

## Spotting

### Pre-requisite

Know how to spin (See “Spin, Spin, Spin”)

### What is Spotting

Spotting is a technique used by dancers to minimize or completely eliminate the feeling of vertigo caused by spinning while dancing.

### What causes vertigo while spinning?

The easiest solution to stop vertigo brought on by spinning is to stop spinning. However, if your desire is to spin and not have vertigo/dizziness, you must do something else. We must first understand what causes the vertigo.

According to doctors, your sense of balance and stability are controlled by three things in your body:

- 1) Position sensation comes from joints and stretch receptors in muscles of your legs and neck. Information from these receptors travels to your brain via nerve and spinal column. Most of this information works below our level of awareness, controlling balance automatically.
- 2) Fluid filled balance organs in your inner ears, separate from the hearing mechanism, sends signals to your brain to determine your 3-dimensional location in space.
- 3) Vision plays an important role in determining your stability by verifying the information from the balance organ and position sensors. Information from your eyes allows the brain to interpret steady vision even though the head may be bouncing up and down as we move or the objects we are looking at may be moving.

Vertigo from spinning is caused by two things – indiscriminant sloshing of the liquid in the inner ear so that the brain cannot make sense of the information, and the inability of the eyes to verify balance. The later comes on because objects are blurred, flashing by before the eyes, and the eyes do not have time to focus on anything.

As a result, two of the three systems for establishing your balance are experiencing interference, and the message that reaches the brain is one of confusion. You then experience the typical symptoms of vertigo – i.e. unstable posture, the sense of the room spinning around you, queasiness. In short, this is vertigo.

The concept of spotting

So, what can we do about the vertigo/dizziness?

The solution is quiet simple. You must maintain your head position steady in one direction while your body spins below. Of course, unless your are possessed as in the “Exorcist”, you cannot physically maintain a steady head while the body turns for very much of a spin. Your physical structure will now allow it.

However, what you can do is to hold your head steady as long as physically possible, and then rapidly snap your head around to pick up the vision on the other side. Your body continues to turn below until the next point where you can no longer physically maintain the position, and the head snaps around again. **Note:** people with neck problems schooled not attempt this.

The concept is that you spend the majority of the time with your vision steady and your inner ear balance mechanism stable. There are only brief moments of blurred vision and sloshing inner ear as you snap your head around, but your brain ignores these and instead interprets only the steady information.

The result is that dancers who use this technique can spin almost an unlimited number of revolutions without becoming dizzy.

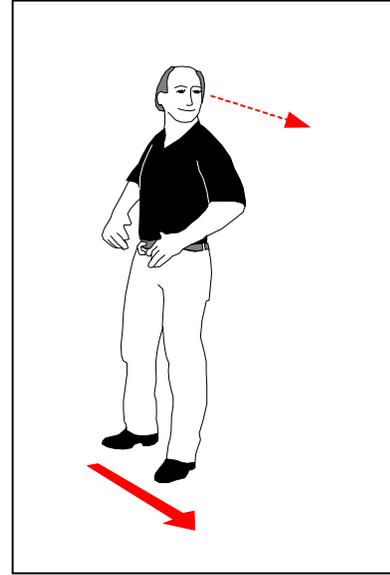
The moving target

The most simple version of this works if you are dancing in a straight line. You maintain a spot you have picked to look at, and when you snap your head around, you pick up that same spot. However, if you are dancing around a dance floor, your angular direction is constantly changing.

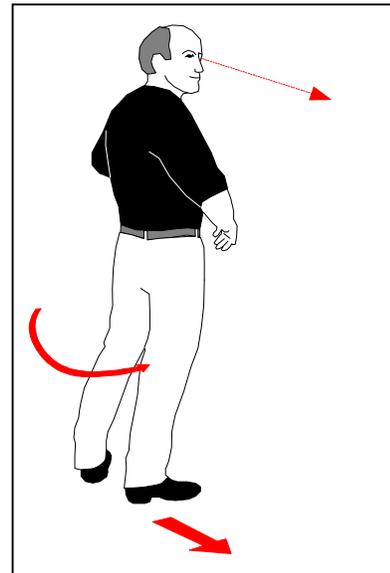
You must practice the idea of the moving target. Every time your head snaps around, you must pick out a different target from what you last viewed but further down the line and in front of you.

