **Volta**, and Turning Traveling **Volta**), and it is also found in other Rhythms in figures such as a Double Lock, a Pick-up Lock, and the crossing step for the **Follow** ending a Double Reverse (Spin). Characteristic of the **Volta** is that the following step continues to move in approximately the same direction as the *side* step. Also characteristic is that the crossing action in a **Volta** always crosses *in front* (crossing behind tends to stop the body’s momentum in that direction).

Other names used for the same action include cross in front, Viennese Cross, French Cross, and Latin Cross.

When a *contrabody turn* of the body accompanies the *side step crossing behind* the standing foot (generally placing the moving toe close to the standing heel), the result is a **Whisk** action. Typically, in the Standard/Smooth Rhythms the **Whisk** is the *third* weight change in a figure; it typically is the *first* weight change in a Latin **Whisk** and the second weight change in a Samba **Whisk**. Because the standing leg often bends during a **Whisk** the free foot extends forward (**slips**) making the “back” step appear much larger than it was actually made!

Because a **Whisk** tends to “check” the body’s movement in that direction, the following step is usually made in the *opposite* direction. One might also recognize this action and the following weight change as a **Rock-Recover**. Besides occurring in figures bearing the term **Whisk**, it is also found in the **Follow**’s action in a Same Foot Lunge and Hinge.

One might also think of the **Whisk** action in the Rock-Recover in Jive/East Coast Swing figures where the toe of the rocking step is placed near the heel of the standing foot, again accompanied by contra body action, and also in the **Lead**’s Rock-Recover in an Alemana Turn so he can keep his body facing his partner as he initiates the **Underarm Turn**.

In the first two weight changes of a Right-Turning Lock the **Lead** has action like a **Volta** (he continues to turn right-face as he steps side-and-back right with his toe pointing almost Center of the Hall and crosses left in front) and the **Follow** continues to turn right-face as she steps forward-ending-side left and crosses in back right (more like a **Whisk**). Their last two weight changes are a Turning Hover action, changing to Semi-Closed Position between those two steps.

## Heel Turn and Heel Pull

There are times in a three-step left- or right-turn where the dancer on the “inside of the turn” makes the smallest side step possible, so that step can be thought of as the point of a piece of pie or the apex of the angles made by the paths of the feet making the first and third weight changes (so those paths are the edges of that pie shape). The dancer on the “outside of the turn” remains in Closed Position and turns with the second step made on the circumference of a circle with a larger radius than the dancer on the “inside of the turn.”

The **component** that is used to make this turn is called a **Heel Turn** which the **Lead** often substitutes with a **Heel Pull** when he is on the inside of the turn.

The **Heel Turn** is introduced at Phase III Waltz, Foxtrot, and Quickstep for the **Lead's** Impetus, and is prominent in Phase IV Foxtrot and/or Quickstep figures such as Telemark, Reverse Turns, Reverse Wave, and Natural Turns. Note that a Natural Turn turns right-face; a Reverse Turn turns left-face.

The **Follow** performing the heel turn (in this example with the right foot): the right leg moves straight back, the left foot drags the heel toward the right foot ending beside the right foot without weight (reaching that point midway through the count). So at that point she swivels left-face on the right heel. On the next count weight is transferred in place to the left heel where additional turn can be made on the left heel. On the “and” count of that weight change the ball of the left foot reaches the floor where more turn can be made, so on the third weight change the right foot can step forward in the new direction (ending in either Semi-Closed or, after weight is on the foot, swiveling to Banjo Position).

Points of clarification for the **Lead** to facilitate the above action (he begins with his left leg free):

- 1 The **Lead** “commences to turn his body left-face” prior to his first step. This means that the right side of his body *begins* back in a contra body position. His left leg moves *straight forward* so the **Follow** can move straight back. At the point when he has full weight, his body ends “square” to his partner, so his *body* does turn “prior to full weight on the first step.” Often dancers erroneously believe that they begin with their body square so they must first rotate their body which makes both dancers turn, compromising their position, making the **Follow's** foot “flail” in an arc as she moves it back, and making her manufacture the **heel turn** action instead of it occurring naturally by their shared movement.
- 2 The **Lead** has “early rise” to create the **heel turn**. That means that as he takes weight midway through the count on his left foot his legs are straight and his body is vertical (his legs moved through straight to bent to straight). This is in contrast to a normal step when his legs would still be flexed (bent) midway through the count (having moved from straight to bent) and when his greatest rise would be midway through his next weight change, so being the most vertical is earlier than normal. With body contact the **Follow** should be able to sense his height change, and her legs would straighten or bend in harmony with his.
- 3 The **Lead** “steps around his partner.” Some interpret that to mean that he does not remain in Closed Position and must move out of Closed Position to “get around” her, and then regain Closed Position, but in reality they *remain in Closed Position* and make the turn as a single unit, and they rotate around a common pivot point; the circumference of his semi-circle path is simply larger than hers.

