

West Coast Swing

Level One

By Mark Saiki
 398 Cypress St
 Broomfield, CO 80020
 (303)- 974- 0074
marksaiki4@gmail.com
www.msaiki.com



1. Open Position.

a) Basic Dance Position:

Men extend their left hand in a comfortable handshake position
 Palm up, two middle fingers curled up
 Men settle back with their weight on their right foot
 This lower arm position encourages body leads and discourages arm leads.



b) Women.

Women extend their right hand
 Palm down, two middle fingers curled down
 Women settle back with their weight on their left foot
 This is a rhythm dance; weight is almost never distributed equally on both feet.
 (Weight is on one foot or the other; you do not straddle both feet with even weight)



d) Natural Opposite. Women's Footwork.




Women start on their right foot.
 Their first walk is with their right foot.
 Woman's first triple is with her right foot.
 Walk, walk, right-two-three, left-two-three.



Men's Footwork.

Men start on their left foot.
 Their first walk is with their left foot.
 Man's first triple is with his left foot.
 Walk, walk, left-two-three, right-two-three.



<p>e) The Slot.</p> <p>West Coast Swing is a slotted dance. The Slot is like a railroad track. Women dance from north to south, when the gate is open. Water flows to the end of the canal and then turns around and gets ready for the next basic step.</p>	
<p>f) Men's Duties.</p> <p>Bill Stevens says that men have to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Think in real time 2) Dance in real time. 3) Think in future time: Plan the next lead 4) Men define the end of the slot, by using their anchor step. It is called an "anchor step" for a reason, because you "anchor-in-place." 5) The man's first step tells the woman whether the gate is closed or open to the right or to the left. 6) Men lead turns. 7) Men plan ahead for the next lead. 	
<p>g) Women's Duties.</p> <p>Pat says that Women have two duties:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Wait for the Lead (the walk, walk lead) 2) Dance to the end of the Slot 3) Flashlight. Women should keep an eye on their dance partners. It is as if there is a flashlight on your core; you want to keep shining your light shining on your partner. Pat says that it is like walking down a narrow hallway. You turn your shoulders and attention toward your dance partner as you pass. 	
<p>h) Rules of the Road.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Rule of Continuation. If you start in a direction, keep going in that direction until stopped. Do not stop yourself; I want to stop you. Find the flow. Go with the flow. 2) Open Hand Rule. Look for the Open Hand; grab the Open Hand. 3) Still Standing Rule. If you understand the step, and you can get through it without both falling down, then congratulate yourselves. Confidently tell yourself: 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. Jim said it takes fifty repetitions to make it look smooth. 	

4) Always assume that you are doing right. 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.

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.

5) Focus. Focus on what you are doing right. Not what you are doing wrong. In other words, build on What you are doing right; do not overemphasize the few things you are doing wrong.

2. Anchor Step.



a) Anchor Step.


The anchor step for men is generally a triple step in place; it defines the end of the slot. The anchor step for women is an extend step. If you are too close to establish proper arm tension (by settling back on your trailing foot), then separate until you establish proper tone.

Five	Anchor
And	In
Six	place









b) Lazy Anchor.

Women's variation is a lazy anchor; where you turn to face.

Five	Turn
And	To
Six	Face

I. Music.	whole note O	
Music: Q. What do we listen for in the music?		
<p>a) First Major Down Beat.</p> <p>You start on the first or third down beat. The bass drum hits (down-beat), and then you clap (on an up-beat.)</p>		
<p>b) Even Beats.</p> <p>West Coast Swing music is generally slow and medium triple music. It has even drum beats, as opposed to lopsided two-step music. Fast triple music is generally avoided. It generally has a gentle beat and often a syncopated jangle for triple steps.</p>		

1. Step.

Footwork:		Pattern:		
a) Count	b) Rhythm	c) Women's Variation	d) Music (Bass drum-Kick drum)	e) Music - Timing
One	Walk	Walk	Boom	whole note 
Two	Walk	Walk	Boom	whole note 
Three,	Quick,	Run,	Boom	half note 
And,	Quick,	Run,		half note 
Four	Slow	Run	Boom	whole note 
Five,	Quick,	Anchor,	Boom	half note 
And,	Quick,	In,		half note 
Six	Slow	Place	Boom	whole note 

2. Leadership.

Q. How do we lead people on the dance floor?

a) Tow Truck.

