



Denver Two Step

Country Western Dance

Level One

by Mark Saiki

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"Love was just a glance away. A warm embracing dance away."
Frank Sinatra, 1966.

Mark Saiki
398 Cypress St
Broomfield, CO 80020
(303)- 974- 0074
marksai4@gmail.com

Four nonexclusive lawyerly disclaimers. 1) Consult your own physician before enrolling in a dance class. Dance instructor assumes no responsibility for medical problems, physical condition or exertion. 2) If you have any reason to believe that a move is dangerous, unsafe or could lead to injury, do not try it. Dance instructor assumes no responsibility for accidents or injury. 3) Do not drink to excess. Dance instructor assumes no responsibility for accidents or injury. 4) Exercise prudent caution as to whom you dance and socialize with. Dance instructor assumes no responsibility for screening or preventing unpleasant or unsafe encounters.

I. Steps.

1. **Three Step.** Use a low stepping action to skip across the floor. Pick your feet up off the floor. Each step involves a quick weight change. Weight is on your toes. Listen for the even major down beats from the bass drum. The long step should be no longer than one foot length. Over striding causes you to get out of step. Shuffle your feet to the music, in a smooth rocking motion.

a. Music:

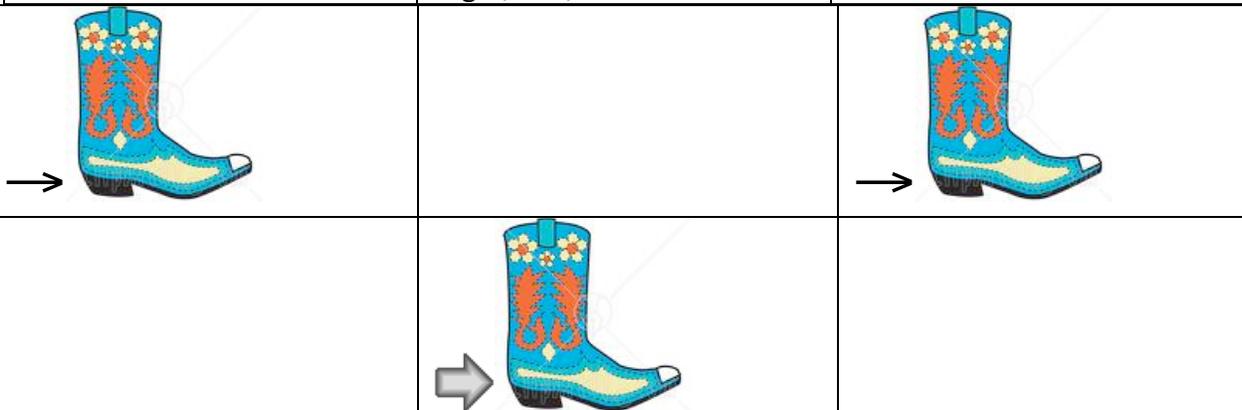


b. Count:

One, two, three (and)	One, two, three (and)	One, two, three
Boom, two, three	Boom, two, three	Boom, two, three

c. Footwork:

Long Left, right behind, left (and)		Long Left, right behind, left (and)
	Long Right, left behind, right,	
Left, two, three		Left, two, three
	Right, two, three	



2. **Two Step.** Use a lopsided step to slide across the floor. Listen to the singer's twang. A long step should be no longer than one foot length. Over striding causes you to get out of step. Your feet should not leave the floor. Bending your knees helps keep your feet on the floor. Weight is distributed across your foot. Feet are relatively flat. Dragging, shuffling, scruffing, or scooting, your feet across the floor makes that famous sawdust noise.

