

Nightclub Two-Step

(Club Two-Step, NC2S)

Richard Powers

Buddy Schwimmer developed this dance in the late 1970s and it has become widely popular among American social dancers. It is the perfect dance for easygoing, moderate-tempo music, and provides a welcome break between fast dances. It can be danced in a wide range of tempos, from 72 to 92 beats per minute, with 82 bpm as its sweet spot.

Buddy Schwimmer originally taught Nightclub Two-Step as rock-step first, danced in quick-quick-slow timing. Today dancers accept both slow-quick-quick or quick-quick-slow timings, depending on what the music indicates.

We teach it in the slow-quick-quick timing for two reasons.

- 1) This timing feels more musical, especially for the Follow role, letting her dance the strongest movements at the strongest moment in the music, on count 1. When the music goes, the Follow goes, instead of being delayed by a rock step.
- 2) This timing is more commonly done in the Bay Area, and we want our students here to dance comfortably with most local dancers. But we don't dismiss the other timing. They're both good. You'll probably want to adopt the timing done by most dancers in your area.

The Basic Step

Take a relaxed closed dance position.

Count

- 1 The Lead takes a slow step to the left side with his left foot as the Follow steps side right.
- 2 The Lead rocks his right foot behind his left heel, taking weight on the ball of his right foot, as the Follow rocks back left.
- & Both replace weight off the rock step.
- 3 The Lead takes a slow step to the right side as the Follow steps side left.
- 4 The Lead rocks his left foot behind as the Follow rocks back right.
- & Both replace weight off the rock step.

This timing is slow-quick-quick, slow-quick-quick.

As mentioned, some dancers prefer rock step first: quick-quick-slow, quick-quick-slow.

Nightclub Two-Step Figures

There are three families of steps in nightclub two-step. Knowing this will help you remember and even invent the figures.

- 1) Steps in place.
- 2) Turns
- 3) Swing moves

Flip-Flops (Toss-Across)

Preparation:

- 4 Let go of held hands and rock back away from that side.
- & Replace weight, still opened away, side-by-side.

- 1 Taking the basic side step, the Lead gently casts the Follow over into his left arm, letting go of the other arm, while backing into his partner's right arm.
- 2 Rock step, facing in the opposite direction.
- 3 Taking the basic side step, the Lead gently tosses his partner back into his right arm, releasing the other arms.
- 4 Rock step.

Follow's Spot Turn

The Lead raises his left arm in an arch and leads her with a gentle body lead behind her shoulder to turn clockwise under his left arm.

The Follow's footwork is:

- 1 Step forward right, pivoting clockwise on that step.
- 2 Take a small step side L to "paddle" around.
- & Return weight to your pivoting right foot, on the same spot where it had first stepped.
- 3-4 Re-take closed dance position and do the second half of a basic step in your partner's arms.

Combine Those Two Figures

Chain the Follow's Spot Turn into Flip-Flops. To lead this, his raised left hand twirls a little extra, like stirring a teacup.

Lead's Spot Turn

This is similar except the Lead raises his left arm in an arch and he turns under it himself under counter-clockwise as the Follow dances a basic step in place.

Lead's hint: Keep your raised left hand back "on her side" when you go under. Keep the fingertips of your left hand behind your head when you have your back to her. Otherwise you may pull her into your side.

Usually the Follow goes under first, then the Lead can go under the next time.

Chained Spot Turns

- 1-2 Start a with the Follow's Spot Turn.
- 3-4 The Lead catches his partner's left hand with his right hand, before it reaches his shoulder, turning toward his right, and turns himself under his own right arm.
- 1-2 He catches her right hand with his left, to repeat the Follow's Spot Turn.
- 3-4 Finish the Spot Turn by catching partner in closed position.

It feels like he is *pulling* her under but *pushing* himself under.

Chained Spot Turns can be done from open two-hand position as well. This is even a bit easier.

Musicality

Many figures, like this one, last four bars of music (8 slow counts). This is the time of two complete Basic Steps, so if he leads *two* basics before leading a four-bar figure, it will feel poetically musical, with the time of the basic steps matching the time of the figure. This isn't a hard-and-fast rule, but merely a good suggestion.

Left Half-Turn

Preparation Check Step:

- 8 The Follow falls back away from the Lead during the preliminary rock step, still in closed position.
- & Replace weight forward, facing partner squarely.
This preliminary motion starts the Follows counterclockwise early, in an easygoing way.
- 1 Side step (his left, her right) as he sends her past him, toward his left.
- 2 Rotate 180° counterclockwise, still facing partner, and take a quick side step onto the other foot.
- & Quickly cross your free foot over in front with weight.
- 3-4 Finish with the second half of a non-turning basic step.

This rotates 180° counterclockwise.

