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how to  
*merengue*

Revised Edition

by  
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HOW TO MAMBO

HOW TO CHA-CHA



Authentic  
body movement  
26 easy-to-follow  
diagrams and explanations

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## MERENGUE

The Merengue, our newest popular ballroom dance, was originally a folk dance on the island of Santo Domingo (The Dominican Republic and Haiti), where it was gradually developed into a social dance by the urban population.

Recently, these countries have been enjoying a large tourist trade from the United States. These tourists saw, liked, and learned the dance and brought it back to this country. As a result, the Merengue has gained sufficient popularity in the United States to challenge the status of the Mambo. At any rate, the exciting music and the fluid nature of the dance movement make it a welcome addition to our social dance repertoire.

### *General Rules for Dancing*

1. Dance counter clockwise around the room. This progression is known as your line of direction (L.O.D.).
2. A man starts with the left foot, whereas a woman starts with the right foot.

### *How to Use This Booklet*

1. Study the word description and appropriate diagram of each step.
2. Practice each step slowly, then try it to music.
3. Note that step patterns are usually done in eight counts, or any other multiple of four.

### *Music for the Merengue*

Merengue music is played in two-four time with a slightly stronger accent on the first beat. All steps are equal in value and a step is taken on each of the evenly timed beats.

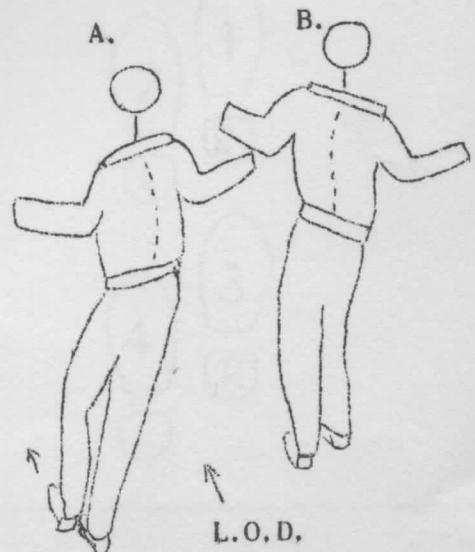
### *Merengue Body Movement*

General Description: The Merengue is danced flat-footed fashion. Each (leading) step is characterized by a bent knee and a swaying of the shoulders. Visualize walking up a flight of stairs while swaying your shoulders, and you will get a mental picture of the movement. For practice, walk up a flight of stairs. Try it! Apply this movement to the exercises given below.

### *Practice in place:*

- A. When left foot moves  
Left knee bends,  
Left shoulder dips  
(toward left knee)
- B. When right foot moves  
Right knee bends,  
Right shoulder dips  
(toward right knee)

NOTE: There is a slight variation in style between the Dominican and the Haitian Merengue. In the Dominican, only the leading foot gets the bent knee and the dip of the shoulder. The Haitian is detailed above. However, the step patterns are essentially similar.



# LESSON ONE - Basic Walking Step

Read page one. Study the description and diagram explaining the Merengue movement. This is essential in executing the step patterns outlined in this book. You will find that actually walking up some stairs in a relaxed manner will result in a swaying of the shoulders which is typical of the Merengue. When you have mastered this movement, you are ready to take your first steps forward.

The basic walk consists of a series of short steps which are done moving the feet flat on the floor. The Merengue movement must be maintained while walking forward.