Men lead by moving your core (center); your lead is like a tow truck.

Do not lead by bending your elbows or wrists.

Do not pull or push your partner with your hand or arm.



b) Four Letter Words.

Patti talked about two four letter words in West Coast Swing. One was pull: never use your arm to pull or jerk your partner. The other was push: never use your arm to push or shove your partner. She asked who moves her and she answered that she did. The man's job is to tell her when to go and where. Pat says that you move your partner by moving your core. Your arm should act like a tow truck, not a wench.



c) Gate Keepers. Keeper of the Gate.

The Man acts like a lock in a canal.

If on his walk, walk, he steps out of the slot to the right, we refer to this as a right side pass.

If he steps out of the slot to the left, this is a left side pass.

When the gate is closed, water laps up (compression/interaction) against the gate and then flows back to the start.






d) Closed Gate.

If he holds his ground and remains where he is, this is a sugar push or push break. By blocking the slot, water laps up against the gate, interacts and flows back to the start.

Your first step tells the woman where she is going.

e) First Step.

Jean said that the direction of the man's first step, tells the woman where she is going to go. If he steps out of the way to the right, then she is going to pass by on her left side. Pat says that the man is a gate keeper like locks on the Panama Canal, and women are like water. If the gate is open, women flow through the gate to the other side. She says that women have two jobs to wait for the (walk, walk) lead and to dance to the end of the slot.

3. Arm Tension:		
<p>a) Arm Tension.</p> <p>Men should set light but definite arm tension. However much pressure I pull up and toward me; the lady pulls an equal amount down and toward her.</p> <p>Muscle tone establishes lead and follow patterns. This language of the hands creates the connection between dancers. It is the way we communicate when to start, pause, twirl, and stop. It tells the women where the end of the slot is.</p> <p>The Walk, Walk series is a lead/follow pattern. You are either leading or setting up a lead</p>		
<p>b) Resistance.</p> <p>Women should use equal but opposite arm tension to maintain equilibrium, Which means maintain a constant amount of arm (hand) tension. They use their contrary nature to resist male influence.</p> <p>Women should use arm tension to follow the lead and synchronize your steps. Proper Arm tension tells the man that you are paying attention. Use arm tension and your dance frame to guide your partner's movements.</p> <p>One basic insight is that women generally follow their lead hand. Keep your nose pointed toward your lead hand.</p>		
<p>4. Complications.</p>		
<p>a) Gospel.</p> <p>West Coast Swing is an evolving art form where six couples from Southern California dictate what the rest of us take to be the gospel.</p>		
<p>b) Rules.</p> <p>Jean Smith suggests that you take a lenient approach to these rules (Cool Hand Luke said that sometimes he leaned to one side of the law and at other times he leaned to the other). The general dogma is as follows:</p> <p>Beginners learn the rules; Intermediates learn to break the rules; and Advanced dancers make up their own rules.</p>		

My own insight is that men who do not follow their footwork: walk, walk, quick, quick, slow, quick, quick, slow, over 75% of the time, especially those who cannot do this footwork when asked, are doing linear swing, not West Coast Swing.

c) Female Initiative.

If men or women want to add extra steps, either can do so and the other person is supposed to be flexible and follow along.

If women want to twirl twice or more, they just hold up their hand and twirl. Men compensate by adding two counts for each twirl.

Men can offer their right hand, and women have the option of taking it or refusing it. Men can lead inside twirls and women can decide to twirl outside.

Women can on their own initiative do an out-back-cross, slow turn, late turn, fan and/or foot drag.

d) Individual Differences.

Different teachers teach variations; they have different styles, older styles and/or newer styles as the mood strikes them.

