

## Hat Tricks

### Pre-requisite

Persistence and patience.

### Introduction

If you have ever danced with a hat, and you have watched competitors perform, eventually you are going to want to try a few hat tricks. We need to tell you up front that there are an infinite number of hat tricks and this segment does not presume to be all-inclusive. Instead, we are going to show you three hat tricks that begin with the least challenging and progress to the most difficult.

These are:

- Hat Flip
- Vertical Spin
- Horizontal Spin

My encouragement for you is that they can all be successfully completed by social dancers with a little practice and patience.

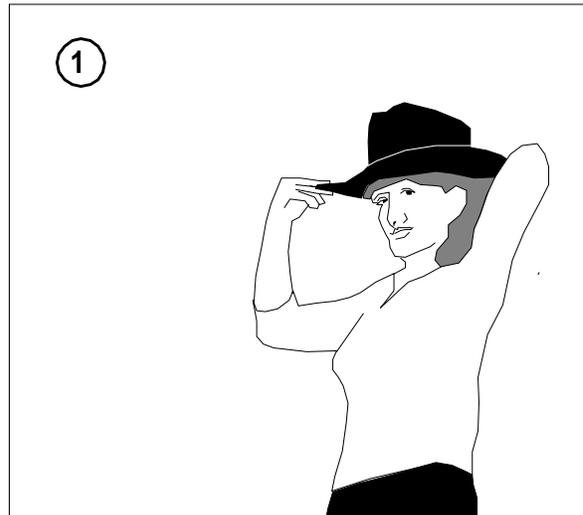
Thanks to Barry Durand “Mr. Hat” for originally teaching these tricks.

### Hat Flip

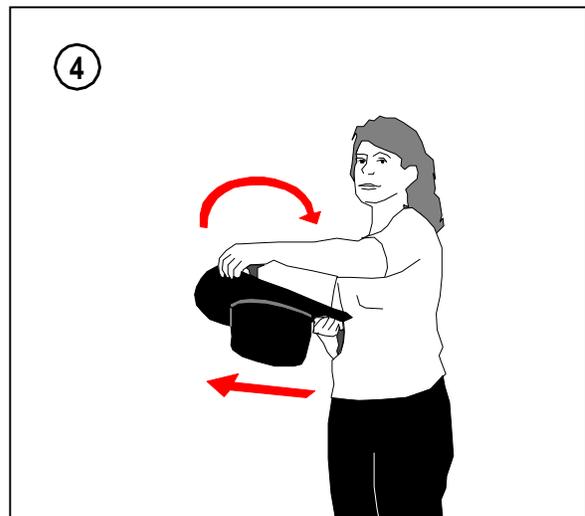
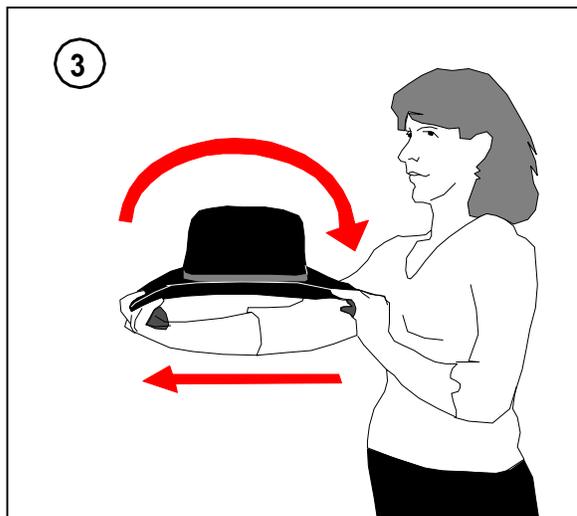
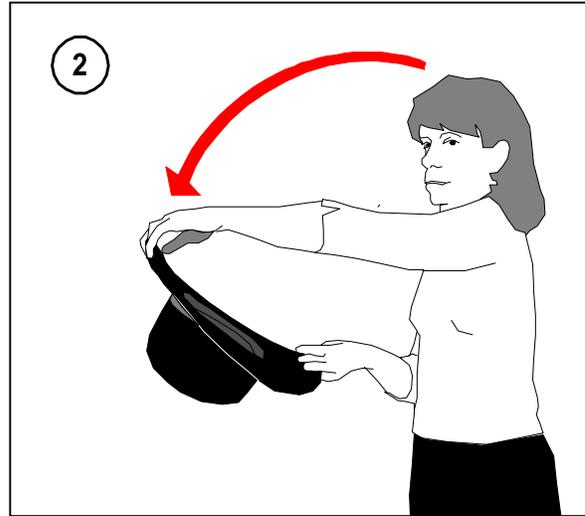
Let us consider the least challenging of the three techniques – the hat flip. This trick is actually very easy and depends more on illusion than dexterity. The hat is held in both hands and you never lose your grip on the hat. The hat is turned forward and then flipped end over end to return to the head.

The key to this trick is the first position. (Presuming you are right handed), grasp the front brim of the hat in your right hand. The index finger and middle finger are on top and the rest of the fingers are below.

The left hand grasps the back brim with the palm facing up and all the fingers grasping the brim of the hat.