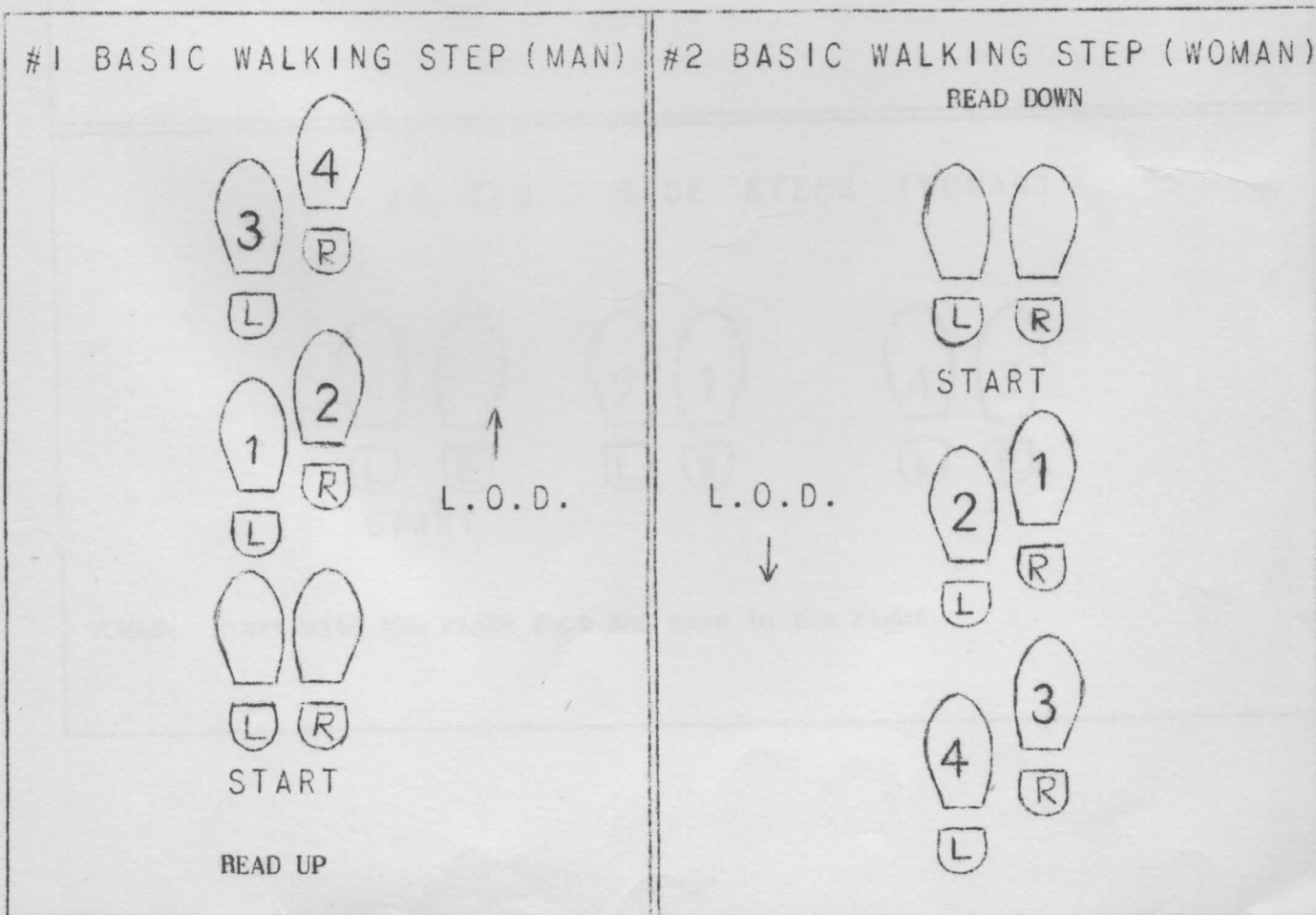
Start with feet together.

Man: Stiffen the right leg and keep left leg relaxed and the left knee bent. You are now ready to take your first step forward (Diagram 1).

1. Step slightly forward with the left foot.
  2. Step slightly forward with the right foot.
- Repeat for a total of 8 counts.

Practice without music and move in a counterclockwise fashion around the room. When you feel confident that you have mastered the basic movement, dance to music.

Woman: Stiffen the left leg and keep the right leg relaxed and the right knee bent. From this position the woman starts moving backward on the right foot (Diagram 2).



## LESSON TWO - Basic Side Steps

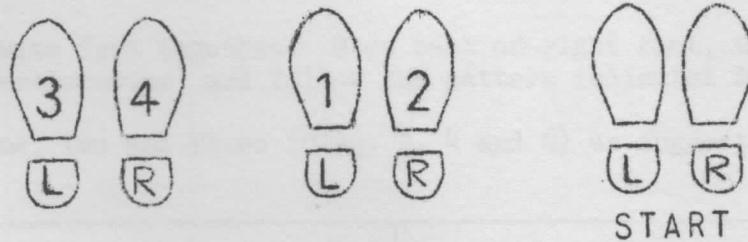
Start with feet together. Basic side steps are taken to the side instead of forward. Man starts with left foot (Diagram 3).

