

FREESTYLE CROSS-STEP WALTZ MIXER

Taught by Richard Powers

The Cross-Step Waltz Mixer traditionally begins with two Turning Basics, taking four measures of music. If the Turning Basics are replaced with variations, it's often called Cross-Step Rueda. If the variations are led spontaneously, instead of being prompted by a Caller, then it's Freestyle Cross-Step Rueda.

Doing variations during the four bars of the Cross-Step Waltz Mixer presents a unique challenge. The variations must travel uniformly LOD, to keep up with the other couples. Then instead of finishing a variation in closed position with the Lead facing out as usual, you must finish side-by-side facing in, with his R hand holding her L. You have very little time to adapt to your new partner's frame and style, so the Lead must instantly ascertain how experienced his new partner is, if he wishes to lead something tricky. And both partners must be careful about exiting smoothly, without crashing into the next person.

The majority (two-thirds) of Cross-Step Waltz variations don't work in the Mixer. Many stop traveling LOD. Many don't resolve within four measures. And many don't flow or resolve smoothly. But here are a few that work especially well in the Cross-Step Waltz Mixer.



CROSS-STEP WALTZ MIXER

In a large circle, all do a Turning Basic traveling LOD for 4 bars; ending by facing in with Follow on the right, all taking hands in a large circle. All step forward one bar and back one bar; He turns the next Follow CCW under his L arm with an Inside Turn as he cross-steps behind her, both changing places with each other. Then he sweeps her toward his right into his R arm as she 4) steps forward R toward the outside lane, 5) steps side L toward the outside, 6) pulls her R shoulder back and they take waltz position to recommence from the beginning.

1 BASIC STEP then GRAPEVINE UNDERARM (OUTSIDE) TURN

3 steps of the Grapevine followed by lead turning her once CW under his L arm. 1) Lead crosses R behind as she crosses L in front; 2) Side step toward LOD; 3) Lead crosses R in front as she crosses L behind; 4) Side step letting her face forward LOD; 5-6) Follow's Outside Underarm Turn. Change hands at the end to face into the circle.

1 BASIC STEP then OPEN 2-HAND GRAPEVINE, FREE SPIN

At the end of the waltz he slips away to a 2-hand hold, then do 3 steps of the Grapevine followed by the Lead turning her once CW under his L arm. 1) He crosses R behind as she crosses L in front; 2) Side step toward LOD; 3) Lead crosses R in front as she crosses L behind; 4) Side step letting her face forward LOD; 5-6) Follow's Free Spin instead of Underarm Turn, which is much easier to follow from open 2-hand position. He can change to open 2-hands during the first basic, or during the grapevine itself. He gives a gentle lead to the free spin, not pushy. This avoids hand-changing at the end.

CHAINED 2-HAND GRAPEVINE TURNS

The Lead intercepts her L hand with his R hand, before it reaches his R shoulder for the initial waltz, to gain open 2-hand position. 1-2-3) The usual three-step Grapevine, with the Lead crossing R behind on count 1. 4-5-6) Outside Turn, where he leads her to turn CW with his forward L hand and looping her head. 1-2-3) Three-step Grapevine, with the Lead crossing R behind on count 1. 4-5-6) Follow's Free Spin.

1 BASIC STEP then OPEN 2-HAND GRAPEVINE, REAR-HAND INSIDE TURN

1-2-3) The same open 2-hand grapevine as above; 4-5-6) The Lead brings his rear R hand through (her L hand) to lead a Follow Inside Underarm Turn. She still turns forward, CW. The beauty is that this is the hand you need to be holding when you all face in.

CHAINING THESE 2-HAND GRAPEVINE TURNS

The Lead intercepts her L hand with his R hand, before it reaches his R shoulder for the initial waltz, to gain open 2-hand position. 1-2-3) The usual three-step Grapevine, with the Lead crossing R behind on count 1. 4-5-6) Outside Turn, where he leads her to turn CW with his forward L hand and looping her head.

1-2-3) Three-step Grapevine, with the Lead crossing R behind on count 1. 4-5-6) Inside Turn, where he leads her to turn CW by bringing his rear R hand across in front of her then looping her head. Keep this hand when you're done, facing in.

MIX AND MATCH

Do any combination of underarm turns, with either hand, and free spins, on counts 4-5-6.

BASIC STEP then WAIST SLIDE

- 1) The Lead disengages his R arm and brings his R elbow slightly over his R hand.
- 2-3) He cuts toward the right, leading with his R elbow, in front of his partner, lowering his L hand to his lower right ribcage.
- 4) He almost stops in place (or actually stops), keeping her R hand at his waist just barely enough to spin her forward by him. 5-6) As she flies by him, facing him, he takes her L hand with his R hand, hanging back and facing in.

TURNING BASICS, NO VARIATIONS

Sometimes the simplest is the best. Enjoy being with your partner.