

Triple-2 Step Basics**Pre-requisite**

None

(These are basic patterns)

Introduction

The triple two step goes by several names – e.g. Triple-Two, Dallas Two Step, Progressive Two Step, Tripledieux, and even incorrectly Ft. Worth Shuffle. These names describe a dance that is a combination of polka and two step, which originated in the Dallas/Ft. Worth, Texas area at least as far back as 1990.

The dance became so popular with the locals that competitors sought to have it included as approved dance steps in competitions sponsored by the United Country Western Dance Council (UCWDC). It was finally accepted, and its popularity spread across the nation. It is now danced and taught regularly in large cities including Austin, El Paso, and all around Houston (the country and western dance capitol of the world).

The basic footwork of triple-two step is a pair of triple steps (like polka) followed by a pair of walking steps (like two-step). However, unlike either polka or two-step, most of the spins and turns occur on the two walking steps, which slows the pace of the patterns. Because its pace is slower than polka, it is more versatile than either polka or two step.

Not only can you do most of the patterns with triple-two that you can do in two-step, but extremely complex two-step patterns are accomplished with ease in triple-two because they develop more slowly. High level triple-two step patterns are often taught at a beginning or intermediate level. In addition, there are easy patterns in triple-two that have no equal in any other dance. Triple-two is admired by many as an elegant, graceful dance and its popularity on the dance floor is spreading quickly.

In this segment, we are going to discuss:

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

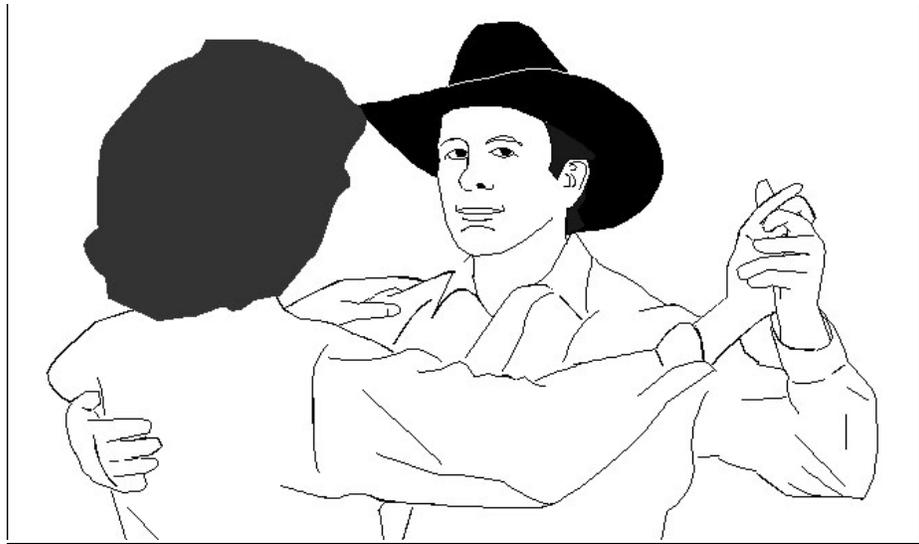
- The Music** Because it is considered a cross between two-step and polka, one might think that all music of either style would be satisfactory – not true. If danced to music of a slow two-step, triple-two would seem far too slow. And, if danced to polka music with a steady rhythm, the pace of the walking steps seem off beat. Triple-two step is best danced to either music of a fast two-step or music of a polka with a heavy beat.
- The Count** The count for triple-two begins similar to that of polka – “one-and-two, three-and-four” for the two sets of triple steps, followed by full counts of “five, six” for the two walking steps. Other acceptable counts are “triple step”, “triple step”, “walk, walk” or “shuffle step”, “shuffle step”, “walk, walk”. A fourth method of counting is “quick, quick, slow” (for the first triple), “quick, quick, slow” (for the second triple), and followed by “slow, slow”. It is important that you count out loud until you have mastered the motor coordination of the dance.
- Caveat (Warning)** A warning here is that this dance will lull you into a sense of security. You must continue to count out loud even when you feel like you do not need to. You will quickly feel comfortable with the footwork and suddenly fail to follow the triple steps with the walking steps or the opposite. When this occurs, the partners are on opposite footwork, and nothing will work except to come to a stop and start again. From experience, we have found these failings will occur long after you would think you can stop counting. Keep counting.
- 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 triple-two?** Listen to the music. The three most common country-and-western music beats are polka, two-step, and waltz. (At this point, disregard the waltz.) You can dance a triple-two step to any two-step or polka music, but some are better than others. Try counting “one-and-two, three-and-four, five, six” to the music and have the words of the phrase fall on the beats of music. If it fits comfortably into the music and sounds like you are keeping time, then you can probably dance a triple-two step to the music.