## Spotting Technique

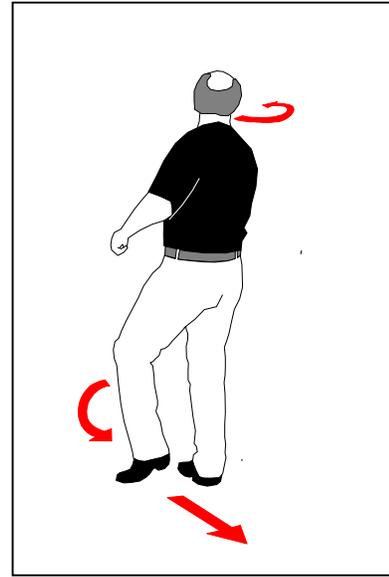
Let's take a look and see how spotting works. You may choose any type of spin (See "Spin, Spin, Spin"). I have chosen pivot turns to illustrate the concept. In the adjacent illustration, the dancer has his weight on the forward foot, and his vision has locked onto something at eye level along the line of dance.



The dancer spins one step counter-clockwise down the line of dance while maintaining his vision lock on the selected spot. You can see that the head is remaining steady while the body rotates below.

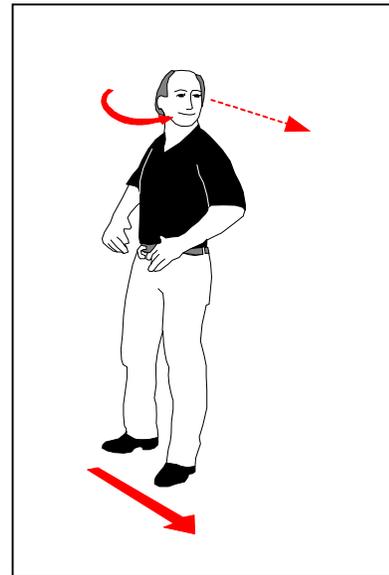


As the dancer takes the third step in the spin, he can no longer physically maintain his head position. When his vision begins to drift because of the physical limitations, he snaps his head around to the other side.



As he completes his third spin step, he rotates his head to pick up his original spot and he has returned to his original position.

This can be executed indefinitely, maximizing the time that the head with the inner ear and the vision remain steady. It reduces or eliminates the feeling of vertigo while spinning. It is also very stylistic and looks very cool when executed properly.



## Practice

Unfortunately, although this technique works quite well, it does not come naturally. You must practice it until it becomes second nature and you execute it without thinking every time you spin.

I am sure there are many ways to practice, but I am going to tell you about how I practiced the technique. I practiced while doing a line dance. Someone once taught me a variation of the Four Corners line dance where the dancer spins during each of the four segments of the dance. I found this was ideal to practice spotting and practice the moving target as we faced each new direction.

Four Corners Line Dance

The Four Corners line dance is quiet popular where country and western dancing is practiced. It gets its name from the fact that after every segment, the dancers turn 90 degrees so they are facing a new direction to start the dance steps over. After four repetitions, the dancers have started facing all four sides (or corners) of the dance floor.

The four parts of each segment

There are four parts to each of the segments as follows:

- 1) Execute a grapvine pattern to the right with a step, a cross behind, a step, and a kick with the left foot.
- 2) Execute a grapevine pattern to the left with a step, a cross behind, a step, and a kick with the right foot. This returns you to your starting point.
- 3) Execute a three step shuffle backwards followed by a kick with the left foot.
- 4) Execute a three step shuffle forward followed by a quarter turn to the left so that you are facing a new direction to begin the dance anew.

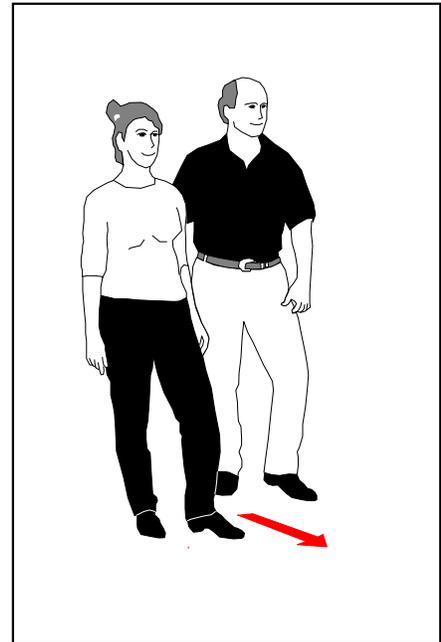
Spinning the four corners

The spinning actually begins in the fourth part of the segment. The first spin combines the fourth part and the first part so that the dancer is spinning in a straight line for six steps.

