

## Harmonious Movement – Other Positions

Other positions common in dancing are **Butterfly** (with variations), **Shake Hands**, and **Open Position**. All of these positions require

- that both dancers have good **tone** in their arms, which generally means that they each have a slight pressure toward their partner's hand(s) and that they keep the joints at their shoulders, elbows, and wrists relatively *stable* so that a change in direction from the **Lead** is easily “read” and accurately responded to by the **Follow**,
- that the **Lead** position his body in such a way that he allows the **Follow** to be a fully-supportive partner instead of “grabbing” her hands in a way that elicits resistance rather than cooperation, and
- that the **Follow** realizes that her responsibility is to *keep her hand against the Lead's hand* and to be sensitive to what his body indicates for her to do.

The above principles are critical for effective *leading and following*, which these days is often referred to as *indicating (or suggesting) and responding*. While specifics for leading and following are beyond the scope of this document, it is important to recognize that the *foundation* for leading and following is how dancers situate various aspects of their body to create the various positions.

### Butterfly Position, Low Butterfly (aka Two-Hand Hold), and Variations

Butterfly (abbreviated BFLY) is a position in round dancing where dancers face each other with some space between them so it can readily incorporate Underarm Turns. Dancers are still offset slightly so the right foot points between partner's feet. One version has hands held about at eye level of the **Follow** (above the waist) with the arms on *both sides of the body* resembling the **Lead's** left and **Follow's** right hands in Closed Position. Perhaps someone saw a female dancer with large, flowing sleeves on her gown which brought to mind the image of the wings of a butterfly.

In this position dancers have found it helpful for the knuckle joint to remain flat so that the thumb is somewhat aligned with the palm. The fingers then curl around the partner's hand. Both dancers have a slight pressure (tone) upward.

A second variation, called Low Butterfly or Two-Hand Hold in ballroom, has the joined hands approximately at hip height of the **Follow**. This position is very common in Latin/Rhythm dances.

To achieve this position from the previous Butterfly, both of **Lead's** hands flatten (straighten the fingers, so the **Follow's** likewise flatten) and extend out slightly and then down in an arc to allow the **Follow's** fingers to swivel against his palms. The action is reversed (extending out and up in an arc) to move from the position below waist height to above waist height.

In early dancing it is helpful to instruct the **Leads** to place their hands palm up and slanted outward so the **Follow** can place her hands palm down in his hands, the *outside edge of her hands* next to his palms. His hands provide a “cradle” for her hands and they can readily be flattened to lead Underarm Turns. The **Follow's** fingers (especially the middle finger, ring finger, and little finger) curl around his hand. Ideally her fingers are bent at the second joint so the back of her hand can be flat (no knuckles showing) and in a straight line from the second finger joints to her elbows.

Further refinement of this position includes the **Lead** pointing his thumb and index finger straight ahead so the **Follow's** palms rest in his palms above his of his other three fingers. Three or four of her fingers curl around his three fingers, and her thumbs are alongside her own palms. While the **Lead's** thumbs may be beside the backs of her hands, there should be NO pressure.



The purpose of holding the hands in this manner is to readily have the thumb and index finger out of the way when flattening the hand so the **Follow's** hand can readily swivel against his as he extends it out to the side and up to lead an Underarm Turn (or down as described below). When the **Lead** has pressure of his thumb on the back of the **Follow's** hand, there is a tendency to “grab” the partner’s hand and lift it up, depriving the **Follower** of participating as a knowledgeable and mutual partner, and also it limits options for subsequent figures.

Both dancers have very light pressure (“tone”) *toward their partner's hands*. Some have likened the tone in the **Lead's** hands to be like a balloon keeping air contained inside and tone in the **Follow's** hands like the air providing shape for the balloon.

Additionally, from the elbow of the **Lead** to the elbow of the **Follow** (their forearms), there are *fairly straight lines* and both of their arms from the shoulder of one to the shoulder of the other are on two parallel vertical planes.

The joints at the shoulders, elbows, and wrists remain stable, providing the needed “tone” so that when the **Lead** moves his body, the arm connection likewise moves the **Follow's** body. There is an exception to this guideline when the **Lead** intentionally *extends his hand out* of this alignment, *away from his body*, to indicate that the **Follow** should move toward the direction he is indicating as he rotates his body, sometimes altering the path for her movement.

The position can also be modified to become a Very Low Butterfly by the **Lead** flattening his hands and rotating his hands out and down, again with the **Follow** likewise flattening her hands so they can swivel against his. They end with arms down, in front of and close to their bodies.

Another modification of Low Butterfly involves retaining contact only with the lead hands (his left and her right). This position is sometimes called Open Facing Position.

## Handshake Position

A modification of Low Butterfly or Two-Hand Hold occurs when right hand joins to right hand and is called Handshake Position in round dancing. The handhold is similar to that described above. The major consideration to use this position well is to further offset bodies to the left so that dancers’ joined arms are aligned on a vertical plane from **Lead's** right shoulder to the **Follow's** right shoulder perpendicular to their bodies instead of remaining in the normal position and having their arms extend on a diagonal from one shoulder to the other which tends to lead the partner’s *elbow* instead of her *body*. The shoulder is attached directly to the body, so good tone in the arms plus the offset position provides a much better conduit for communicating a lead.

## Open Position

In this position dancers are side by side facing the same direction. The **Lead** flattens his open hand palm up for the **Follow** to place her hand on it palm down. The **Lead** has slight pressure upward and the **Follow** has slight pressure down. The fingers may curl around partner’s hand. This position can readily flatten to change

position. The **Follow** can readily sense **Lead's** forward, back, or side movement in order to move with him as he moves his body. The **Lead** can create a back-to-back position by bringing the joined hands quickly forward as he rotates left-face (causing the **Follow** to rotate right-face). To lead an Underarm Turn, he first faces his partner and extends his left (lead) hand for the **Follow** to connect to it. It is awkward for him to lead an Underarm Turn with the joined hands (**Lead's** right and **Follow's** left).

## Other Positions

For pictorial representation of positions commonly used in round dancing, go to <https://roundalab.org/> > About > Dance Positions.