**TECHNIQUE WORKSHOP – BOSSA NOVA**

**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 mid-point 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.
* Make your neck long - don't tilt your chin up, stretch up through the centre of your head.
* Don’t look at the dance floor – when you drop your head it throws both of you off balance.

**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.
* Never let your elbows move behind your body.
* 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.
* Leaders indicate direction by moving the leading arm(s) and through body movement.
* 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.
* Leaders need to be aware of where the Follower’s weight is, as well as their own, before a new move.

**CLOSE HOLD – RUMBA/CHA CHA CHA/BOSSA NOVA**

* In close hold make sure that you are about 15cm apart and positioned 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 nose/ear height.
* The Leader’s left wrist is straight and the Follower’s right slightly bent to receive the lead.
* The Leader’s right hand cups the bottom of 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 or back to back position, 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!
* Leaders need to change the handhold as they lead ensuring that the hands, arms and shoulders are held naturally and under no strain.
* Free arms never dangle – typically they are to the side extended or retracted, i.e. with the elbow slightly flexed.
* The hands of free arms 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, 1234.
* The musical accent or down beat is on beat 1 with percussive accents on half beats.
* Music can be slow, mid or fast tempo – it’s very adaptable.
* The rhythmic building block is Slow Quick Quick Slow (quick = 1 beat and slow = 2 beats).
* To start dancing, move on beat 1 – left foot for Leader and right foot for Follower.

**MOVEMENT - CUBAN MOTION - FOOTWORK**

* Control is the essence - don’t slap your feet into place.
* The footwork throughout most of the basic figures is Ball Flat, i.e. first the ball of the foot and then the heel lowers (step 2 of the whisk is ball).
* Don’t pick up your feet: both feet (big toe really) remain in contact with the floor.
* For Cuban Motion (opposite hip action to foot action), emphasise the feeling of pushing down into the floor through the ball of the foot, slowly straightening the knee as the next step is taken – this is easier with slow and mid tempo music.
* Make sure you make 3 weight transfers throughout the SQQ rhythm.
* For the basic figures, travel is usually made on Slow count, then Quicks are used for adjusting position and dancing in place.
* The faster the music, the smaller the step.

**REVERSE BOX STEP – ON SPOT & TURNING**

* The feet on the side step should only be shoulder width apart.
* Remember to transfer weight as you close your feet.
* The Reverse Box Step can be danced on the spot or rotating to the left – the foot which you step forward on determines which way you rotate when figures are danced in close hold.
* It is up to the Leader how much turn is danced across each group of 3 steps and when the rotation stops.
* The Reverse Box Step danced on the spot is a useful transition from one figure to another.

**WHISKS**

* The close hold needs to be flexible when dancing whisks – the Leader’s right and Follower’s left hand need to be able to slip position but stay connected to each other’s arms.
* The Leader should use the right hand to give the lead for the Follower to make the side step.
* As Leader’s whisk to their left, raise the joined hands just above Follower’s head height to bring that side of the body closer together (and conversely open out the other side).
* As Leader’s whisk to their right, lower the joined hands to waist/hip height to open out that side of the body (and conversely to bring the other side closer together).
* When joined hands are lowered, both palms should face the floor -the Leader’s thumb is secure over the back of the Follower’s hand and the Follower’s fingers are over the Leader’s hand – this puts wrists and elbows into a natural unstrained position.
* When dancing whisks in close hold, both Leader and Follower turn out 1/8th from each other, shoulders a little less.
* The cross behind step (step 2) should be taken on the ball of the foot, only part weight is transferred, both knees are flexed and the step is a short one (less than 15cm from the toe of the back foot to the heel of the front foot).
* As you cross behind on step 2, try to roll the pelvis – this is easier to slower tempo music.
* To lead from a Whisk to a Reverse Box Step more easily, Leader’s should move their right hand around to their Follower’s side in preparation for the step forward

**BACK TO BACK**

* Dance Side Basics (an odd number) before and after the Back to Back – before they start to the Leader’s left and after they start to the Leader’s right.
* Leader’s should change the handhold on the joined hands as they lead through into the Back to Back – hold Follower’s hand between thumb and index finger and slip other 3 fingers under the Follower’s hand – this puts the wrist, elbow and shoulder into a natural unstrained position.
* Use a 2-point connection, at the hand and at the elbow, to let your partner know where you are when back to back – this way a pair (even number) of Side Basics can be danced in the back to back position.
* To lead into the Back to Back, the joined hands start to move forward through the middle of the bodies as the Leader takes the first side step with slight body turn.
* To exit the Back to Back, the joined hands start to move back through the middle of the bodies as the Leader takes the first side step with slight body turn.

**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.