- Man:
1. Step to left side with left foot.
  2. Bring right foot against left and transfer weight to the right.
- Repeat for a total of 8 counts.

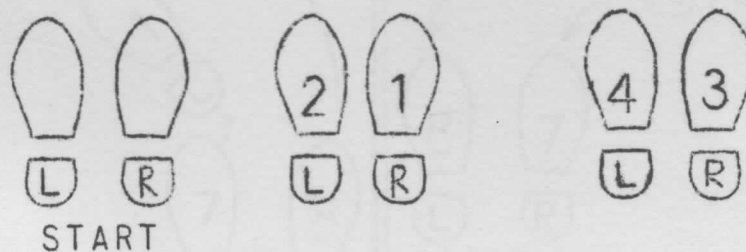
Man and woman: Practice side steps. When you are ready, combine walking steps with side steps. Each figure is generally done for 8 counts.

Practice to music. Follow L.O.D. The Merengue body movement must be maintained!

### #3 BASIC SIDE STEPS (MAN)



### #4 BASIC SIDE STEPS (WOMAN)



WOMAN: Start with the right foot and move to the right.



## LESSON THREE - *Left Turn*

Start with feet together (Diagram 5).

- Man:
1. Step forward on left foot, turning left.\*
  2. Step forward on right foot and continue to turn left.
- Repeat for a total of 8 counts.

\*Note: Left foot describes a small circle whereas the right foot moves in a wider arc around the left foot.

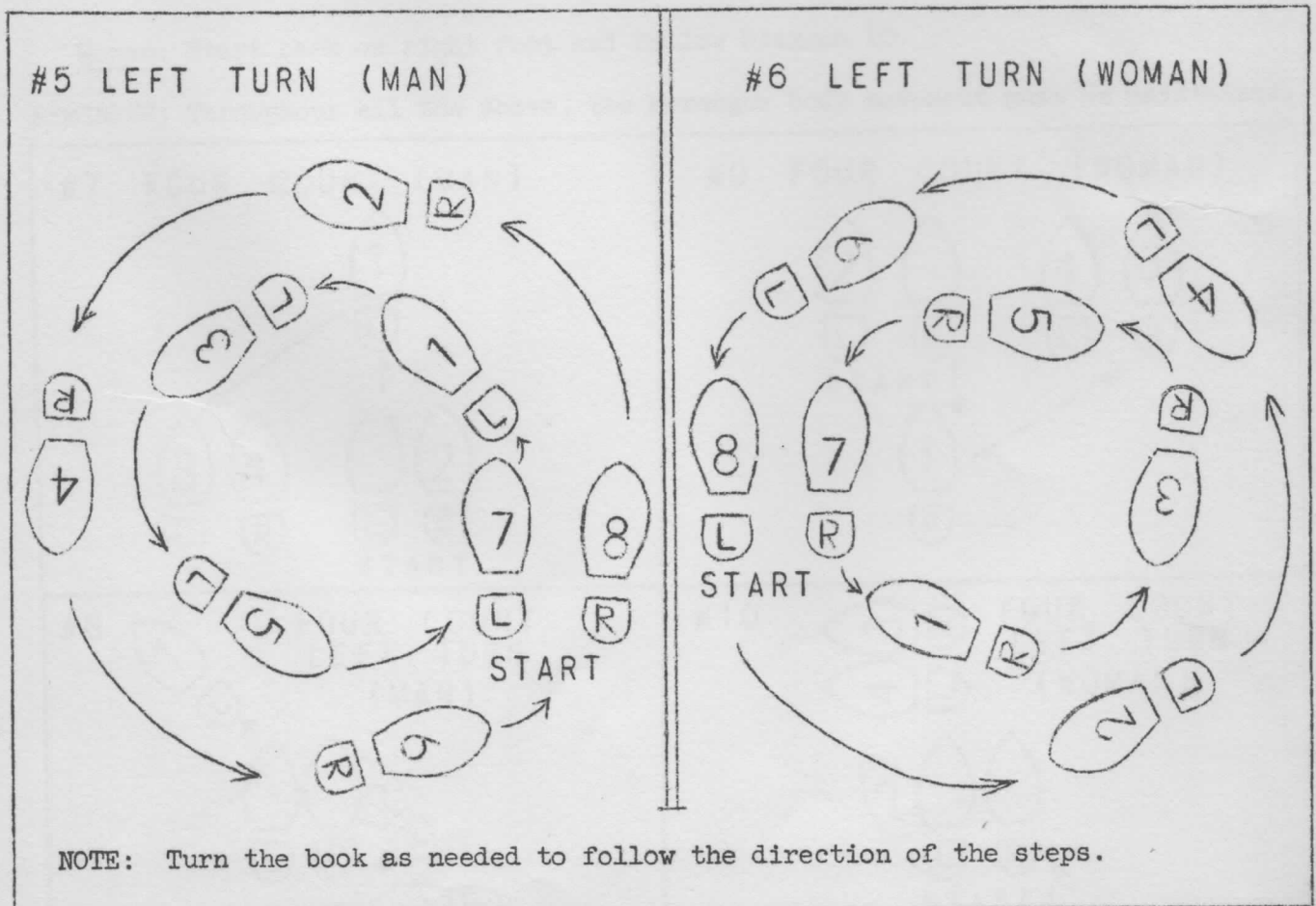
These steps are small, flat-footed, and done with the Merengue body movement. Practice going into a left turn from the side steps. Try the left turn from a basic walking step. Finally combine in one figure Lessons One, Two and Three (Diag. 1, 3, 5).