Fourth Part – first step

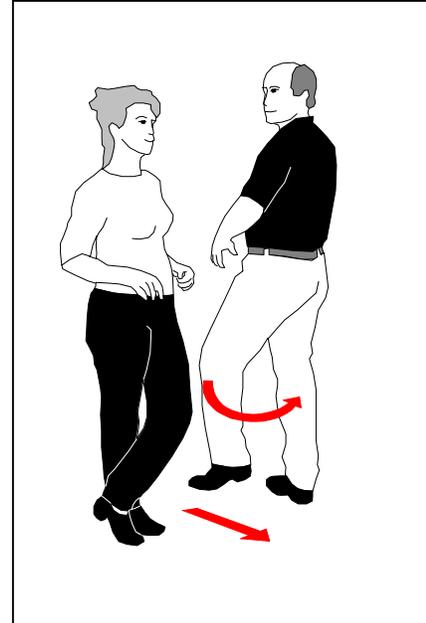
In this illustration, the lady is executing the normal Four Corners steps and the gentleman is executing the spinning version. This illustration picks up after the last kick of the third part. Both dancers take the first step of the fourth part down the line of dance with their left foot.

The gentleman has picked a spot at eye level down the line of dance.

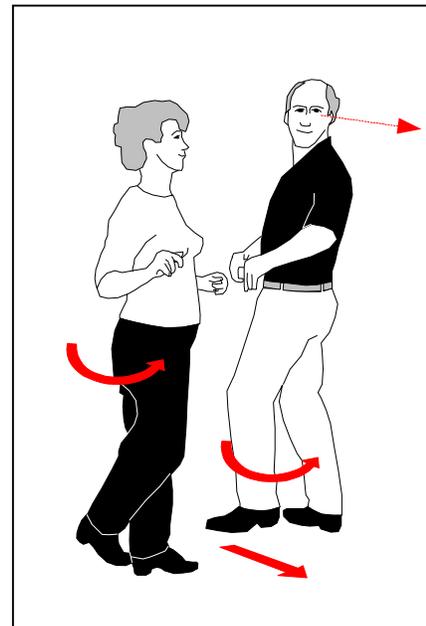
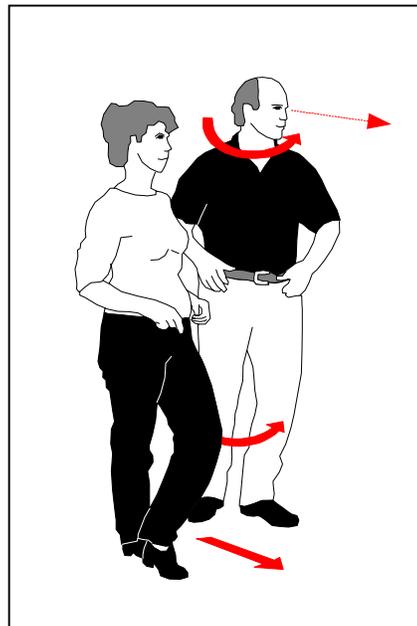


Fourth Part – second step

In the second step, the lady completes a shuffle step or lock step. The gentleman begins to spin. Because of the physical limitation of the position of the head, he snaps his head around to pick up his spot on the opposite side.



