

## 10<sup>TH</sup> GRADE DANCE UNIT

### TANGO

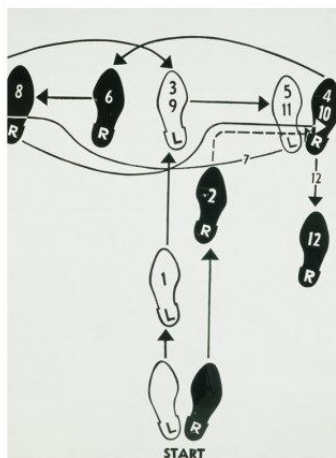
The tango is a slow, sexy dance that originated in the slums of Buenos Aires in the mid-1800s. It's become a universal symbol of sexual tension in the movies, but most commonly, is a popular dance in ballrooms and nightclubs around the world. Although many variations of the tango exist, the most famous is still the original Argentine Tango.

#### History of the Tango

Like so many of history's most popular and enduring dance styles, the tango's legacy stretches back from its current cachet as a sensuous, exotic ballroom dance to its origins in the immigrant African slums of Argentina. No one knows for certain where the tango really came from, but it's generally accepted that the word itself likely has African origins, and that it evolved from the free mixing of cultures and ethnicities in working class Buenos Aires in the mid-19th century. There, poor immigrants from Spain, Portugal, Italy, Poland, and Russia mixed and mingled with African slaves and shared their dance traditions with each other. Cuban and African musical styles and instruments were introduced, and an early style of the tango was born.

Later, wealthy members of the Argentinian elite who weren't above slumming among society's poor introduced the dance to their own circles and eventually brought the steps and music with them to Paris, where many had moved for education and leisure travel. Unlike conservative Buenos Aires society, Parisians loved and embraced the coarse, sexual nature of the new dance. The tango craze spread throughout Europe and soon landed in London and New York. Before long, even the most scandalized Argentinian matron couldn't help but proudly claim the wildly popular tango as a homegrown phenomenon.

Over the years several different styles of the tango have evolved, including International, American, French, Gaucho, Ballroom, and others, but the original Argentine Tango remains the most favorite. Although its popularity has waxed and waned over the generations, it's become one of the most famous dance styles in the world.



## How to Dance the Tango/Basic Steps

The tango looks quite complicated, but learning the basic steps is quite easy. In fact, you've probably already done it at least once in your life — that's how popular the tango is. Here are some tips to keep in mind as you learn the tango:

1. The tango starts with a simple walk: *el Paseo* (the “stroll”). Thus, if you can walk, you can tango.
2. The basic tango rhythm is slow-slow. Step on every other beat.
3. Keep your head and posture erect but not stiff.
4. If you can't execute the more complicated moves while still keeping in time with the music, stick to the basic steps. Don't sacrifice rhythm for fancy embellishments.
5. Listen carefully to the music! Because the tango is a very slow dance, keeping in rhythm is of critical importance.

The following is a basic forward walking step for the leading partner in the tango:

1. Step forward with the left foot. (Count 1, 2.)
2. Step forward with right foot. (Count 3, 4.)
3. Step forward with left foot. (Count 5.)
4. Step forward slightly and to the side with the right foot so that both feet are at an angle. (Count 6.)
5. Close the left foot to the right foot. (Count 7, 8.)

## CHA-CHA

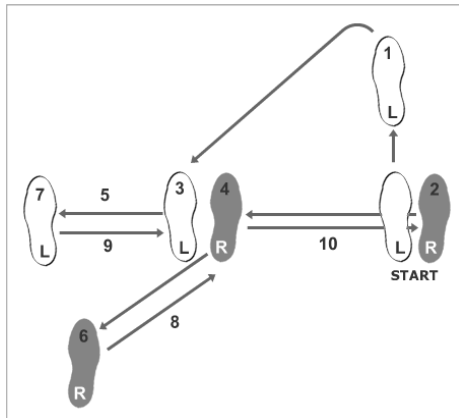
The cha-cha is one of the five main Latin ballroom dances most frequently taught in dance schools around the world. The steps are compact and based partly on the rumba and mambo, with plenty of hip and pelvic movements. The basic forward movement is supplemented with various turns, dips and slides.

### History of the Cha-Cha

Like the rumba, the cha-cha can trace its roots to the Afro-Cuban community in Havana. Big bands from the U.S. mainland made their way into the exciting clubs that populated the capital and developed a unique fusion of rumba music and American jazz that eventually came to be known as the Mambo.

