

HOW TO FOLLOW

*Ten Exercises which Teach You the Foundation Movements in Ballroom Dancing.
These Exercises Will Develop Grace, Poise and Strength*

Early in life I showed faint signs of having a sense of rhythm, which is quite natural in children, but my mother thought I was a child wonder and exclaimed, "Ah! He is musical! We will buy him a piano and he shall have music lessons."

A few days later the piano arrived and behind it trailed the man who was to make me a seventh wonder. The piano teacher was not a novice at the game and before many lessons he gave me up as a hopeless case.

"You read music unusually well and you have a good sense of rhythm," he said, "but you will never make a good pianist. A natural gift of rhythm and a reading knowledge of music do not qualify one as a pianist. If you wish to learn to play the piano, you must develop the muscles of your fingers by constant exercise. It takes hours and hours of practice before control over the fingers is gained. Do you suppose Paderewski learned to play the piano by spending his time on the baseball field?

"You are lacking in muscular co-ordination. Your knowledge of music is all in your head; your fingers, they are dumb. I see that you are not willing to practice the exercises which I have given you and therefore cannot hold out any hope for you as a pianist."

And that little speech ended my career as a great musician.

Sometime after that I took up swimming. A kind friend showed me a number of the principal strokes and I made a good job of committing to memory the various swimming movements before I went near the water. Never did I learn my studies so well as I memorized the various underhand, overhand and other strokes in swimming. In my mind I was a perfect swimmer and I approached the water with the confidence of a professional. With absolute disgust did I look upon the people who swam in shallow water; for my own part, I chose that end of the pool where the water was at least ten feet deep.

After rehearsing in my mind the underhand stroke, I plunged into the deep water. Immediately I went to the bottom! I tried every stroke I knew, but somehow they refused to work. In the meantime I stayed at the bottom of the pool. When I realized that I had no means of reaching the surface, I cried for help, but that availed me nothing and filled my mouth full of dirty water. Thanks to one of the lifeguards, I am here to tell the tale.

I mention the incident of my failure to learn to swim and of my hopelessness as a pianist because they brought home very forcibly the fact that if we are to learn to do anything with our hands or feet, we cannot be content with simply having in our heads a knowledge of how it is to be done; we must get that knowledge down to our hands or feet by intensive training of the particular muscles which we wish to develop.

By constant practice we form a connecting line between our head and our hands or feet.

Having learned this lesson by sad experience, I am now putting it into practice in the teaching of social dancing.

Before teaching people to do the actual steps in a dance like the Fox Trot, I first give them a series of exercises. These exercises are the basis for infinite ballroom steps and may consist of movements which at first

may seem entirely foreign to the ballroom dance. The object of the exercises is to train the muscles which are used in dancing.

After the pupil has brought the required muscles under control, it is a simple matter to learn the details of the dance. In most instances the pupil is capable of following her partner immediately after learning the exercises, which, by the way, bear a close relationship to physical culture exercises.

In my experience with teaching social dancing by giving a series of exercises, I have found that many of these exercises, in addition to teaching the person to dance, also serve as aids in developing the figure to the ideal form. That these exercises also make one graceful goes without saying.

Let us now consider some of these exercises in relation to those dancing steps for which they constitute the logical preparation, and for which they develop the co-ordination and technique necessary if one would do these dances well.

NO. 1

In following (see photos 1-A and 1-B) it is essential for the girl to dance so that her feet will always be out of reach of her partner's and at the same time she must dance with ease and without pulling away from him. The secret of knowing how to live through a dance and come out of the struggle with shoes untouched is to know how to walk.

For the lady there are two ways of dancing backwards: the ordinary way is to simply walk backwards, but the good dancer does more than that; when she places her foot in back, she does it in such a way that it looks pretty and it will not be stepped upon.

Place the feet in what is called the First Position in dancing; the heels together and toes turned out. Move the right foot as far backward as it will go and at the same time stretch the toes well back so that only the front tip of the foot touches the floor. There should be a straight line from the hip to the big toe. Now, bring the foot back to first position. Repeat the same exercise with the other foot.

This may be done to one-step music.

In this series of pictures are given specific exercises to develop the muscle-control and co-ordination needed for certain ballroom steps. In each case the exercise is identified with a companion photograph showing the particular step referred to. Photos 1-A and 1-B illustrate the correct method of walking backward, as described in the text, so that the foot will look pretty and will not be stepped upon. The photographs were posed by Miss Mary Faith Yow, one of the best dancers of the South, and Mr. Murray.



No. 2

Photos 2-A and 2-B. This exercise is intended to correct the position of the head so as to avoid a slovenly appearance while dancing. If you hold the head upward and backward while practicing this exercise, you will be assured of good position on the floor.



So often people who are really good dancers make a bad appearance on the ballroom floor that I am tempted to give them an exercise which will remedy the cause of looking slovenly while dancing. It is largely a matter of the position of the head.