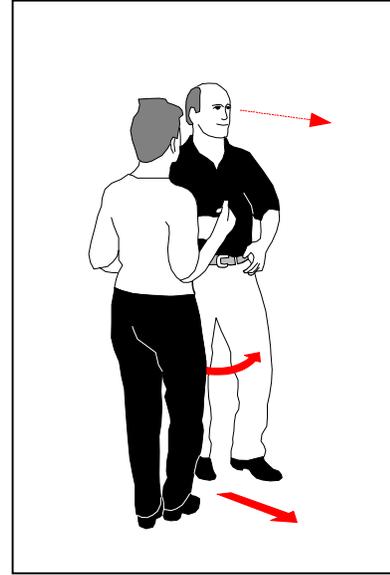
Fourth part – third and fourth steps



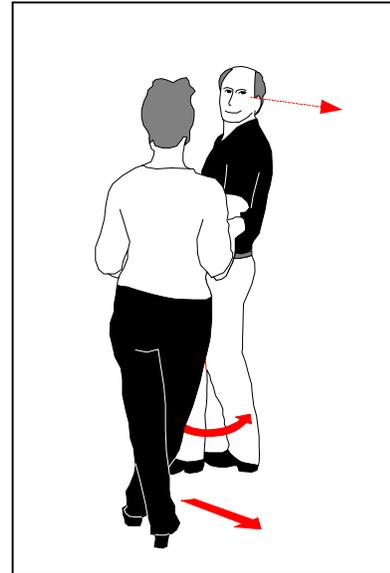
In the third and fourth steps the lady completes her lock step and turns to her left to complete the fourth part of the dance. She is now facing a new direction. The gentleman continues to spin maintaining eye contact with his chosen spot as long as possible and then snapping his head around to pick up the spot on the other side.

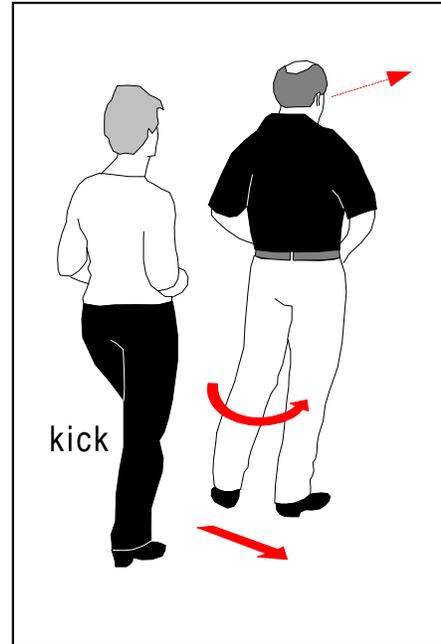
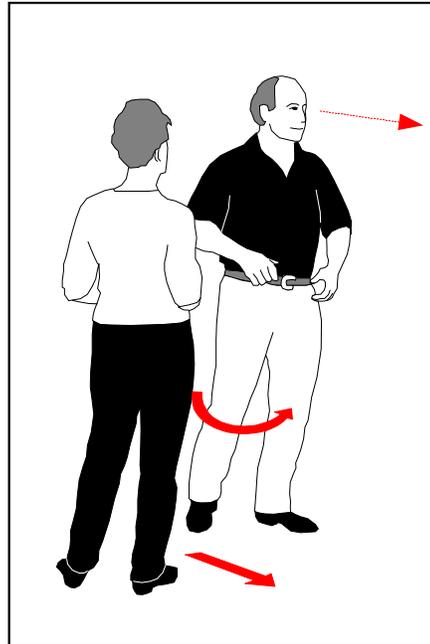
First part – first step In the first step of the first part, the lady begins her grapevine to the right by stepping to the side with her right foot.

The gentleman continues the fourth step of his spin continuing to maintain visual contact with his chosen spot.



First part – second step In the second step of the first part, the lady crosses behind with her left foot while the gentleman completes the fifth step of his spin. He continues to maintain eye contact with his spot.



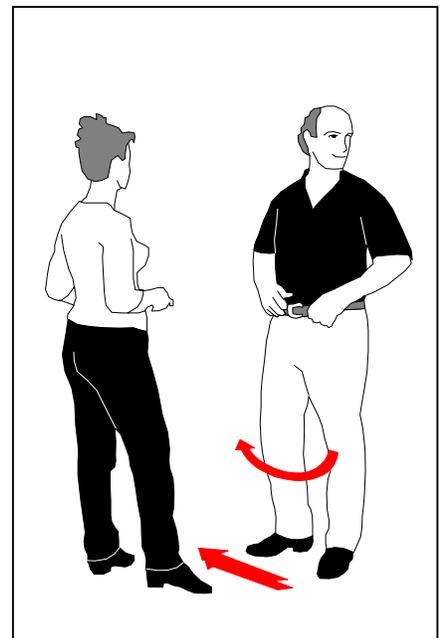


End of the first part

At the end of the first part, the lady steps to the right with her right foot and kicks with her left foot. The gentleman completes his six step spin and ends facing the same direction as the lady. He does not have time to kick but stabilizes on his right foot and chooses a new spot in the same direction the lady is looking.