Note: A right turn may be accomplished by merely walking clockwise in a circle.

Practice to music.

Woman: Start with feet together. Step back on right foot, turning left (counterclockwise) and follow the pattern indicated in Diagram 6.

Combine Lessons One, Two and Three (Diag. 2, 4 and 6) as suggested above.



## LESSON FOUR - *Four Count Steps*

### A. FOUR COUNT

Start with feet together (Diagram 7).

- Man:
1. Step forward on left foot.
  2. Step back on right foot (in place).
  3. Place left foot a few inches to the left side of the right foot.
  4. Bring right foot up to the left and change weight to the right (leaving the left foot free to move).

Woman: Starts stepping backward on the right foot. Follow Diagram 9.

Practice a four count step starting from a basic walking step and a side step.

### B. FOUR COUNT LEFT TURN

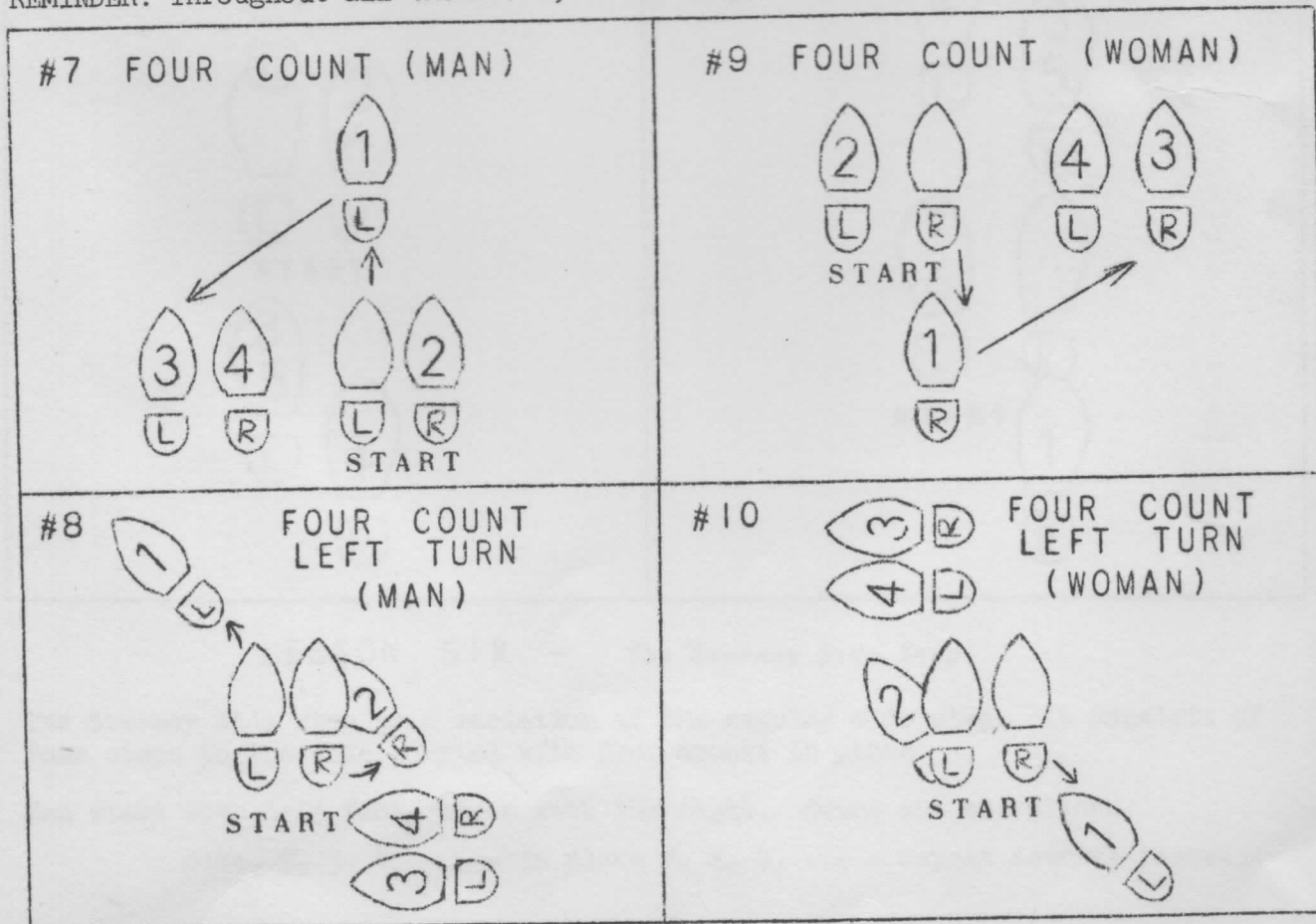
Start with feet together (Diagram 8).

- Man:
1. Step forward on left foot, turning left.\*
  2. Step back on right foot, continuing to turn left.
  3. Place left foot (about 10 inches) to the left side of the right foot.
  4. Bring right foot up to the left and change weight.

\*Note: To assist you in turning left, look over left shoulder.

Woman: Start back on right foot and follow Diagram 10.

REMINDER: Throughout all the above, the Merengue body movement must be maintained.



## LESSON FIVE - *Six Count Steps*

### A. SIX COUNT

Start with feet together (Diagram 11).