The exercise in photo 2-A looks easy, but it's not. Try and do it. Ten attempts will make you feel as though you've done a hard day's work and you will perspire more freely than after running a mile in a hot July sun. But you will be a better dancer for it. This exercise will make you hold your head up high, (see photo 2-B), and it will have the effect of strengthening your shoulder muscles as well as the muscles of your chest. The photograph of the couple shows the correct position of the hands and arms.

Begin each exercise by standing erect, with hands at sides and heels together. Then assume the position as shown in the illustration.

NO. 3

"I could do the steps if I only knew what my partner would do next. How can I know?" I have been asked this question almost a million times and always I think of the time I asked a doctor to cure my cold. He replied that if he knew how he would surely cure his own. So it is with a man's dancing; he himself often does not know what step he will do next and, of course, the long-suffering partner must follow. The poor girl who has no choice in the matter can do but one thing; she must train her feet to always be ready for whatever steps the man takes a notion to do.

A knack of stepping backward quickly, and always having the feet slightly off the floor, are two of the best ways of being prepared for your partner. The exercise shown in Photo 3-A has been designed with these special points in view. That it is also of help in various ballroom steps, is incidental. The exercise needs no further description than a glance at the photograph. Just remember to kick backward very quickly. This exercise should be done first with one foot and then with the other. Fox Trot music is best if you would have that luxury. Begin with heels together. Kick the right foot up at the back; then bring the heels together.



Photos 3-A and 3-B. The fair dancer should train her feet to be ready for whatever steps the partner takes a notion to do. This quick backward kick is the best training to prepare one to get her feet out of the way in a step like this.

Here is an exercise upon which most of our steps are based. It also furnishes the groundwork for the Two-step and many popular variations, and is the best exercise to use in training the toes to turn outwardly. Place your feet in a position similar to Miss Yow's, in Photo 4-A. Step backward with the right foot, then draw the left foot up to the right. Step back again with the right and draw the left up again. Repeat this movement around the room, bearing in mind that the toes must be well turned out.

This same exercise may be practiced with the left foot leading. Simply step backward with the left foot and draw up the right foot in front of the left. Notice that in stepping backward the girl uses only the tips of her toes. How much better looking is her foot than if she had put down the whole foot or even the ball of her foot! Photo 4-B shows how it works out in dancing.

The fox trot music is most suitable and the steps are done very quickly.



Photos 4-A and 4-B. This exercise furnishes the ground-work for the two-step and many popular variations, and for training the toes to turn out. A detailed description is given in the text.



Photos 5-A and 5-B. An exercise for acquiring the side-step, which is the second step in a waltz measure. This is, to many people, a stumbling block.



NO. 5

The test of a good dancer is the ability to do the side steps. One may often dance well when taking a forward or backward step, but the side movement frequently acts as a stumbling block. It is because of the difficulty of doing the side movements that so many people naturally fall into the habit of doing the two-step, when supposedly they are waltzing. That the second step in each waltz measure is a side step proves the importance of this movement in social dancing. See Photo 5-B.

The best way of learning this most difficult of steps is by simply extending one foot to the side and raising it as high as possible, as in Photo 5-A. To gain a good sense of equilibrium, keep the body erect and raise the hand opposite. Practice this exercise using one foot ten times, then give the other foot a chance. Use either waltz or fox trot music.

NO. 6

Photos 6-A and 6-B. This exercise will prepare you for those steps in which the bending of the knee is the characteristic feature. Bend as far down as possible, and thereby gain the strength and control which will enable you to do these steps gracefully.



If you like steps which are more or less extreme, or if your partners are men who do not mind bending the wicked knee, this exercise will come in handy.

To start with, stand up straight and in a natural position. Take a long forward step with your right foot and throw the weight on that foot; at the same time bend the right knee, as in Photo 6-A. Keeping the body erect, bend as far down as possible. Then, rise and resume your natural standing position. Without moving out of place, face about and step forward with the left foot, placing the weight on that foot. Notice that while one foot is bent, the other remains perfectly

straight. Also note that the toes are well turned out.

In practicing this exercise to music, allow three beats of the waltz for this downward movement and the three beats to rise into place again.

Photo 7. Should one dance on the heels, balls of the feet, or the toes? The answer is, the tips of the toes only. The toes of the two partners should be placed exactly opposite each other, not sandwiched between.



NO. 7

Perhaps the most common question in dancing is: "Shall I dance on my heels, the balls of my feet, or shall I dance on my toes?"

There is but one answer. Dance on the tips of your toes only! Dancing on the toes not only makes one lighter but it makes one look a hundred per cent better. Another question asked frequently, is: "How shall I place my feet?" Should they be placed to the side of my partner's or in between one another?" Both ways are wrong. The man's feet should be placed directly in front of the lady's and when the girl walks backward, the man must follow in her footsteps. (See Photo No. 7.) When the man goes backward, the lady should not be afraid of stepping on her partner's feet, but she should step directly toward him.

