



### Beginning 2-Step: Segment 1

#### Introduction

2-step is a dance with four basic steps taken in six beats of music. There are two slow steps together and two quick steps together. In the Houston area, we begin with the slow steps followed by the quick steps. However, in other parts of the country (and the world) dancers begin with the quick steps. It really does not make any difference (except for the start), because all the patterns are the same regardless.

In this segment, we are going to discuss:

- The music – how to step to the beat and how determine if it is a 2-step.
- Contact – how to hold your partner.
- The basic foot work.
- Dance etiquette .

#### The Music

The most oft asked question we field from beginners at dances is “What kind of dance is this?” The variety of music played at dances is often overwhelming to those not familiar with the rhythm and beat of the various styles. 2 step is played to  $\frac{3}{4}$  timing, and each basic covers two bars, or six beats of music.

#### What is a beat?

A beat in music is a heavy guitar strum, a drumbeat, or some other heavy sound in the music. It is the **natural** place you would snap your fingers or clap your hands if you were keeping time to the music.

The important thing to remember here is that in dance, you put your foot on the floor on the beat as opposed to picking it up. To practice, you can snap your fingers and stamp your feet as you listen to the music (guys use the left foot and ladies use the right.)



Is it a 2 step?

Before you can determine what the dance is, you must know how the 2-step dance works to the music. In this part of the country, we start with two slow steps and then 2 quick steps. The slow steps take twice as long to complete as the quick steps. There is a feeling of slowing for two steps and then speeding up for two steps with a slight pause between the last quick step and the first slow step.

Knowing this, a little phrase makes it easy to determine if the music is a 2 step. While listening to the music, if you can say, "slow, slow, quick, quick" with both the slows on a beat of music and the first quick on a beat of music, it is a two step.

An alternative is to watch what other dancers are doing before you go out onto the floor. If they are taking a pair of slow steps followed by a pair of quick steps, it is a 2-step.

If you still cannot determine what it is, ask someone nearby. Country and western dancers are friendly and they will be glad to tell you.

### Contact

Face each other with the gentleman facing forward in the line of dance and the lady facing backward.





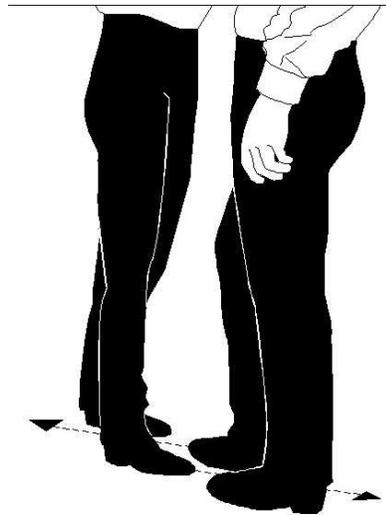
Gentlemen – Put your right hand under the lady's left arm and place it gently on her left shoulder blade. Keep your fingers together and turn the tip of your hand down so that it raises your right elbow to create a shelf for the lady to rest her arm. Hold your left hand out to the side about level with her shoulder. Hold your palm forward and fingers pointing to the outside to create a fence for her right hand.

Ladies – Rest your left elbow on the gentleman's arm and cup your left hand on the ball of his right shoulder. Gently rest your right hand on top of the gentleman's left hand.

### Frame

Naturally, there must be a connection between the two of you (how you hold your arms and hands) that allows you to move on the dance floor together. This is called **frame**. You both must have a little tension in your elbows so that the lady can feel the gentleman's body movement and respond accordingly.

Finally, hold each other slightly offset so that your right foot is pointing between your partner's feet.





We do three things to prevent stepping on each other's toes:

1. Ladies and gentlemen dance with opposite footwork – guys start with the left foot and ladies start with the right foot. Provided they are facing each other, as the gentleman steps forward with his left, the lady steps back with her right and there is always a place to put the foot.
2. Ladies and gentlemen dance parallel but offset to each other so that the right foot is lined up to always pass between the partner's feet. This prevents bumping knees and toes.
3. If everything else fails, we keep our feet close to the floor as we step so that if there is a mistake, we will bump into the side of our partner's foot rather than stepping straight down on top. Remember – this is not sliding your feet, which will quickly ruin your shoes or boots.