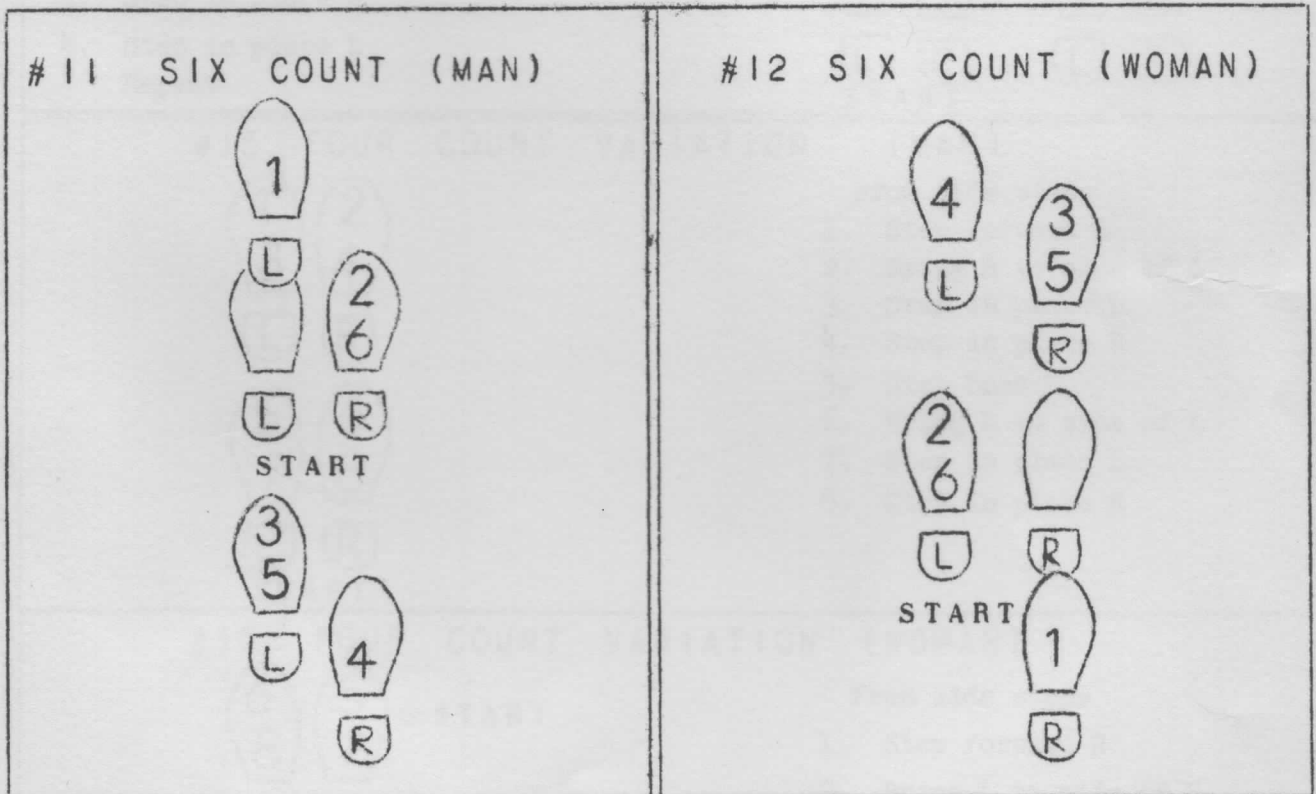
- Man:
1. Step forward on the left foot.
  2. " in place with right foot.
  3. " back on left foot.
  4. " back on right foot.
  5. " in place on left foot.
  6. " forward on right foot.

Woman: Start back on right foot and follow Diagram 12.

### B. SIX COUNT LEFT TURN

The six count left turn follows the same foot pattern as the six count, but you turn slightly left on EACH step. Practice a six count step, then go into the six count left turn.

Do the step twice to bring you back to L.O.D.



## LESSON SIX - *The Sterney Side Step*

The Sterney side step is a variation of the regular side step. It consists of four steps to the side coupled with four counts in place.

Men start with left foot, women with the right. Count out as follows:

Side, 2, 3, 4, - - - in place 2, 3, 4, - - - repeat several times.



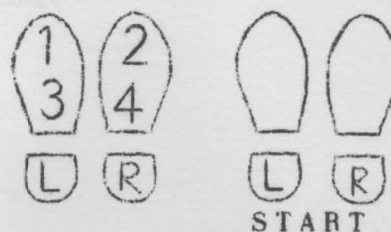
# MERENGUE

## PART II

Part One details fundamental movements which are inherent in the authentic Merengue. Recently, however, many embellishments have been added. For your dancing pleasure some of the more interesting figures which still maintain the flavor of the Merengue are diagrammed and explained.