Two step music has an uneven beat. Drum beats are less prominent in two step music and not regular. Do not listen to the drums. Listen for the flat twang in the singer's voice. The twang is a form of a bridge. On the first long and slow syllable you take a slow step. On the second long and slow syllable you take the second slow step. Two quick words in between.

a. Music:

							
							
(From the) Cor-	-nners	of	the	Cooo-	-untry	and	the
Ciii-	-tties	and	the	Faaa-	-rrms.		

b. Count:

Slow,	Slow,	quick	quick
Step-slide,	step-slide,	walk,	walk
Brush-step,	brush-step,	walk,	walk

c. Timing (slows get two counts, quicks get one count)

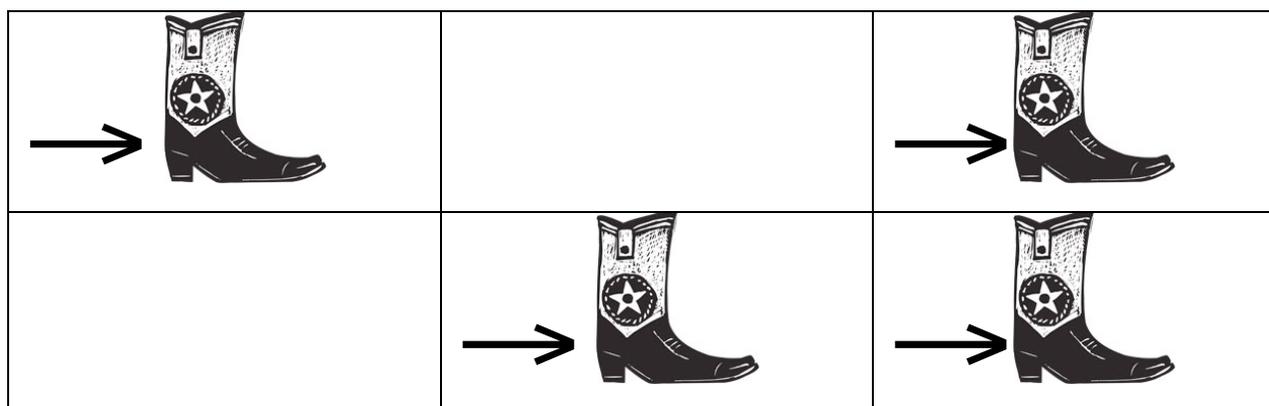
One-two,		five,
	three-four,	Six

d. Footwork.

Long left,		short left,
	Long right,	right behind

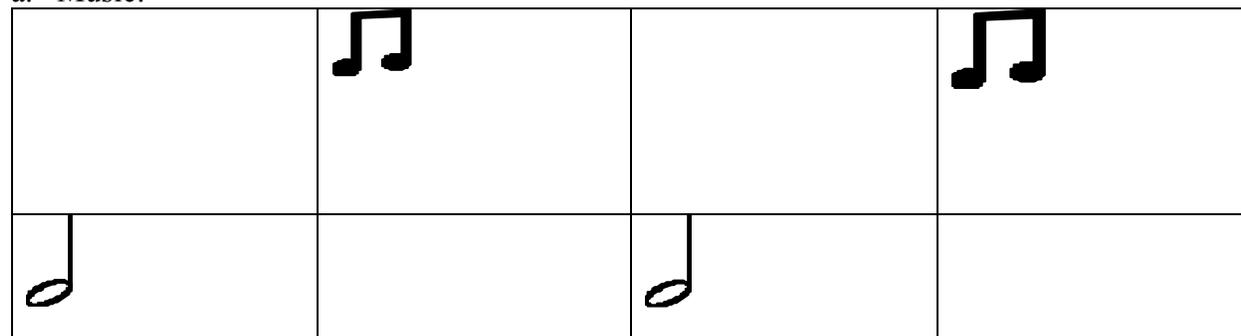
Alternative Count:

Walk		Step
	Walk	Together



3. **Waltz.** Use a swaying motion to glide across the floor; don't pick your feet up and step across the floor. Listen for the long major down beats and the short taps on the symbols. Waltz music contains mountains and valleys. The rise and fall of the waltz. Your eye level should accentuate the rise and fall of the music. On one take your long step. Two bend your knees down sliding together. Three pause swaying up on your toes.