An alternative is to watch what other dancers are doing before you go out onto the floor. If they are generally dancing around a circle as triple step, triple step, and walk, walk, it is a triple-two step.

If you still cannot determine what it is, ask someone nearby. Most dancers are friendly and they will be glad to tell you. If they say triple-two you are home free. If they say two-step and the beat is relatively fast, you can dance a triple-two step to it. And, finally, if they say it is a polka and it has a heavy, throbbing beat, you can dance a triple-two step to that also.

Contact

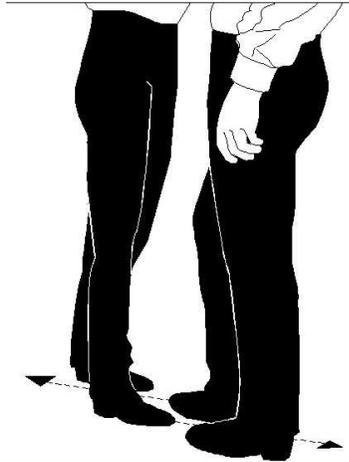
Face each other. Gentleman faces forward and lady faces backward. Be sure that you will be moving counter-clockwise around the floor.



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 chin but below her eyes. 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.

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:

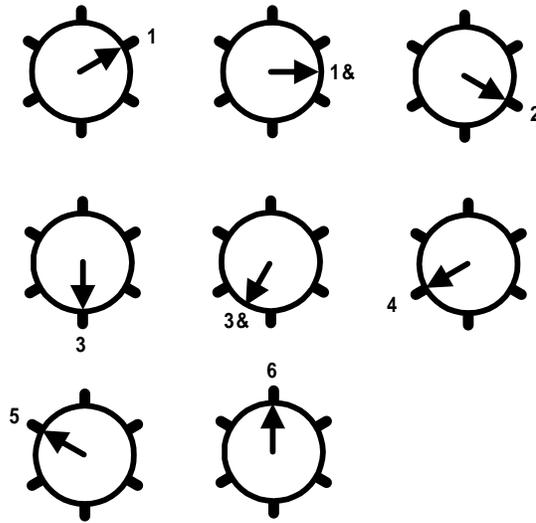
1. Ladies and gentlemen dance with opposite footwork – guys start with the left foot and ladies start with the right foot. Provided they are facing each other, as the gentleman steps forward with his left, the lady steps back with her right and there is always a place to put the foot.
2. Ladies and gentlemen 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. Ladies and gentlemen keep their feet fairly close to the floor when they step to prevent stepping on your partner if all else fails. Avoid dragging your feet – it is unsightly, it creates an irritating sound, and it will quickly wear out you shoes.

Connection and Frame

The connection and frame is created by leaning slightly in toward your partner and keeping a tension in your elbows. The gentleman should hold the clasped hands somewhere about the height of the lady's shoulders.

Try it out. If you would like to learn more of connection and frame, refer to the on-line segment entitled "connection and frame."

The dance clock



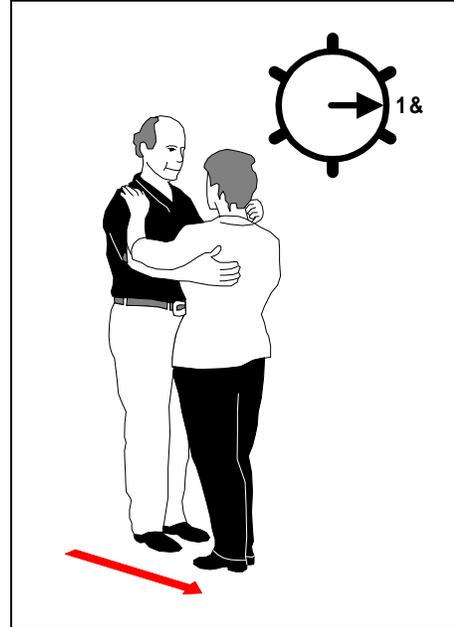
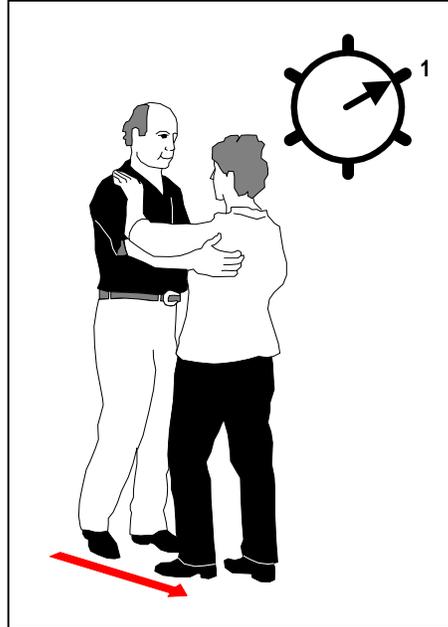
Unlike the regular clock, the triple-two step dance clock is divided into six segments to correspond to the beats of the basic music. Clocks for other dances will be different. The spaces between the markers along the outside of the clock represent full beats of music, and the arrow points to the beat representing the step being taken. When the arrow points between the markers, this represents a half beat that occurs in the quicker steps of the triple step.