### #13 SIDE STEP VARIATION (MAN)

1. Side step L
  2. Bring R to side of L
  3. Step in place L
  4. Step in place R
- Repeat

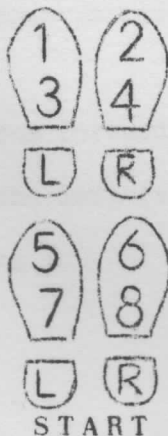


### #14 SIDE STEP VARIATION (WOMAN)

1. Side step R
  2. Bring L to side of R
  3. Step in place R
  4. Step in place L
- Repeat



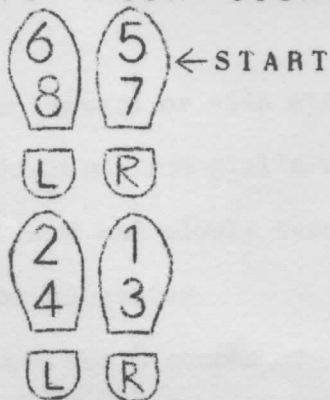
### #15 FOUR COUNT VARIATION (MAN)



From side steps

1. Step forward L
2. Bring R to side of L
3. Step in place L
4. Step in place R
5. Step back L
6. Bring R to side of L
7. Step in place L
8. Step in place R

### #16 FOUR COUNT VARIATION (WOMAN)

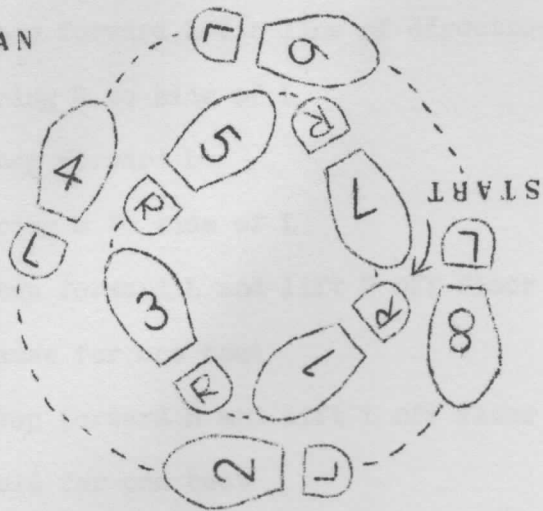


From side steps

1. Step forward R
2. Bring L to side of R
3. Step in place R
4. Step in place L
5. Step forward R
6. Bring L to side of R
7. Step in place R
8. Step in place L

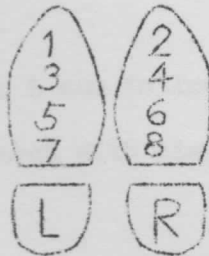
## #17 ARCH STEP

WOMAN



WOMAN: (from forward or side steps)  
Walk under raised right arm and circle to the right (clockwise) for 8 counts.

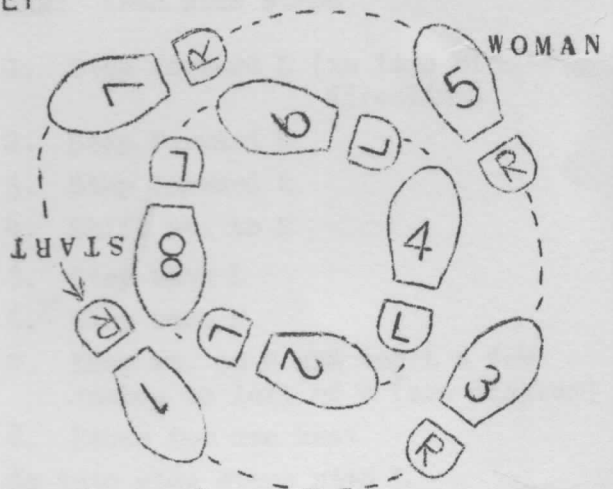
MAN



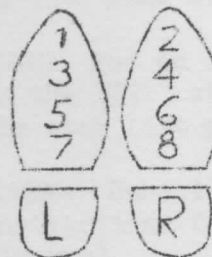
MAN: (from forward or side steps)  
Remove right hand from girl's waist  
Raise left hand  
Step in place for 8 counts

## #18 LOOP STEP

WOMAN: (from forward or side steps)  
Circle to the left (counter-clockwise)  
for 8 counts



MAN: (from forward or side steps)  
Remove right hand from girl's waist  
Raise left hand and slowly turn the girl counter-clockwise  
Step in place for 8 counts