a. Music:



b. Count:

Long,	short, short	Long,	short, short
Boom,	tap, tap	Boom,	tap, tap

c. Timing:

One-two,	three, four	One-two,	three, four
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d. Footwork:

Long Left,	short right, short left		
		Long Right,	short left, short right
Sway Left,	slide together, pause up on your toes		
		Sway Right,	left together, pause up on your toes

4. **Basic Dance Position** for 2 step, 3 step and waltz:

Man faces forward
Woman faces back
Man's left hand between the bodies
Man's right hand on Woman's shoulder (inside her arm)
Woman's left hand on man's shoulder (outside)
Woman presses against man's right hand (arm tension)
Knees bent
Both lean back from the waist

The two step and three step travel in a counterclockwise pattern.
Travel means that you move from point A to point B.
By contrast swing is stationary in the middle of the floor.

II. Theory.

1. Men's Rules.

a) Rules **of the Road**. If you are traveling forward, and are about to run into somebody, tug on your partner's right shoulder to slow them up. If you bump into somebody, say that you are sorry.

b) If you lose your step **smile and start over**. The advanced rule is to start wherever you please and make your partner change her step. Smile if you do the turn right. Smile if you do the turn wrong. Take dance lessons to know the difference.

c) Always **Assume that You are Doing Right**. Confidence builds good dancers. Lack of confidence is a self-imposed roadblock.

If you always assume that you are doing right, you may be doing right and that is wonderful. You might have the right basic idea and need practice to smooth it out. If you are doing it wrong, a confident attitude does you no harm. Confidence promotes self esteem which puts you into a receptive learning state.

Assuming that you are doing it wrong, does you no good on the dance floor. Generally you have the right basic idea and it feels awkward because you are trying a new step. If you assume that you are doing it wrong, you lack confidence and are on the road to ruin.

d) **Still Standing Rule**. The first night of class is three step night. If you understand the step, congratulate your partner and confidently tell yourself that we are getting this. Rome was not built in a day. It may feel awkward at first. Keep in mind that everybody gets better. It may take three or four weeks of practice to look and feel smooth.

e) **Everybody Gets Better.** If your hearing, physical coordination and grace are within normal limits, you will get better. You will get better each class. You will get better each week. Trust me, I'm an attorney.

2. **Women's Rules.** Careful attention to the basics is well rewarded. Inquiring minds want to know, "Does she or doesn't she?"

a. **Step Rule.** Keep in step. Staying in step with your partner is more important than keeping time with the music.

b. **Rule of Continuation.** If you start in a direction, keep going in that direction until stopped. Find the flow. Go with the flow.

c. **Communication Rules.** Communicate by touch. Proper arm tension lets him know where you are. It lets him know whether or not you are responding to his cues.

Too little arm tension means that you are not paying attention. A limp arm means that you are bored, tired of dancing and want to sit down.

Too much arm tension is restrictive, possessive, clutching and controlling. It takes a lot of work to overcome excess arm tension. It tires both of you out prematurely.

Seek the proper tension. Not firm, just right.

d. **Proper Tension Rule.** Press back against the man's right hand. This constant pressure lets you know which direction you are going, how fast and with what step. Keep light tension in both arms at all times. Keep as much tension in your arms as he has in his arms.

e. **Feet and Direction Rules:** Keep your feet under your body. If he pulls left, go left. If he pulls right, go right. If his open hand is in front, walk up to meet it. If his open hand is in back, walk back to meet it. If the man is leading you forward, you need to develop forward momentum.