Steps number 1, 1&, 2 are the first triple step set as described above (counted as “one-and-two”). Steps number 3, 3 &, 4 are the second triple step set (counted as “three-and-four”). Count numbers 5 and 6 are the walking steps.

Timing of Steps

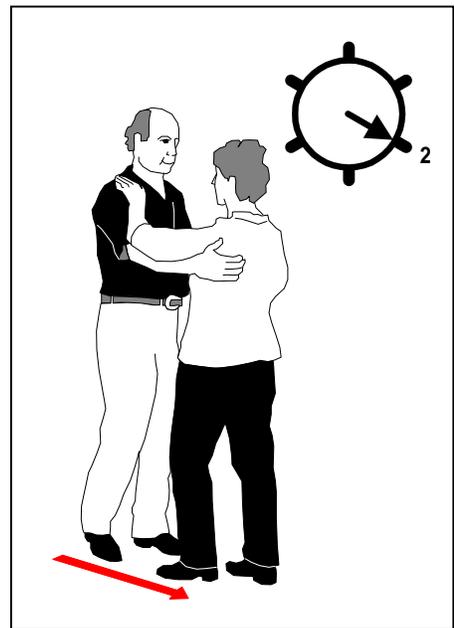
An important point to note is that the timing occurs after the step, not before it. Therefore, the timing for the first step occurs between point 1 and 1& in the diagram. The second step begins at point 1&, the third step begins at point 2, etc. The same applies for the second set of triple steps. The timing for the steps of five and six occur after the counts of five and six respectively.

**The Steps
(The First
Triple Set))**

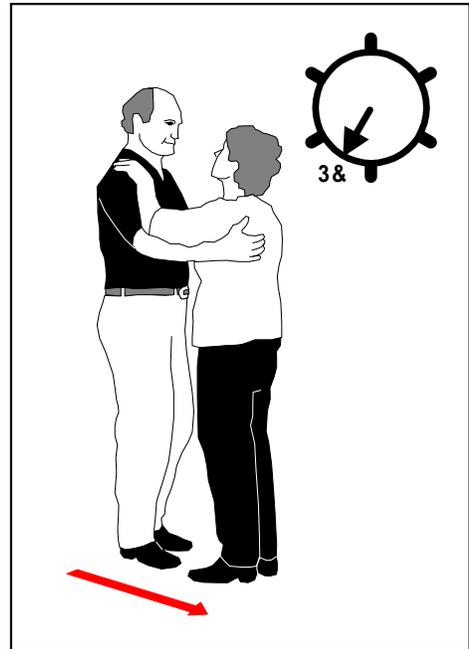
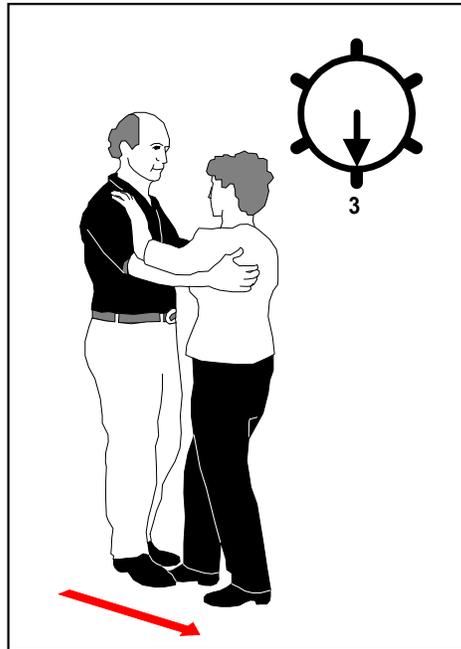


In the first triple step set, the gentleman steps forward with his left foot and the lady steps back with her right foot on count one. On the count of 1& they each bring their trailing free foot beside the other. On the count of two, the steps are identical to the count of one where the gentleman steps forward with his left foot and the lady steps back with her right.