In some figures instead of a **heel turn** the **Lead** does a **heel pull** where (for example) he steps back with a left foot, drags his right foot to his left and places it so that it is “toed out,” even with some space between his heels and taking weight on his foot. His left foot would then be free for his third step. His action is very similar to that of a **heel turn** but the turn is made by *placing the foot* instead of making the turn *on his heel*.

## Swivel

The **Swivel** action is another means to create a turn. Essentially the dancer steps and the foot swivels on the ball of the foot to end in a new direction. As the free foot reaches the instep of the foot that **swivels**, it remains in

place, taking a “free ride” as the weighted foot **swivels**, turning the body to a new direction. This action is found in an Outside Swivel and an Ocho. It can also occur following a back step in Rumba and in a Back Ocho.

A **swivel** is also used with the standing foot swiveling on the floor so a dancer faces a different direction *prior to a step or another action* to create figures such as the **Follow’s** Chicken Walks or a Susie Q; and the foot **swivels** after taking weight in Vines and Crab Walks.

**Swivels** are also made on the weighted foot in a **Fishtail** to create the motion for which the figure gets its name (swerving in one direction and then another) and so that all steps can “progress down Line of Dance.” In the Round Dance **Fishtail** the **Lead** first swivels left-face on his weighted right foot so he can cross his left foot in back (more like a **Whisk** action). His second step is to the side, so these two weight changes are approximately on the diagonal and progress approximately toward Line of Dance. After taking his second weight change, he swivels right-face on his weighted right foot to dance Forward, Lock-in-Back toward Line of Dance. In like manner, the **Follow swivels** left-face on her weighted left foot so she can cross right in front (an action more like a **Volta**); her second weight change is to the side, and after weight is on her left foot she swivels right-face so her Back, Lock-in-Front moves toward Line of Dance. (Note that the first swivel is made at the end of the measure *prior* to the **Fishtail** so the first step can be made at the count of one.) The Ballroom **Fishtail** has six weight changes (SQQQSS) and begins with **Lead’s** right foot.

Because a step with the right foot swiveling right-face and a step with the left foot swiveling left-face has **Hip Twist** action, a **Swivel** can also be considered a **Hip Twist**, and there are alternate ways to achieve the action (see below).

## Hip Twist

**Hip Twist** is an **action** (that is a unique type of **swivel**), a **component**, and even part of the name of a **figure** in Rumba and Cha Cha (and Cha Cha also has a **Hip Twist Chassé** as described above). In these Rhythms any *forward step* with the *right* foot which *turns right-face* or a *forward step* with the *left* foot which *turns left-face* has **hip twist action**, so both **Leads** and **Follows** use this action constantly.

Because of how dancers *walk* with exaggerated hip action along what can be thought of as a single track in Cha Cha and Rumba (instead of two tracks as in normal walking), the foot left behind *must swivel on the floor* resulting in **hip twist action** with every forward step in these Rhythms (see the document on “**Body Awareness – Walking**” under the section **How the Body Moves** on the page dedicated to **Refining Dance Knowledge** on this website). The addition of the **swivel** allows the hips to move in an exaggerated fashion.

In normal walking (which is used in the Standard/Smooth Rhythms such as Waltz and Foxtrot), one’s hips move forward as one walks forward so hips alternate being forward with each successive walking step and the spine progresses forward smoothly in a *straight line* at an equal distance from each hip. The action of the hips is somewhat constrained, even in power walking or running. The hip action might be compared to a baton twirler holding her baton in the middle so the action of each end of the baton rotates back and forth from that central point. Such action in regular walking or running is NOT considered **hip twist action**.