Right Half-Turn

- 1 The Lead steps left around in front of his partner, looking back at her and pulling away from her, just like the first step of the rotary waltz. The Follow steps right forward between his feet.
- 2 Rotate 180° clockwise, still facing partner, and take a quick side step onto the other foot.
- & Quickly cross your free foot over in front with weight.
- 3-4 Finish with the second half of a non-turning basic step.

This rotates 180° clockwise.

Swing Moves in Nightclub Two-Step

Swing moves usually begin by holding one hand in swing-out position. How do you get there from closed position? You could drift back to swing-out position, but more people prefer to use the Follow's Spot Turn.

Spot Turn to Swing-Out Position

- 1 The Lead raises his left arm in an arch and leads her under into a Spot Turn.
- 2 The Lead lowers his left hand at the end of the turn, so that it's halfway between his heart and his partner's heart.
- 3 Brace away from the connecting hand and take a small step back away from your partner.
- 4 Do a rock step in swing-out position.

The reason for this placement of the Lead's left hand at the end of the Spot Turn is because normally the Follow will be expecting to come back to closed dance position, with her left hand returning to his shoulder. The lowered hand communicates to the Follow that she isn't coming back to closed position, because there is a lowered hand in the way.

Waist Slide

From swing-out position, the Lead raises his right elbow a little, and leads (gently pulls) her to straight walk forward past his right side. It feels like he is pulling her right hand under his right elbow. Then he places his right shoulder forward and backs himself in front of her, turning counterclockwise.

The Follow walks three steps forward in slow-quick-quick timing. The Lead's footwork is the same as the Lead's Spot Turn, turning halfway counterclockwise in place.

Catch each other in closed dance position on the second bar of music.

Inside Turn

- 1 From swing-out position, the Lead brings the Follow forward off of her rock step and crosses his left hand toward his right, across in front of her, to lead a Follow's Inside Turn. He steps in place as she steps side right foot toward him, backing in front of him, turning counterclockwise.
- 2 The Follow steps side left foot, exactly as in the Left Half-Turn. He steps right foot in place.
- & The Lead lowers his left hand and sweeps her toward his right side. The Follow crosses right foot over left, as in the Left Half-Turn. The lead mirrors her cross-step by crossing his left foot over ***in the same direction that she is traveling***.
- 3-4 Catch partner in closed dance position and rock step (i.e., the second bar of the basic step).

Note that unlike most swing moves, the Lead does not travel into his partner's position. Instead he hangs back in place as she turns under, then he joins her, traveling in the direction that she is going.

She-Goes-He-Goes

- 1 From swing-out position, the Lead brings the Follow forward off of her rock step and crosses his left hand toward his right, across in front of her, to lead a Follow's Inside Turn. He steps in place as she steps side right foot toward him, backing in front of him, turning counterclockwise.
- 2 The Follow steps side left foot, exactly as in the Left Half-Turn. He steps right foot in place.
- & The Lead keeps his left hand in the air and moves his right shoulder forward to back in front of her, as he crosses his left foot forward over his right foot.
- 3 The Lead turns counterclockwise under his own arm.
- 4 Both take a rock step facing partner, in swing-out position.

Note that you don't finish in closed dance position this time. You may continue with the above Waist Slide to end up in closed dance position.

Around The World

From closed position, he leads a Follow's Spot Turn, but he keeps the fingers of his right hand on her back, rolls his thumb down to catch her and re-direct her toward his right side, then leads her to travel forward behind his back. Catch each other on the fourth bar of music.

- 1-2 He leads her under his left arm, redirecting her to turn back.
- 3-4 She walks forward past his right side; he steps in place, starting to turn to his left.
- 5-6 She walks forward behind his back; he turns to his left, stepping in place, and sees her.
- 7-8 Both catch each other with a side step (to his right, her left) and rock step.

Undulating Style

A common Nightclub Two-Step style is to slightly rise onto the ball of the supporting foot on each count and slightly sink during the "and" counts. The slow side step would thus be one rise-fall, counting "1" then the rock step would be a second rise-fall, counting "2." The undulating style feels satisfying, especially when it's understated, just barely rising. This styling is entirely optional.

Cumbia

This is a form of Salsa. The Cumbia basic step is similar to Nightclub Two-Step, except you can push straight back on each rock step. This push-back styling is also seen in Nightclub Two-Step styling now and then, offering a nice contrast in your connection to your partner. All of the NC2S figures work well in Cumbia.

Swing Waltz (Waltz Swing)

Do any of the above figures in even 1-2-3 waltz timing. This works to a variety of waltz tempos.

Waltz Swing is useful when a waltz is played but there is no room for traveling. It also has a "sweet spot" tempo halfway between cross-step and rotary waltz, around 130 bpm. When waltz music is this tempo, Swing Waltz may be your best choice.