

Rated R: Dances All Adults Should Know
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An opportunity for dance presents itself at bat/bar mitzvahs, weddings, football games, family reunions, Beach Street and any other time that people get together to celebrate. Besides learning the actual steps to a dance, teens should learn dance etiquette and the tools for learning new dances.

First, let's speak to music. Music is written in 32 count paragraphs, and we instinctually will move on the downbeat, or count 1. One of my less than enthusiastic male students informed me that dancing was "just about counting." So, getting students to count will make them more successful.

Chicken dance

I preface that, if they should attend VT or a VT football game, they need to know the chicken dance. It is often done as a mixer. There are only 5 steps; beaks, wings, nest, clap, and elbow swings. The etiquette of participating in a mixer includes not swinging the partner too hard, and to be receptive to any potential partner.

Electric Slide

This dance does not follow the "square pattern", so the "counters" need to know this. Also, the best place to learn a 4 wall line dance is in the middle, so there will always be someone in front of you. The steps of the Electric Slide are also found in many other line dances:

Grapevine right, grapevine left (8 counts)

Walk back R, L, R, tap L (4 counts)

Shift weight forward on L, tap R; backward on R, tap L (8 counts)

Step L, pivot ¼ to L, and Kick R and hold for "and" (2 counts)

If the Electric Slide is too overwhelming to start line dance with, use a 2 wall dance, such as the "King Tut".

Cha-cha Slide/ Cupid Shuffle

Variations on the "slide" theme. The Cha-cha slide is directed by the words on the song, as is the cupid shuffle. The instructions for many dances can be found on [YouTube](#); a good example of an easy to follow instructional video is the "New Jersey/Baltimore Strut"

8 Count Swing Dance

Entering the complex world of partner dancing, I like to use an 8 count swing dance. I already have the students in 32 count phrases, and all the skills can be transitioned to a 6 count swing. Before starting movement, I address dance etiquette. The deal is brokered with a request to dance. At the completion of the song, neither partner is obligated to continue dancing. They should thank each other for the dance, and then, renegotiate, if desired. This takes care of that awkward moment when the music fades.....

Partner dances have a lead and a follow, traditionally aligned with gender. I use the terms “lead” and “follow”. Rules of play: The lead gets to determine which skills are to be requested of the follow. Leads use a “C” hand position; follows use hook hands. The lead starts the dance movement by stepping forward on the left foot, the follow, backward on the right foot.

Skills include:

Basic: step forward, forward, back, back (I teach this as a V step forward and close together backward, and then reign it in)

Around the world: Walk two steps past each other, then two steps back together.

Follow under: the lead drops R hand, raises left arm, and draws follow under. This finishes with two steps back together. ,

Lead pass: Holding L hand only, lead turns into L arm, releases hand and walks past follow. Follow walks past, brushing hand across leads back to insure a connect.

Slide: Both arms raise up as lead and follow face opposite directions. They put hands behind their own head, release hands and slide out to connect.

Spin: A fancy, fun, and easy movement to follow a slide. Grasp wrists, turn follow under. Start building momentum by walking around. The follow squats down to buttocks and spins on the floor. The leads pulls her back up at the completion of the spin.

Pretzel: Lead reaches behind back with R hand, pulls follow back to back. Raise R arm to turn follow under, then L arm to turn follow under, again.

Basic Ballroom

When the music slows, the lead places R hand on follow’s upper back and L hand holds follow’s R hand. The box step is a 6 count step so the movement to music is a little more complex.

Lead box: Step forward with L, side with R and close (3 counts). Step back with R, sideward with L, and close (3 counts).

Follow box: Step backward with R, side with L, and close (3 counts). Step forward with L, side with R, and close (3 counts)

Once a couple becomes proficient with the box, add a box going the other way to create a figure 8. Next, the lead should change directional focus by gently leading with the hand and pressing on the back.