Timing of these steps is everything. An easy way to think of it is “quick, quick, slow”.

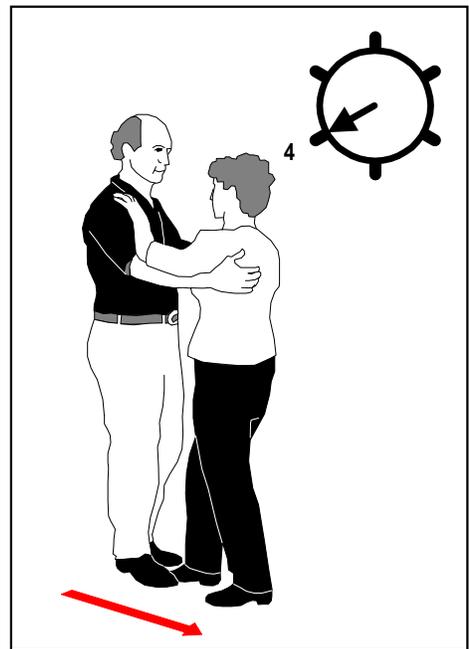


**The Steps
(The Second
Triple Set)**

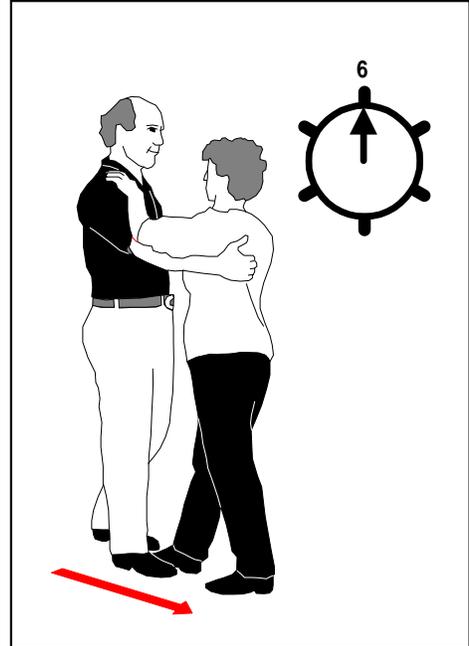
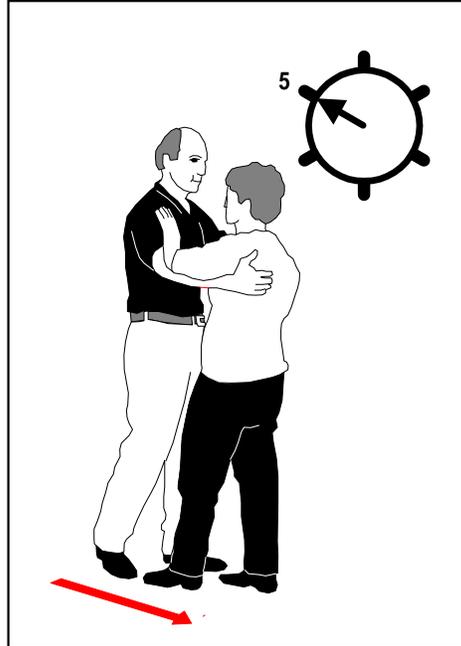


The second triple step set is a mirror image of the first set. The gentleman steps forward with his right foot and the lady steps back with her left foot on count three. On the count of 3& they each bring their trailing free foot beside the other. On the count of four, the steps are identical to the count of three where the gentleman steps forward with his right foot and the lady steps back with her left.

Again, pay particular attention to the timing as illustrated in the respective dance clocks.



Walking Steps



The two final counts are walking steps. Note that the timing is that of slow steps. The gentleman leads with his left foot on count five followed by his right foot on count six. The lady likewise follows first with her right foot on count five and her left foot on count six.

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. Dance as if no one is watching you.

Protect your Lady

As you are dancing, check often around you to be aware of the traffic and patterns that are happening nearby. Look over your partners shoulder if you are moving forward, and use side glances and peripheral vision if you are moving backwards. Do not run your lady into another dancer and do not allow them to collide with her. Take smaller steps or maneuver her into an open spot if necessary. Avoid collisions with other dancers.

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 and knock over their drink, offer to replace it, and try to be more careful.

Conclusion

The material presented here is not all-inclusive, but only touches the high points. There are many other tips to help in your triple-two step 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. Please call to join a class.

This concludes the segment on basic triple-two step.