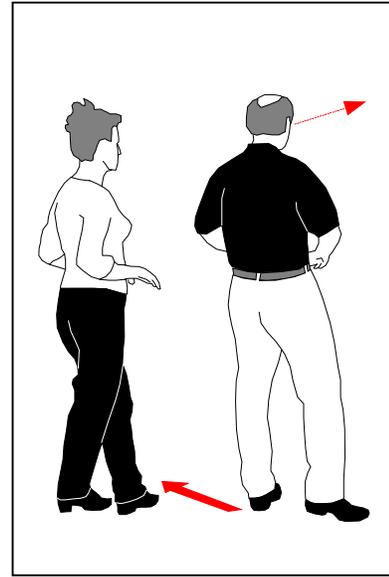
Second part – first step

In the first step of the second part, the lady steps to the left to begin her return grapevine. The gentleman begins his first spinning step in the same direction, continuing to maintain his spot as much as possible

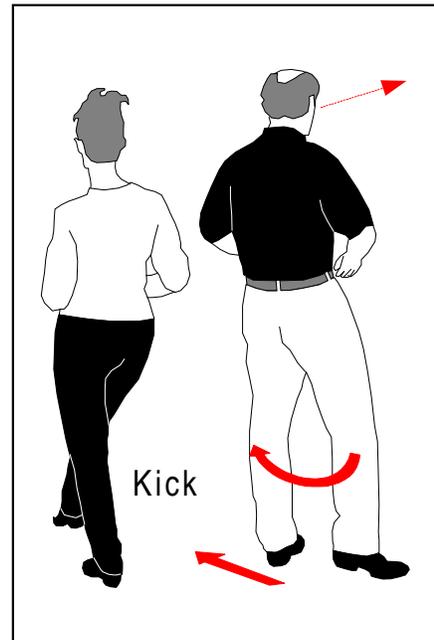
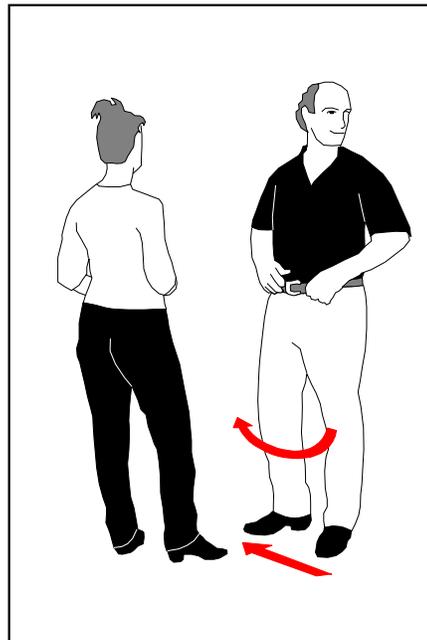


Second part – second step

In the second step of the second part, the lady crosses behind with her right foot, and the gentleman continues to turn along with her. You will notice that the spot on this return trip is sideways to the line of spin. Although this is not normal in a regular spin, it is ok here because of maintaining the facing direction of the line dance part.



Second part – third and fourth steps

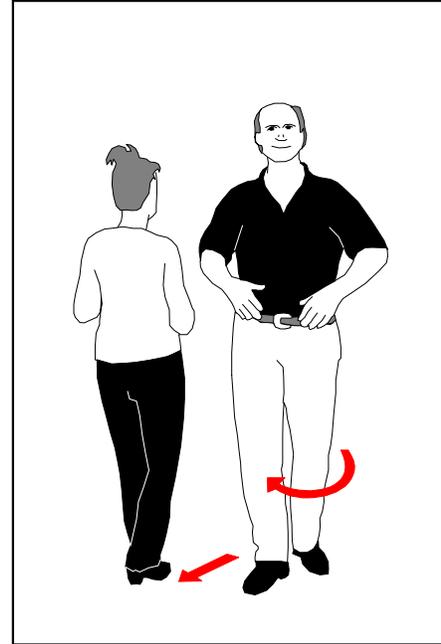


The third and fourth steps of the part, the lady steps to her left and kicks with her right foot. She is then ready to step back with her right foot to begin the third part.

