**TECHNIQUE WORKSHOP – ROCK’N’ROLL**

**POISE**

* Dancing is a language without words, good poise is crucial to communicating with your partner.
* You have to train your body to get your posture right – think about it every time you start to dance.
* Get your blocks in a straight line – your head, shoulders and hips in line with your feet.
* Stand with your weight over the front of your feet but your heels still in contact with the floor.
* Knees are soft – not locked and not completely flexed.
* Lift and support your ribcage, remembering to breathe through your diaphragm.
* Relax your shoulders so they are back and down.
* Poise will vary depending on the figures being danced but try and follow the principles.

**ARMS & HANDS – LEAD & FOLLOW - GENERAL POINTS**

* Your arms and hands should have tone – just a slight resistance - to connect to your partner.
* Feel that your hips are pushing into the balls of your feet as you step, that your core connects with your arms and hands and through into your partner.
* Never interlink your fingers with your partner – it can be dangerous on turns and if you slip.
* In Latin-American dances, Leaders use both their left and right hands/arms to indicate a lead.
* Don’t beat time with your arms and hands – you need to use them for Lead & Follow – it’s like constantly mumbling and then expecting someone to pay attention!
* Ensure the lead is given at the appropriate time.
* Leading is about indicating to the Follower what’s happening next – the Follower is under their own steam so light leads are best – but be adaptable in case the signals are misinterpreted.
* Leader’s need to be aware of where their Follower’s weight is, as well as their own, before leading into moves.

**CLOSE HOLD**

* In close hold make sure that you are about 15cm apart and positioned very slightly to your partner’s right side so your feet and bodies are offset – this facilitates moving together.
* Don’t raise your shoulders when you move into close hold.
* Make sure you connect with each other through your joined palms – just slight resistance – and close the fingers around your partner’s hand but don’t squeeze or grip!
* Make sure your joined hands are on an invisible line central to both of you – it helps your balance – and that the joined hands are at Follower’s chest/shoulder height.
* The Leader’s left wrist is straight and the Follower’s right slightly bent to receive the lead.
* The Leader’s right hand is on or just below the Follower’s left shoulder blade so the lead can be felt – don’t dig and don’t make “banana” hands on your partner’s back – group fingers neatly.
* The Leader’s right hand/fingers shouldn’t cross the spine of the Follower – it’s uncomfortable for the Follower.
* Leaders’ elbows should be level for better balance.
* Followers shouldn’t grab at Leaders with their left hand or form a “claw” on the shoulder – just group fingers neatly on top of the Leader’s shoulder – you connect better and it looks good.
* Followers mustn’t rest their arms on the Leader – they are not a coat hanger and arms are heavy.
* Allow close hold to flex as you move into different positions.

**OTHER HANDHOLDS – FREE ARMS**

* If in open position, offering 1 or 2 hands, Leaders offer their hands palm up and Followers palm down.
* Use a fingertip hold – don’t grip tightly – your hands should make a shallow crescent shape.
* Allow hands to rotate around each other - keep the hands open and keep your thumbs out of the way!
* Free arms never dangle – typically they are to the side retracted, i.e. with the elbow slightly flexed.
* The hands of free arms usually face down to the floor or away from the body if a high armline.

**TIMING – MUSIC**

* Count 4 beats to a bar i.e. 1234 - the tempo (or speed) is anywhere between 36-50 bars per minute!
* The musical accent or down beat is on beats 1 and 3, but there are percussive accents (e.g. a snare drum) on beats 2 and 4.
* For most figures we dance using the rhythm of the single step basic which is suited to mid or fast tempo rock’n’roll.
* For most figures we dance using the same rhythm (the rhythm of the single step basic): the rhythmic building block is Slow Slow Quick Quick (quick = 1 beat and slow = 2 beats).
* To start dancing, move into a side rock on beat 1.

**MOVEMENT & FOOTWORK**

* Control is the essence - don’t slap your feet into place.
* The footwork throughout is Ball Flat, i.e. first the ball of the foot and then the heel lowers.
* Use your upper body in the side rocks and emphasise the feeling of pushing down into the floor.
* On back rocks, only take a small step back pretty much still under your body – your head and body will stay in virtually the same place.
* On back rocks still keep your weight forward – either the back heel only “kisses” the floor or you keep the movement on the ball of the foot.
* Make sure you make 4 weight transfers in the Single Step Basic – don’t cheat!

**SINGLE STEP BASIC – IN OPEN & IN HOLD**

* In open position, ensure you step straight back on the back rock – hips square to partner – there is no reason not to face them.
* In close hold, the back rock turns out 1/8th from your partner – only the back rock – so that your bottom doesn’t stick out!
* In close hold, the side rock faces your partner - there is no reason not to face them.
* When leading from open position to close hold, the Leader needs to indicate with the left hand to the Follower to step forward as the Leader steps on the left foot – it’s a small movement.
* When leading from close hold to open position to close hold, the Leader needs to use both hands (left hand joined, right hand on Follower’s waist) to indicate to the Follower to step backwards as the Leader steps on the left foot.
* Followers usually take both right and left steps to transition from open position to close hold and vice versa.

**FOLLOWER’S UNDERARM TURN (Change of Place Right to Left & Left to Right)**

* The follower’s underarm turn starts from close hold and, if turning back, finishes in open position.
* Indicate the Follower is to turn by raising the Leader’s left hand just above Follower’s head height as the Leader steps left on the side rock.
* When the Leader’s left arm is raised to indicate a turn underarm to Follower’s right then the joined hands should be palm to palm and the Follower’s hand should rotate in the Leader’s hand.
* A second indication is to guide the Follower with a small push to the back with the Leader’s right hand – think “Step Push Step”.
* The Follower swivels on the ball of the right foot to turn ¾ and lands with the left foot back to help balance – don’t forget the back rock.
* The Leader should turn to face their partner – think of it as dancing to the opposite sides of a box.
* When the turn is finished the Leader should lower the arm to indicate “stop turning”.
* When turning the Follower back to their original position and moving back to theirs, the Leader needs to start moving out of the way on the first side rock to the left before continuing to their original position - think of it as dancing to the opposite sides of a box.
* When the Leader’s left arm is raised to indicate a turn underarm to Follower’s left then the Leader’s palm will face away from the Leader’s body and the Follower’s hand should rotate in the Leader’s hand.
* The Follower completes the turn from left to right in 2 halves – about ¼ and then ½ over the 2 steps.
* When the turn is finished the Leader should lower the arm to indicate “stop turning”.
* Keep your head level on turns, don’t look down, as this will help your balance.

**FLOORCRAFT**

* When dancing a spot dance, try not to encroach on other dancers' space.
* Be flexible about your hold when you have to – if you’re going to elbow another couple then drop your arms a bit or don’t extend your free arm as far.