The **hip twist** action in Latin walking has even more hip action created by the foot left behind swiveling (on the ball or toe of the foot) so the hips seem to *swing* in each walking step with the alternating hips exaggerated pivot points, as if *ends* of a baton, so that the spine cannot remain in one straight line but has a circular path curving one way and then the other. **Hip Twist** action can therefore be thought of as movement of the hips as extremely as possible. It can even be made when standing in one spot when the hip on one side of the body changes from as far back as it can go to as far forward as it can go. The action is accomplished by use of the knees and foot swivel.

### Creating the Hip Twist

There are two ways to accomplish the **hip twist**.

The first way, which is generally taught first, relates to how the *feet* move as dancers become familiar with the “beat and the feet” of various **components** or figures. In this version, and using a step with the right foot as an example, full weight ends above the ball of the right foot and the right hip is forward. As the foot **swivels**, the left foot moves forward so that it is adjacent to the right foot (as a “touch,” meaning without taking weight), and the whole body rotates right-face so that the right hip ends above the right heel. The right leg is the pivot point (the hip extends slightly further to the right) and simultaneously both hips rotate clockwise (right-face). The spine and left hip consequently rotate clockwise, approximately  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a circular path, with the left hip having a *larger* concentric semi-circular path than the spine around the pivot point (the right leg). With this technique the right hip doesn’t move back unless dancers consciously move it back (actually leave it behind) as the dancer takes the following step.

A more advanced technique, available when dancers are aware of how the *whole body* moves is actually a faster technique and easier on the body. Larry describes it as “releasing the hip.” As the right hip is forward and the left hip is back (with the left toe remaining on the floor), the body is in a strong contra body position (the right hip is further forward than the right shoulder) and the body has a great deal of torsion (pent-up energy created by the twisting of the body). When the right hip is *released* (or moved back), the energy is released very quickly which makes the body turn right-face, so the foot swivels and the right hip ends *back* so that it is above the right heel. The path of the right hip is a very short arc (about  $\frac{1}{4}$  of a circle), so consequently it can arrive very quickly (much faster than the left hip making a larger arc) and the left foot moves “automatically” to be at the instep of the right foot. While the analogy is not exactly the same, one can easily visualize two cars turning right in two adjacent lanes. The car in the closer lane has a shorter arc for the turn (thus makes the turn faster) than does the car one lane to the left.

Even when standing stationary in one spot, one can create **hip twist** action. If weight is on the left foot and the left leg is straight, the right knee is bent and placed slightly in front of the left knee and the right foot is in a “touch” position with toes slanted toward the left which puts the right hip forward and the left hip back. In **swiveling** the feet and taking weight on the ball of the right foot, the right leg straightens, the toes then point slightly to the right, the left knee moves slightly in front of the right knee and the left hip is forward and the right hip is back. The hips have “twisted” or exchanged relative position. Hence, the name of this **component**.

### Using Hip Twist Action in the Switch Turn

Dancers can think of the **Hip Twist action** in the **Switch Turn** in three different ways.

When they first learn the technique, they must learn to cross their free foot (e.g., their left) *beyond* their (right) foot while maintaining their *right* hip forward (both the foot placement and the hip placement are different from normal walking which puts the walking foot on a different “track” forward, and the left hip rotates forward which is action they likely did when stepping straight forward). Initially they might think of moving onto the (left) foot and turning right-face while their body has split weight, so their hips rotate with the *spine* as the pivot point and ending so the left hip ends back.

Later they can begin to think of their body weight moving directly over the ball of their (left) foot with their right hip forward, and at this point they might think of their left hip rotating around the pivot point of their left leg.

The third, most advanced and effective, technique which is aligned most favorably with body mechanics (using muscles in the right gluteus maximus when moving onto the left foot) involves having their body weight onto the ball of their (left) foot and their right hip forward, and they think of their *right hip moving back* (around the *pivot of their spine*).

Dancers can choose the technique they prefer.

**Using Hip Twist Action in Other Rhythms**

Several dance rhythms: Tango, Foxtrot, Jive, Samba, Mambo, Merengue, and even Waltz (besides Rumba and Cha Cha) occasionally include figures which involve **swivels**. **Swivels** essentially use **hip twist action** since when one steps forward with one foot (perhaps the right), the **swivel** is right-face. Stepping with the left foot, the **swivel** is left-face. Therefore, there are two ways the hips may be used (as described above) and dancers can select which method they prefer. When there are a series of **quick swivels**, dancers will find that the technique of moving the hip *back* instead of swiveling  $\frac{3}{4}$  around the weighted leg is much faster so *such a sequence of swivels* can be made much more successfully with the faster technique.