Bill Stevens wisely encourages tolerance and flexibility. "Don't go back to your regular dance teacher and tell him that they are teaching it wrong or that Bill Stevens is teaching it wrong. Just think of it as a different turn."













e) Splitting the Triple (aka Coaster Step).














Most triple steps progress in the same direction. When you split the triple, you change directions during the same triple.









A Coaster Step changes direction. Your quick, quick step back and then your slow step advances forward with your whip.

Three	Step	Quick
And	Collect	Quick
Four	Step in a new direction	Slow

5. Basic Turns.















a) Left Side Pass	Man Open Position				Man rotates 180 degrees counterclockwise
Walk	Left foot steps 90 degrees Opening your body counterclockwise				 Right Walk 2
Walk	Right foot steps beside	Man opens 90 degrees counterclockwise			 left Walk 1
Quick,	Step (in) [These steps overlap walk, walk]				 Right Quick 2
Quick,	Place				 left Quick 1
Slow	Left foot crosses back into the slot 90 degrees			left 	Man splits the triple
Quick,	Anchor				
Quick,	In				
Slow	Place				

b) Underarm Turn (Right Side Pass)	Man Open Position: Man rotates 180 degrees clockwise				Man opens 90 degrees clockwise
Walk	Left foot steps 90 degrees Opening your body clockwise	 right Walk 2			Man pulls his left hand
Walk	Right foot steps beside	 left Walk 1			Toward his right shoulder
Quick,	Step (in) [These steps overlap walk, walk]	 left Quick 2			
Quick,	Place	 right Quick 1			
Slow	Left foot crosses back into the slot 90 degrees			left  	Man splits the triple
Quick,	Anchor				
Quick,	In				
Slow	Place				

c) Sugar Push: Push Break	Man Open Position		 1	 2	Man blocks the slot and then drives her back
Walk	Left foot steps 90 degrees Opening your body clockwise		 left walk one 3	 right walk two 4	
Walk	Right foot steps beside		 left Slow 3 forward 7		Man splits the triple
Quick,	Step (in) [These steps overlap walk, walk]				
Quick,	Place		 left quick one 5	 right quick two 6	
Slow	Left foot crosses back into the slot 90 degrees				
Quick,	Anchor				
Quick,	In				
Slow	Place				

Here the man splits the triple, by changing direction in the middle of a triple.
Back, together, forward.












Pat says if you do not compress into your partner and interact with them, you are dancing
by yourself. You might as well be dancing with the rail surrounding the dance floor, or a
pole.

d) Tuck Turn	Man Open Position: Man rotates 180 degrees counterclockwise				Man opens 90 degrees counter-clockwise
Walk	Left foot steps 90 degrees Opening your body clockwise				 Right Walk 2
Walk	Right foot steps beside	Man raises left hand			 left Walk 1
Quick,	Step (in) [These steps overlap walk, walk]	Woman 			 Right Quick 2
Quick,	Place	Angles			 left Quick 1
Slow	Left foot crosses back into the slot 90 degrees	Right arm slows woman,		left  	
Quick,	Anchor	turning her 45 degrees counter-clock wise			
Quick,	In	Woman turns to face			
Slow	Place	(lazy anchor)			

A tuck turn changes direction; woman angles left then turns back right to face.

e) Whip	Man Open Position				Man pivots 360 degrees in 8 counts
Walk	Left foot steps 90 degrees Opening your body clockwise	 right Walk 2			
Walk	Right foot steps beside	 left Walk 1			
Quick,	Step (in) [These steps overlap walk, walk]	 left Quick 2			Women
Quick,	Place	 right Quick 1			Coaster
Slow	Left foot crosses back into the slot 90 degrees			left Slow 1	Step forward
Walk			 left walk 3	 right walk 4	Man pivots (opens) clockwise
Walk					
Quick,	Anchor				
Quick,	In				
Slow	Place				

On the first triple, women do a coaster step

			
Walk	Right slow forward	 Right Slow 1	
Walk	Left step pivot 180 degrees		 Left Slow 2
Quick	Together (Collect)		  Right Slow 1 Forward
Slow	Forward		
Quick	Back	  right Quick 2	  Right Quick 1