

Smoothing Out Your Waltz

Dancing *With* Your Partner 😊

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Clinic goal: Make dancing feel smoother, more comfortable, and more connected by learning to move with your partner rather than simply executing the same figures at the same time.

First make it work. Then make it smooth. Then make it expressive. So that it is more enjoyable.

Connection: Dancing With Your Partner

The goal is for the couple to move comfortably together.

Frame and connection

- Maintain a comfortable, responsive frame
- Connection should communicate—not control
- Keep the connection consistent through turns and position changes
- Avoid using the arms to compensate for poor body movement

Partner awareness

- Know what your partner is doing—and what your partner needs
- Don't impede your partner's movement
- Adjust **step size** to accommodate your partner
- Adjust movement to the **inside/outside of a turn**
- Turn **with** your partner rather than turning independently
- Partners should complement and compliment each other

Orientation: Know Where You're Going

*Both dancers need to understand not only **what the step is**, but also **where the step normally goes**.*

Executing Steps

- What is the normal starting orientation?
- What is the normal ending orientation?
- How much turn is normally involved?
- What happens if the preceding or following figure changes the expected orientation?

Adjusting Orientation

- Figures don't occur in isolation
- An amalgamation may require an adjustment to the usual orientation
- Don't force a figure to begin from its "textbook" orientation if the preceding figure has put you somewhere else
- Learn to recognize where you *are* before starting the next step

Position Changes: Moving Smoothly Between Positions

Smooth transitions between positions is an essential part of dancing.

Transitions Between Positions

- Where are the bodies relative to each other?
- Where is the connection?
- Where are the feet moving?

Timing: Moving With the Music—and Each Other

Dance to the music and cues with continuous movement.

Timing

- Leader generally establishes the timing for the partnership
- Don't rush through a step simply because the next step is coming
- A step can have movement **through** the beat rather than simply occurring **on** the beat

Don't dance like a metronome (You can interpret the music with your dancing)

- You can **linger** on a step
 - Hovers, Canter, and Change of Direction are good examples
 - Even the second step of a Telemark is an example
- Sometimes the smoothest dancing comes from allowing a movement within a step to continue rather than immediately taking the next step
- Prepare for the next step while finishing the current step

Movement: What Makes Waltz Look and Feel Like Waltz?

Waltz technique contributes to smoother dancing.

Rise and fall

- What is it?
- When does it occur?
- What does it accomplish?

Weight changes

- Where is your weight?
- When does weight transfer occur?
- Avoid being "between feet"
- Prepare for the next movement

Step size

- Bigger isn't necessarily better
- Step size needs to accommodate partner

Counterbalance

- Use the body appropriately to support movement—particularly in turns and shapes
- Counterbalance should create stability and movement—not become a pose

Head weight and positioning

- Allow the head to contribute naturally to the movement
- Head position should support the figure and body movement

Body flight

- Movement is initiated by your core instead of legs
- Allow movement to continue through the figure and between figures

What happens when something goes wrong?

- Don't panic, adapt
- Don't stop dancing unnecessarily
- Don't "correct" your partner in the middle of the figure
- Find a comfortable place to reconnect and continue

Musicality: Feeling the Waltz

Once the mechanics become comfortable, there is room for expression.

Dance what you hear and feel

- Musical phrasing
- Melody
- Dynamics
- Changes in energy
- Accents
- Emotional character