Do not ask, where am I going? What do I do? Do not state, I don't know what I am doing. This puts you into the wrong mindset. Do not engage your conscious mind to confuse and complicate.

f. **Still Standing Rule.** If you complete a turn and both of you are still on your feet, celebrate! Use positive reinforcement. It will take around fifty practices before a turn will feel smooth. If you understand the turn and are still standing, you have achieved success.

g. **Always assume that you are doing right.** If brings your right hand inward when the class is practicing the outside twirl, praise his experimental nature. Assume that he wanted to warm up by trying an inside twirl and that he will later try an outside twirl. Always assume that what you are doing is absolutely right. Strut with confidence. There are good leads and bad leads. It is really difficult to make a bad follow.

Comment: An impudent and insightful female student said that I had a dozen rules for women and only a few for the men. My ex- defended me by paraphrasing something a Caucasian wife said about her Japanese-American husband. They said in effect, although he sounds like a male chauvinist pig, he really isn't that bad at home. Women have more rules because men bear the burden of leadership. My interpretation is that I am a women's libber and open minded.

III. Class Structure.

Class is designed to introduce concepts, to demonstrate steps and turns. Taking notes is a good idea.

Shoes with leather or hard bottoms are recommended. Cowboy boots with leather soles are the best. The heel puts weight on your toes. This makes for snappy turns. Tennis shoes tend to grip. Stutter stepping is inconsistent with the sliding flowing nature of country dance. Comfort is the key. If attire and footwear are excuses to keep you away from class and practice, then come as ye may.

Learning the steps is important. You should practice until they become second nature. If circling the floor leaves a smile on your face, then level one and practice is all you need. The purpose for learning turns is to add sparkle, to reduce boredom.

You should practice at least one night per week. You should dance at least every other song for an hour. You should ask somebody new to dance. Changing partners is a teaching device. It sharpens your cues and responses. When you go out to practice, take a front row seat facing the dance floor. Feel the music, tap your toes, and watch other dancers.

Practice Rules: If you want to learn, put yourself and your partner into a receptive state. If you both are happy, you are more likely to learn. If you are unhappy, you block most of your ability to learn. Positive attitude, positive reinforcement, and praise are the tools of the trade. A friendly squeeze, a hug, and a word of encouragement go a long way. A scowl and a nasty look also go a long way the other way.

Single women should show some leg and tap their feet to the music (a historical invitation dating back to Salome). Both men and women should observe the asking process. Watch who says yes and then ask them to dance.

Couples should practice asking each other to dance. "Would you like to dance?" "Could I have the honor of this dance?" Accompanied by a sweeping hand and arm gesture pointing to the dance floor. An enthusiastic "Yes!" or "I'd love to." Responded to by a slight bowing gesture or offering your hand. After the dance a polite, "Thank you for the dance," is generally well received.

Dancing is a life long investment. For about the price of a movie you can take one dance class. By comparison, a trip to a marriage counselor is much more costly.

IV. Lessons.

This is your class. If you want to learn different turns in different orders let me know. We can move faster or slower. We can learn different steps. Each class generally starts with a review from night one.

1. Three Step Night

Outside Twirl, Inside Twirl, Weaving

The Outside Twirl: Man's left hand goes over her head, in an outside direction, reconnect

2. Two Step Night

Outside Twirl, Inside Twirl, Sideways Skating Exercise

3. Basket Night

Basic to basket, basket pinwheel, basket crossover

The Basket: In basic position, Man's raises his left hand, over her head in an inside direction, Man's left hand assumes a lead position. Man's right hand slides down woman's arm, and catches woman's left hand in a side by side position, Man's right hand is around her waist behind her back

4. Breakaway Night

Lasso to breakaway, weaving, side dual opens

Breakaway: In basic position, Man starts an outside twirl, When woman turns to face him Man lassos his left hand behind his head, Man guides woman behind his back into a side by side position

5. Waltz Night.

Outside Twirl, Inside Twirl, Weaving pattern in breakaway

6. Practice Night. Sometimes, I sing and you dance. Practice listening to the music and picking out the step. I answer review questions between songs. I generally teach one new turn. "Less is more," Wynonna Judd. It is better to learn four turns well than eight turns poorly.