The gentleman continues his four step spin and ends with his weight on his left foot as she kicks. His right foot is prepared to start the spin going backward. His vision is still locked onto the spot chosen at the beginning of the second part.

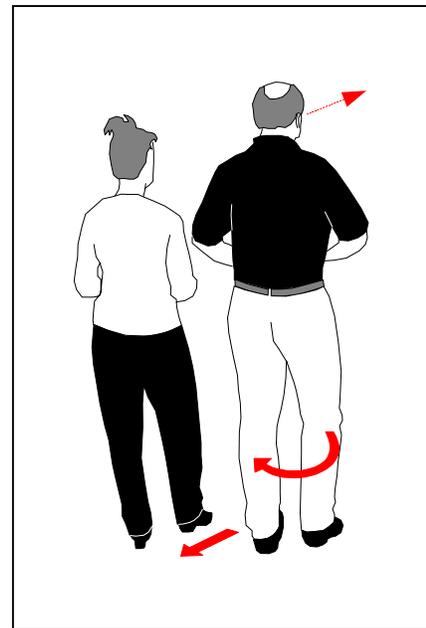
Third part, first step In the first step of the third part, the lady begins a shuffle step backwards as the gentleman begins his backward spin. He snaps his head around when he can no longer physically maintain his head position.

You will note that the gentleman's spot is actually not forward in his line of dance, but backward. This is ok. The spotting technique works from any direction.

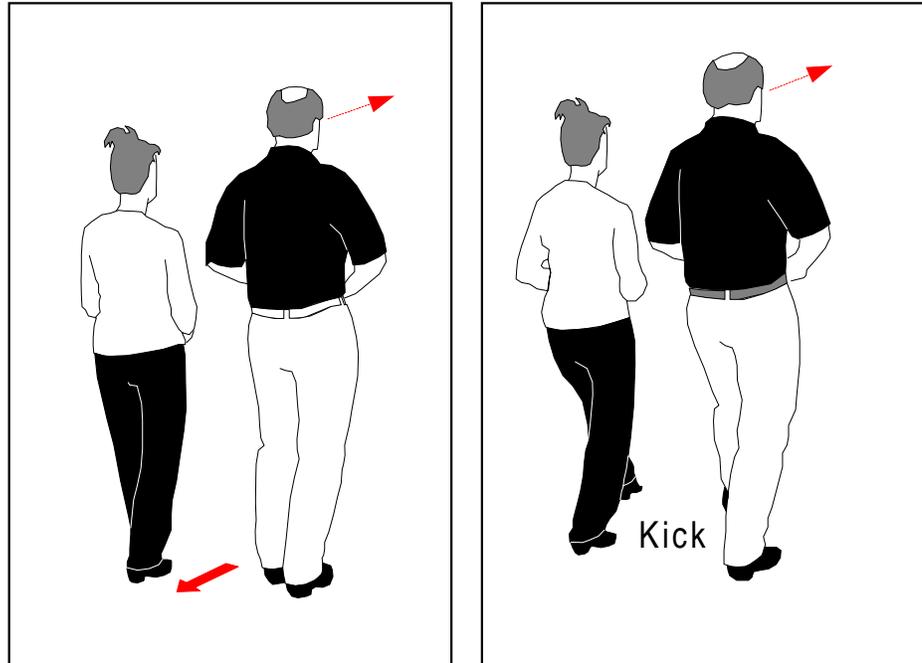


Third part, second step The lady continues her shuffle step back as the gentleman continues his spin. He locks his vision on his chosen spot whenever he physically can, allowing his body to turn beneath him as his head remains relatively stationary.

In this step, both the lady and the gentleman end with the weight on their left foot.



Third part, third and fourth steps



In the third step, both dancers step back with their right foot and in the fourth step they both kick with their left foot. This is only the end of the third part for the lady and she has one more part to complete to finish this segment and begin a new direction.

This is the end of the spinning sequence for the gentleman. He is ready to begin a new spinning sequence and the dance is repeated.

### Conclusion

Spotting will prevent you from becoming dizzy while dancing. However, it is a technique that must be practiced. The Four Corners line dance is a convenient way to practice the spotting technique and become proficient at it.

The material presented here is not all-inclusive, but only touches the high points. There are many other tips to help in your spin technique. Some of these tips will be presented in the course of other dance segments, while others may have to be taught in conjunction with an instructor present.

This concludes the segment on spotting.