

The Continental Walk

Richard Powers

This 1961-62 dance has the widest variety of any line dance. Each version is different from the others, some very easy, and some difficult. The reason for the differences is probably because the name was repeatedly heard through Continental songs by Chubby Checker, Hank Ballard, The Rollers and The Vibrations in 1961, and by The Dovells and Danny & The Juniors in 1962. They all sang about the popularity of this new line dance, so the teens wanted to dance it.

But there were no how-to books on line dances, and it didn't appear on American Bandstand, so back before YouTube, there was no way for teens in various towns to find out how the dance went. So they just made something up, different in each town, usually beginning with the side steps of the Hully Gully.

The Continental, an early version

It looks simple but is a bit trickier than it looks.

- QQQQ Side R, close L, side R, Tap L closed to R (or cross-kick) and clap.
- QQQQ Side L, close R, side L, Tap R closed to L (or cross-kick) and clap.
- QQQQ Walk forward R, L, R, lift L knee turning 1/4 to the right.
- QQQQ Walk backward L, R, L, tap R.

Almost the same:

French version of **Le Continental** taught by **Gérard Contant**

- QQQQ Side R, cross L over R, side R, Tap L closed to R.
- QQQQ Side L, cross R over L, side L, Tap R closed to L.
- QQQQ Walk forward R, L, R, tap L turning 1/4 to the right.
- QQQQ Walk backward L, R, L, tap R.

Variation: Cross-kick on counts 4 and 8. Left the knee on count 12. Kick forward on 16.

Variation: Do full rolling turns right and left during the first two parts.

The Continental in John Waters' *Hairspray*

John Waters thoroughly researched all of the dances in *Hairspray*, so this is an accurate Baltimore version. 📺 This is my first choice when I teach the Continental.

- QQQQ Side R, cross L over R, side R, Tap L closed to R and clap.
- QQQQ Spin CW L, Spin R, Spin L, Tap R closed to L.
- QQQQ Step side R, cross-tap L, point L to L side, cross-tap L
(Sway body away from the cross-taps with semi-raised arms to the sides)
- QQQQ Turn 1/4 to the right and walk back L, R, L, Tap R closed to L.

They danced to The Dovell's "Do The New Continental"

Continental Walk as described in **Ballroom Dance Magazine** in 1962

- QQQQ Side R, cross L **behind** R, side R, touch L heel closed to R and clap.
 QQQQ Side L, cross R **over** L, side L, R heel closed to L and clap.
 SS Touch R toe back, cross R over L with weight.
 SS Cross L over R with weight, walk forward R turning 1/4 to the right
 (Slightly lunge that R forward, ready to push back into the step-ball-change.)
 QQQQ Walk back L, cross R behind L, step L forward, tap R toe back.
 (The last part works better as a step-ball-change than crossing R behind.)

Carl Williams learned **The Continental** "on the beach" in the 1960s

Counted in double time

- SSSS Side R, close L, side R, hold.
 SSSS Side L, close R, side L, hold.
 QQS Small cha-cha-cha forward RLR.
 QQS Small cha-cha-cha forward LRL, turning 1/4 to the right.
 QQQQ Tap R toe forward, replace weight back, tap L toe forward, replace weight back,
 QQQQ Tap R toe forward, replace weight back, tap L toe forward, replace weight back L.
 SS Place R heel out to the R side (toe up), cross R over L w/o weight.

A YouTube video shows young dancers at The Beaver Bar, Murrells Inlet, S.C. doing this version very fast, to Tutti Frutti. They turned to the right during the second cha-cha.

Continental Walk as described by Dick Blake was more similar to the L.A. Hustle and Bus Stop

Line dances gained a new popularity in the 1970s disco era. The very first 70s disco book was Disco Dances by Dick Blake in 1974. It contained this description of the Continental Walk.

- QQQQ Walk back 3 steps, R-L-R, and touch L closed to R.
 QQQQ Walk forward 3 steps, R-L-R, and touch R closed to L.
 Repeat both.
 QQQQ Side R, cross L over R, side R, touch L closed to R.
 QQQQ Side L, cross R over L, side L, touch R closed to L.
 QQQQ Side R, touch L closed to R, Side L, touch R closed to L.
 QQ Click heels together twice.
 QQQQ Touch R foot in front twice, touch R foot in back twice.
 QQQ Touch R foot in front, touch R foot in back, touch R to the R side.
 Q Kick R foot across L foot turning body 1/4 to the left.