**TECHNIQUE WORKSHOP – SLOW FOXTROT**

**POISE**

* Dancing is a language without words, good posture 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/front of your feet and don’t lock your knees – forward poise but brace at the waist with torso straight, followers lean back a little but do not exaggerate.
* Lift and support your ribcage, remembering to breathe through your diaphragm.
* Relax your shoulders so they are back and down, and open up your chest.
* 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.

**DANCE HOLD - BALLROOM**

* Your arms and hands should have tone – just a slight resistance - to connect to your partner.
* Ballroom hold has 5 points of contact when done correctly – try and put them into practice.
* Never interlink your fingers with your partner – it can be dangerous on turns and if you slip.
* In ballroom hold make sure that you are positioned to your partner’s right side so your feet and bodies are offset – this allows room for feet and facilitates moving together.
* Don’t raise your shoulders when you move into ballroom hold.
* Leaders should look through the window that their left arm creates, i.e. look over your partner’s right shoulder.
* Followers should look over their partner’s right shoulder, turn your head an eighth to the left and lift your eyeline just above the horizon.
* Keep your heads left so your shoulders remain parallel to your partner to make lead/follow easier.
* 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!
* 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.
* Leaders shouldn’t push and pull with their left hand – it throws your Follower off balance.
* 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 equidistant from their spine, with elbows level for better balance.
* Make sure that the Follower’s left tricep makes contact with the Leader’s right lower arm.
* Followers shouldn’t grab at Leaders with their left hand or form a “claw” on the shoulder – just group fingers neatly together on the Leader’s bicep – 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.
* “Floppy is no good” for the ballroom hold – make sure you have a frame to work with.
* Don’t be afraid to make body contact in ballroom hold – most of the lead comes from there.
* Don’t press your Follower tightly to your chest with your right hand – allow room to breathe!

**TIMING – MUSIC – RISE & FALL**

* Count 4 beats to a bar i.e. 1234 - the tempo (or speed) is c30 bars per minute.
* The musical accent or down beat is on beats 1 (stronger) and 3.
* For the basic figures (Feather Step, Reverse Turn, Three Step, Natural Turn), except steps 4-6 Nat Turn, we dance the same rhythm: Slow Quick Quick (quick = 1 beat, slow = 2 beats). Quicks come in pairs.
* In terms of Rise and Fall for the basic figures, Slow is essentially Down and Quick is Up.
* Start to rise at the end of the Slow count, continue up through the Quick counts, lowering at the end of a Quick if the next step is a Slow (except step 2 of Three Step - down & rises at the end).
* If moving forward, rise by stretching through the knees and body, raising your heels from the floor, but if moving backward do not raise your heels from the floor – this is No Foot Rise.
* When you lower, the foot lowers from toe to heel then the knee flexes as you take the next step.

**MOVEMENT & FOOTWORK**

* Control is the essence - don’t slap your feet into place. Always collect your feet/weight under the body before moving again. Ballroom walks glide!
* Move your legs from the hip, not just from the knee - naturally and smoothly.
* Move your feet as close to the floor as possible without dragging them on the floor.
* Slows use a heel lead when stepping forward.
* Quicks are danced on the toe or ball of the foot, except step 2 (RF) of Three Step for the Leader.
* When dancing walks backward, peel the toe of the front foot from the floor and bring the foot back with the heel in contact with the floor.
* As you dance forwards, only settle into the ball of the foot as the other foot passes.
* As you dance backwards, only settle into foot and lower the heel as the other foot passes.

**TURNING – STEPPING OUTSIDE PARTNER – HEEL TURNS – HEEL PULLS**

* In close hold, if you’re turning left then left foot goes forward and right foot goes back.
* In close hold, if you’re turning right then right foot goes forward and left foot goes back.
* Leaders use their body to turn their partner – arms stay the same relative to the body.
* Use CBM (Contrary Body Movement) to initiate a turn – the opposite side of the body moves towards the stepping foot – stepping forward toe turns out & back it turns in.
* To maintain body contact when stepping OP with right foot, Leaders use CBMP (Contrary Body Movement Position) – stepping foot moves across the line of the other foot but no turn initiated – this is preceded by a left shoulder lead in preparation if moving forwards.
* Use Sway to assist turning and balance - incline the body from the ankles upwards towards the inside of the circle – for the basic figures on Quicks and step 5 (Slow) of Natural Turn.
* Get the alignments correct - understand which way you should be facing on each step and how that affects your partner and managing your movement around the floor.
* When Leading into a Follower’s heel turn, Leaders must dance the step forward before swivelling to the side position – this will maintain body contact as the Follower is on a fixed point.
* When Follower’s dance a heel turn, start the turn on the ball of the foot then continue to the heel, turn with the foot relatively flat, draw in the other foot but only completely close and transfer weight at the end of the turn – rise on both feet at the end and step out on a toe.
* When Leaders dance a heel pull there is no rise, it’s similar to a heel turn but the feet finish slightly apart – when you draw the foot in it will be first on the heel, then inside edge and end foot flat.

**FLOORCRAFT**

* Progressive dances (like the foxtrot), go anti-clockwise around the floor – that’s the Line of Dance and never cross the Centre Line - it'll upset the flow of dancers
* On corners, imagine a diagonal line out of the corner, dance in one side and dance out the other.
* Usually faster couples dance on the outside and slower couples to the middle of the floor.
* Be aware of other couples and how much space your couple also takes up – allow enough room.
* Turns travel along the floor – allow enough room especially at corners.
* Be flexible about your hold when you have to – if you’re going to elbow another couple then drop your arms a bit.