NO 8

Why is it that the champion walker finds a snag tries walking forward, or rather toward her partn has walked forward, while the man danced backward, ing toward her partner gives one a most uncomforta

It is because walking on the street and walk ner bring into play different muscles. In dancing, only goes forward but she is called upon to raise front, a mean trick on the man's part to make it ne it calls for uncommon ability and grace.

A little practice doing the exercise shown in Photo 8-A will go a long way in teach- ing one to follow in forward movements, as shown in Photo 8-B. Without bending the body forward, raise the foot in front until it is parallel with the floor. Keep in mind that the toes must turn downward and not upward. To develop your dancing poise, hold your foot up in front for five seconds, then lower it slowly. Do it without music.

NO. 9

At the same time that we practice the exercises of the feet, it is well to give the arms and hands some work to do, for not only will the arms and hands become more grace- ful, but the exercise will strengthen them. This last is most essential if you would be a light dancer. Too often a girl seems "heavy" simply because the upper part of her arms are weak and their weight rests upon the man's arms. The man has his own hands to hold up; any addi- tional weight may make dancing a bore rather than a delight.

The exercise shown in Photo 9-A, be- sides being useful in following, has a direct bearing on the Kick-up Step in the College Rock, as shown in Photo 9-B. Lift the right foot at the back, raising it as high as possible. At the same time bring the left hand up in front and the right hand behind. Hold this pose for a full second, then slowly lower the hands and feet to the original position. Always let the wrists lead when moving the arms and hands.

Repeat this exercise by raising the left foot and right hand. The waltz music is best for practicing this exercise.

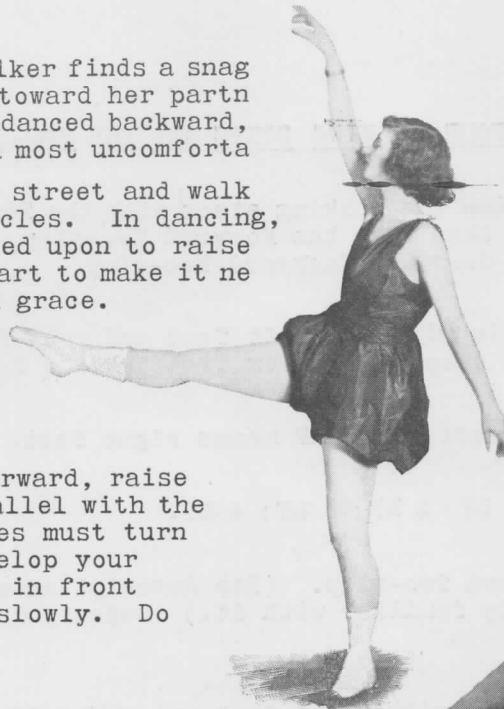
No. 10

Another good exercise, one used in teaching ballet dancing, is to raise the foot in front, and while it is up high, carry it sideways and then to the back, holding it up high at the back before lowering.

the moment she er? Any girl who knows that go- ble feeling.

ing with a part- the girl not her foot in cessary, because

Photos 8-A and 8-B. One of the greatest difficulties a girl experiences, is in walk- ing toward her partner, being compelled to raise her foot in front. This exercise, de- scribed in the text, will give her the control and snap de- sired.



Photos 9-A and 9-B. This exercise is impor- tant if one would be a light dancer. She should not expect her partner to carry her. The kick-up step shown, is used in the College Rock. The exer- cise is carefully described in the text.

FOUR WALKING STEPS AND THE TWO-STEP.

We will now combine the walking steps with the Two-step. The man will walk forward 4 steps then take the Forward Two-step, while the lady walks backward 4 steps and does the Backward Two-step.

Man's part: Begin with the left foot and walk forward four long slow steps. Each walking step in the Fox Trot takes a full second.

Note: LF means left foot; RF means right foot.

Walk forward: 1 LF; 2 RF; 3 LF; 4 RF.

Then do the Forward Two-step. (See description of the Forward Two-step if you are not already familiar with it.) Repeat, beginning with walking steps.

Lady's Part: Begin with right foot and walk backward four long slow steps. Each walking step takes a full second.

Note: LF means Left foot; RF means Right foot.

Walk backward: 1 RF; 2 LF; 3 RF; 4 LF.

Then do the Backward Two-step beginning with right foot. (See description of the Backward Two-step if not already familiar with it.)

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To repeat the FOUR WALKING STEPS AND THE TWO-STEP, the man begins with the left foot and the lady begins with the right foot. At least an hour should be spent practicing this step.

The Two-step is made up of three steps; slide, draw, slide. For convenience, we count it 1, 2, 3. Some teachers count a Two-step as 1 - AND-2. Either way is correct. The word "and" is often confusing, therefore, we will continue to count a Two-step as 1, 2, 3.

Remember that there is a slight pause after you have taken the third step in the Two-step; also after the sixth step.

Caution: Do not go any further until you are positive that you are thoroughly familiar with all the information in the foregoing lessons. Begin at the first page and read carefully all information to be sure that you have not missed anything.