MAN

## STEP LIFT

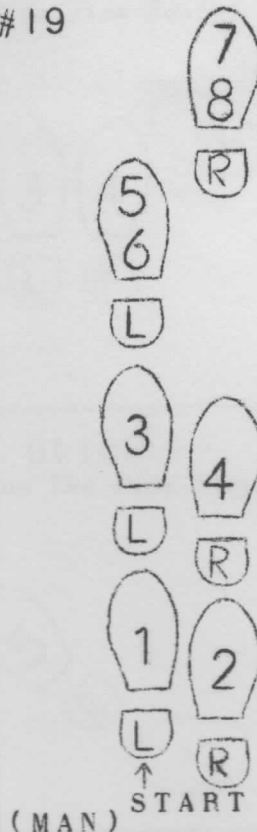
MAN: from side steps

1. Step forward L (in line of direction)
2. Bring R to side of L
3. Step forward L
4. Bring R to side of L
5. Step forward L and lift R off floor
6. Pause for one beat
7. Step forward R and lift L off floor
8. Hold for one beat

Go into side step basic.

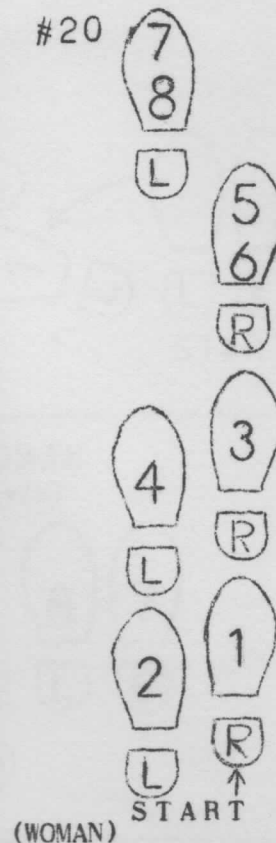
WOMAN: Substitute R for L and follow instructions for man (check with diagram)

#19



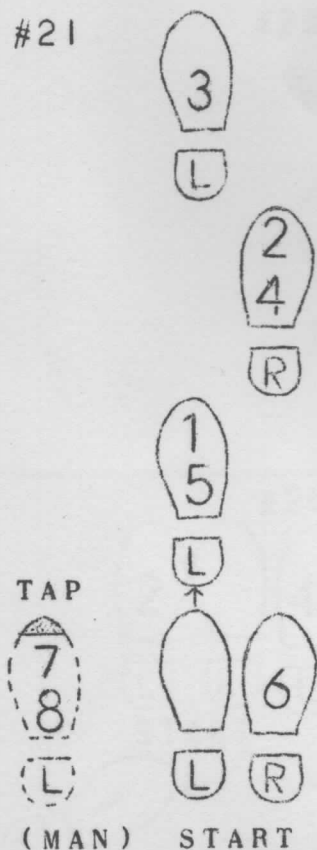
(MAN)

#20



(WOMAN)

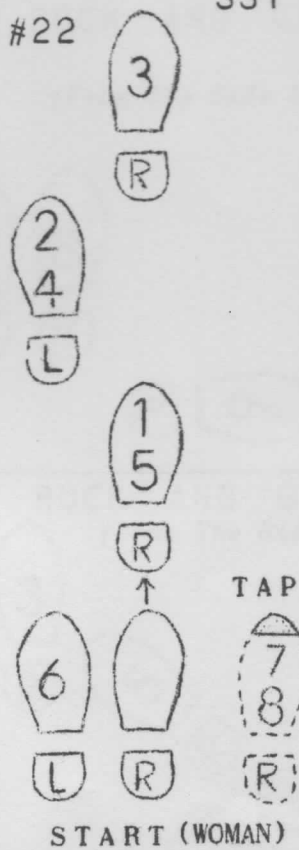
#21



(MAN)

START

#22



START (WOMAN)

## " 331 " STEP

MAN: from side steps

1. Step forward L (in line of direction)
2. Step forward R
3. Step forward L
4. Shift wt. to R
5. Step back L
6. Step back R
7. Keep wt. on R and tap L a few inches to left of R (see diagram)
8. Pause for one beat

Go into side steps with L

NOTE: For an interesting combination do the "331" step and go directly into the step lift pattern.

WOMEN: Substitute R for L and follow instructions for man (check with diagram)