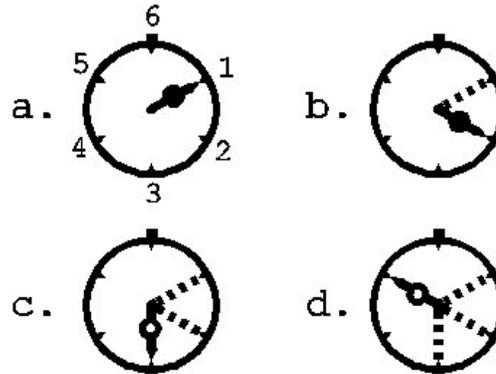
### **The Footwork**

As I mentioned earlier, the basic footwork for the 2 step in the Houston area is slow-slow-quick-quick. However, if you will recall, the rest of the world starts on the quick step. That is ok.

The reason I mention this is that I have developed a graphic (a dance clock, if you will) to help dancers with the timing of their footwork. Since the clock applies to the patterns, which usually all begin on quick steps, the clock starts with those quick steps. Just think of our first two slow steps as starting steps and then we all will be dancing alike.



The dance clock



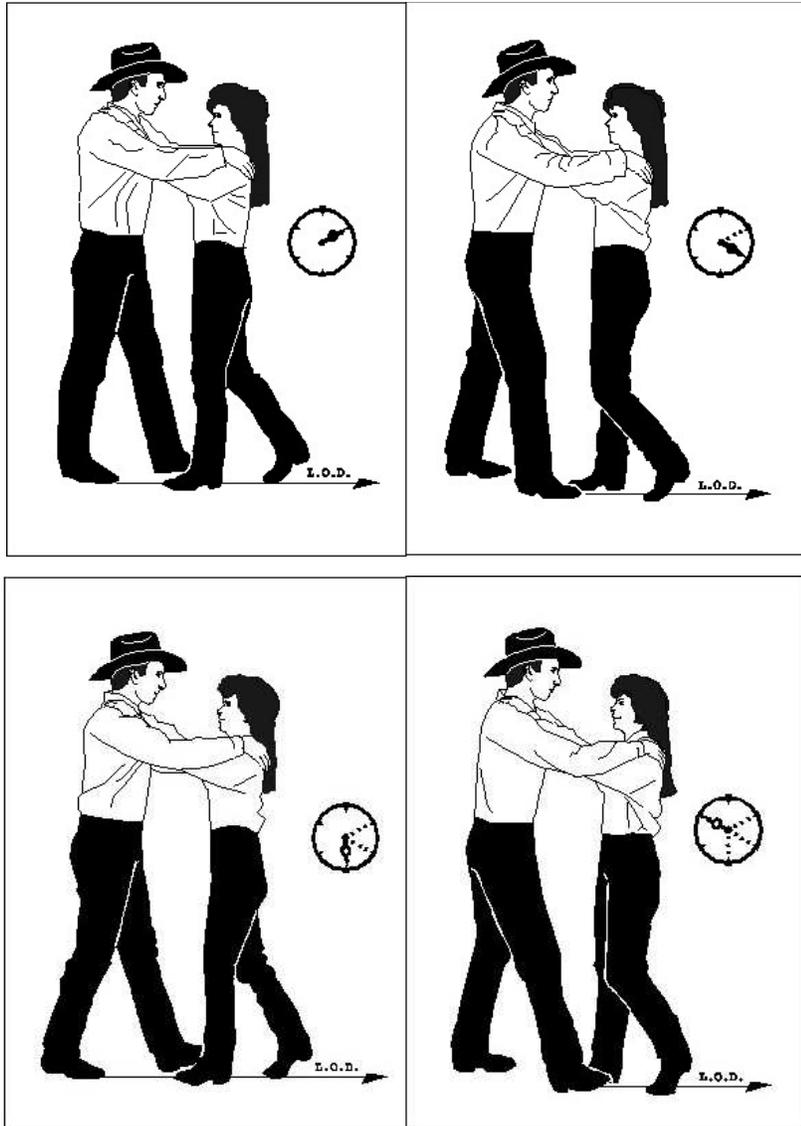
Unlike the regular clock, the dance clock is divided into only six segments to correspond to the beats of the basic music. (a.) Clocks for other dances will be different. Step number 1 is the first quick step followed by the second quick step as shown in (b.) You will notice that there is a dashed line to remind you of the steps you have already taken.