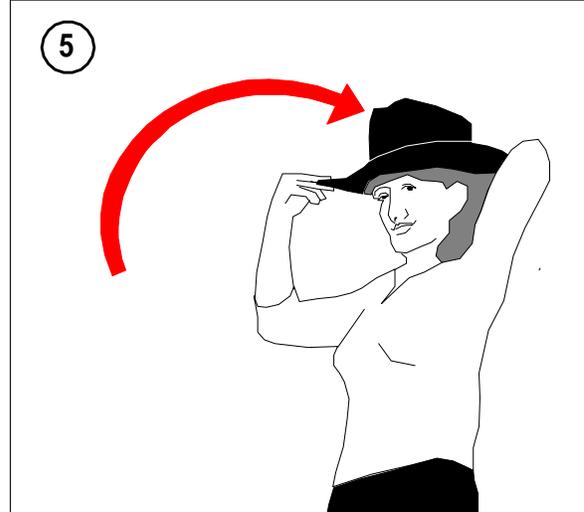
Flip the hat off your head so that it is upside down and in front of you. The left arm should be extended and the right arm held close to the body.



In two quick motions as shown in figure 3 and 4, reverse that position twice so the top of the hat first faces up and then down. It will take some instantaneous re-adjustment of the handholds as the brim of the hat flips around, but with a little practice; the motion will become second nature.

Note that at the end of the sequence in figure 4, you are holding the hat exactly like you held it in figure 2.

To end the hat trick, flip the hat back onto your head and give your audience a big smile.



When and where can you do the hat flip?

You will notice that this trick takes two hands. These figures were shown with the lady doing the trick, because it is one of Betty's favorites. However, usually the gentleman does the trick on the dance floor.

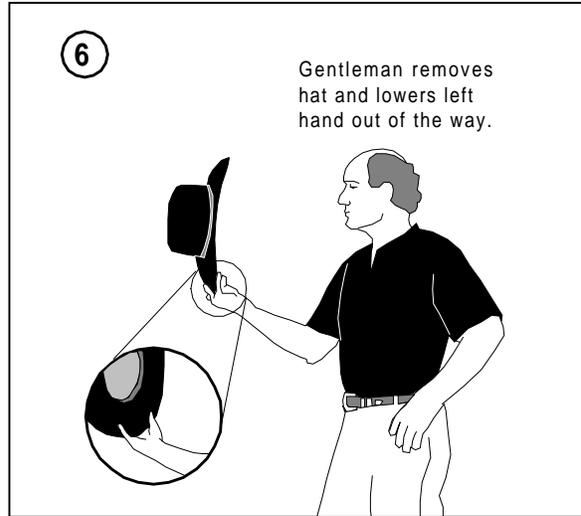
There are not many patterns where the gentleman has two hands free. An opportunity presents itself when the gentleman free spins the lady. Two common patterns are free spinning the lady in promenade and free spinning her across the line of dance in a whip. (There are others.) During these patterns, she is only free for three steps, e.g. two quick steps and a slow before she requires your hand again. That means this trick must be done quickly to be able to present your hand again for the lady. If the trick takes too long, she can simply play along, spin again, or continue stepping while waiting for your hand.

### Vertical Hat Spin

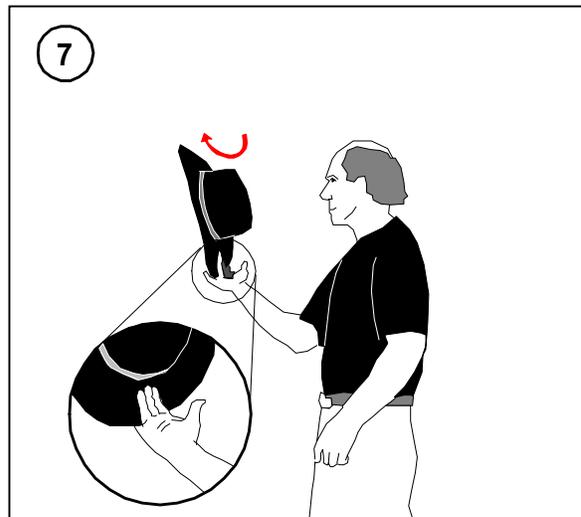
The next most challenging hat trick is the vertical spin. It begins similar to the hat flip with two hands but with the hat standing vertically in your right hand. The spin is accomplished with the right hand only by dexterous movement of the fingers and thumb. The hat is then captured with the left hand and flipped back onto the head.

A caveat here is that you should practice this with an inexpensive hat. Extensive practice of this trick with a hat can cause the fiber of the brim to weaken, bend, and cause a floppy crease near the handhold.

The key to this trick is shown in figure 6. You begin with a split – the thumb and pinky finger is on the bottom side of the brim and the other three fingers are on top. Balance the hat in the palm of the hand.