When famed dance teacher Pierre Lavelle (aka “Monsieur Pierre”) arrived in Cuba to study local dance in the early 1950s, he noticed the additional steps that many performers added to the typical mambo and rumba. He returned to England and began teaching these extra steps as an entirely different dance, which later came to be known as the cha-cha. A number of theories attempt to explain the origins of the name: the Cuban dance known as the *guaracha*, the gliding steps of the *chasse*, and even supposedly the sound of a type of Haitian bell. Whatever its true source, however, there’s no question that the cha-cha has become one of the most popular Latin dances in the world.

### How to Dance the Cha-Cha/Basic Dance Steps



The cha-cha endures as a popular ballroom dance partly because of its appealing mix of breezy movements and smoldering sensuality. Some things to keep in mind as you perform the cha-cha:

1. Cha-Cha music is in 4/4 time.
2. Steps are small and compact, with most of the movement happening in the hips and pelvic areas.
3. Although this is an oversimplification, think of the cha-cha as being a series of sliding steps, with weight constantly shifting from one foot to another as you rock back and forth between each step. Keep your legs flexible and supple, bending and straightening them as you shift your weight.
4. The dance typically commences on the music’s second beat.
5. The lead begins with the left foot, while the follower begins with the right.

The basic forward movement is a must for beginners interested in learning how to dance the cha-cha:

1. Slide your Left Foot forward, shifting your weight onto that foot. Keep your Right Foot stationary.
2. Shift your weight to your Right Foot.
3. Step back to the side-left and shift your weight to your Left Foot. As you do so, close with your Right Foot.
4. Shift your weight onto your Right Foot. Shift your Left Foot to the side and shift weight onto your Left Foot. Keep your Right Foot stationary.

## **SWING**

Swing dancing remains one of the most popular dance styles in modern dance clubs. Three dances in particular make up the basis of swing dancing: the Lindy Hop, the Charleston and the Jitterbug, but the beauty of swing dance is that improvisation is encouraged. The basic dance steps of each style are relatively easy to learn, and as you gain more confidence you can layer on different moves as the mood — and the song rhythm — strikes you.

### **History of Swing Dancing**

Swing dance came out of the electrifying New York City club scene of the 1920s and 1930s, a time when African-American jazz bands ruled the nightclubs and dance halls. Later, famed clarinetist and bandleader Benny Goodman took the then-nascent music and brought it to the mainstream, creating a hot trend that reverberated all the way to the West Coast. Hollywood picked up on the craze and made a number of movies about this homegrown American music style, and soon the entire country was rocking and swinging to a new set of dances inspired by the lively tempo of “swinging jazz.”

The Lindy Hop, Charleston and Jitterbug are some of the earliest and most popular swing dances, but in the ninety-plus years since its invention, swing dancing has evolved as swing music itself continues to absorb influences from other musical styles, from R&B to country and western. Regional variations have also contributed numerous unique moves, from the Imperial Swing in St. Louis to the Houston Push.

Many people think of swing dancing as the fast, almost gymnastic-type choreography often seen in films and reality show competitions, but over the years most dance studios have successfully developed styles of ballroom swing dancing appropriate for the general public. And of course, the original dance moves — the Lindy Hop, Charleston and Jitterbug — remain some of the most popular with dancers of all ages and abilities.

### **How to Swing Dance/Basic Steps**



The Lindy Hop is a relatively simple partner dance that can easily be learned in one lesson. Keep the following in mind as you begin to learn to swing dance:

1. Although many musicians have composed slower, more “user-friendly” swing music, in general swing music tends to be relatively fast and energetic. Fortunately, the basic moves can be learned quickly and lend themselves beautifully to improvisation. Begin with some of the slower swing dance songs and work your way up to those with faster rhythms as you become more confident.
2. Try not to look down at your feet as you dance. Focus on the music and your partner. Remember what your mom told you when you were learning to ride a bike? Staring at the ground only guarantees a face plant. The same applies to swing dancing: keep your eyes up, or you’re almost certain to make a misstep.
3. Partners begin facing each other in closed position. Keep your shoulders relaxed and your head up.
4. Keep your steps small and compact.

The following is the basic Lindy Hop step for the leading partner:

1. Start in the closed position, i.e., your feet close together.
2. Step back with your left foot, putting all your weight on it in a rocking motion.
3. Shift your weight back to your right foot, completing the “rock step.”
4. Step to the left with your left foot.
5. Step to the right with your right foot.
6. Repeat.

The follower mirrors the above basic dance step, starting off with her right foot rocking backwards as the leader rocks backwards with his left foot.

As you progress with the Lindy Hop, you can add more elaborate moves, including turns and spins. Remember to have fun and improvise!