An important point to note is that the timing occurs after the step, not before it. Therefore, the timing for the first quick step occurs between point 1 and 2 in the diagram. The second quick step begins at point 2, the first slow begins at point 3, and the second slow step begins at point 5.

The significance of this is that it almost feels like 3 quick steps instead of 2. If you talk it out, it is “quick-quick-slow (pause) slow (pause)”. All you need to do is two quick steps followed by two slow steps and do not come to a stop.



The steps

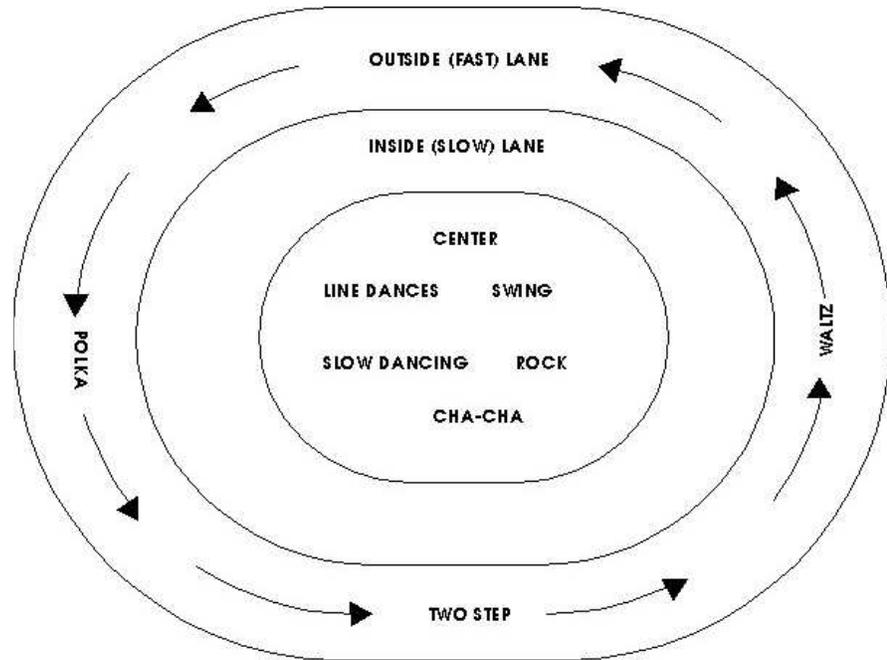


This graphic is shown with a practice hold, which you can use if you like until you get used to the footwork. The important thing here is to follow the timing of the dance clock.



**Dance Etiquette**

The flow of traffic around the dance floor is counterclockwise. The dance floor is divided into three imaginary areas – a fast lane, a slow lane, and a stationary area. However, unlike the freeway, you do not merge from the side into the slow lane. The outer lane is the fast lane. You must cross over that to get to the slower traffic.



The center of the floor is reserved for those dancers doing stationary dancing like East Coast Swing, West Coast Swing, Jitterbug, Cha-Cha, and Salsa.

**Don't be Afraid**

Every dancer out there has “paid their dues”. They have struggled just like you. However, they are concentrating on their own efforts and not upon you. They do not care if you make a mistake, so go ahead and make them. You have just as much right to be on the dance floor as they do, so get out there and dance. It may be a struggle, but that is ok. No one is watching you.

**Protect your Lady**

As you are dancing, check often over your shoulder to be aware of the traffic around you. Do not run your lady into another dancer. Slow down or maneuver around a potential collision.



### Take the Blame

If a collision does occur, remember that it does no one any good to get upset – this is just recreation. The best policy is to apologize regardless if it is your fault or not.

And last, but not least – if you do bump into someone on the side and knock over their drink, offer to replace it, and try to be more careful.

### Next Month

In the next segment, we will show you how to make a turn so that you can dance backwards and forwards.