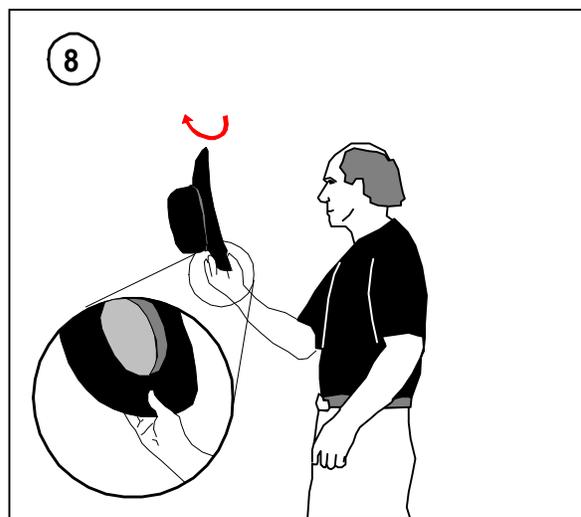


Quickly press down with the pinky finger while lifting the thumb out of the way. The hat will roll in your hand to the position shown in figure 7.



Quickly move the thumb to the other side of the brim and roll the hat to the position shown in figure 8.

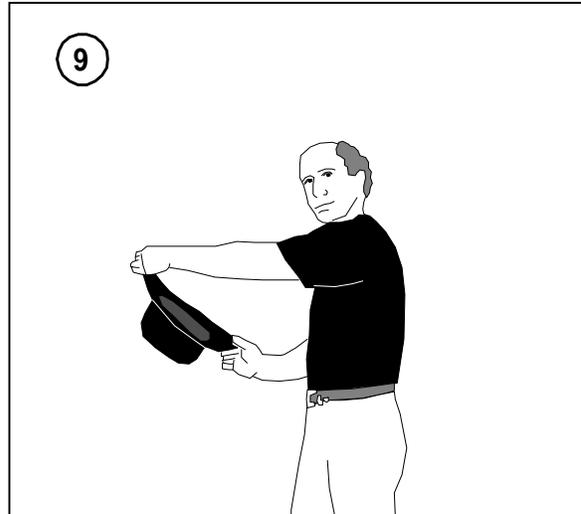
This entire motion is just a fraction of a second. However, the hat is actually supported from falling at all times in between the fingers and the thumb.



Quickly reach out with the left hand and capture the top of the hat to support it.

At this point you can complete the first trick or simply place the hat on your head.

Use for this trick is similar to the first trick.



### Horizontal Spin

This last trick is the most challenging. It takes considerable practice and the failure rate is quite high. Even after you have perfected it, if you do not practice for a while, you will tend to drop the hat.

The concept is to hold the hat upside down in the palm of your right hand, quickly give the hat a little bounce upwards, and then roll your hand sideways so the crown of the hat rolls across your hand. You must capture the brim between thumb and index finger and all before the hat falls to the ground.

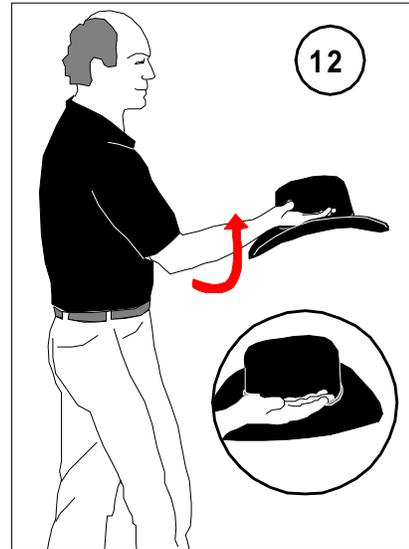
Warning – Practice Location is Important

Practice location of the third and final trick is important. You will drop your hat – many times. To avoid getting it soiled, practice this trick while holding the hat over a bed or soft mat.

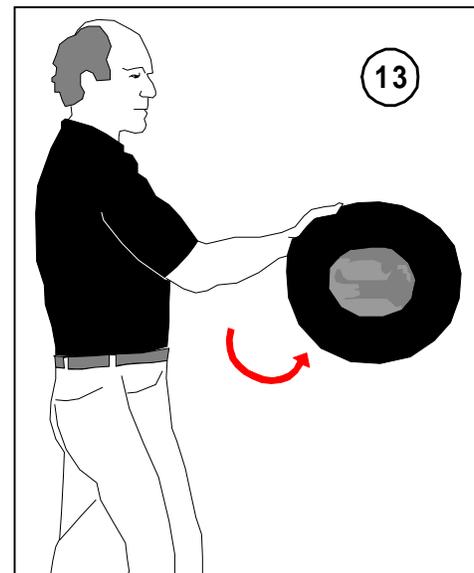
Remove your hat and cradle the crown in the palm of your right hand.

To begin the trick, bounce the hat up so that it is light in your hand. While it is light, pull your hand slightly to the right and lift it up.





The positions illustrated in figures 11, 12, and 13 are completed quickly before the hat falls to the ground. In figure 13, the thumb crosses the edge of the brim and grasps the brim between the thumb and index finger.



Rotate the hat with your wrist so that the crown is down and quickly grasp the back brim of the hat with your left hand.

You could use the hat flip after this, but frankly this trick takes a long time as far as social dancing goes and is probably more suitable for competition.

Try it out. Have fun with it.



## Conclusion

This concludes the segment on hat tricks.