

THE TEXAS TOMMY

Also known as the Texas Tommy Swing

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The Texas Tommy is widely recognized as the earliest form of swing dancing, created by African Americans in San Francisco's Barbary Coast around 1910. We had only vague descriptions of the Texas Tommy until a silent film surfaced with scenes of San Francisco, circa 1910, featuring two clips of dancers doing the Texas Tommy. We can clearly see that it was an evolution of the two-step, which was in turn a modification of the polka. Johnny Peters took the Texas Tommy to New York in 1911 where it achieved brief fame in vaudeville before evolving into the Lindy Hop over the next fifteen years.

Music: 1910 Ragtime

Tempo: Approximately 100 beats/min

— The Steps —

Texas Tommy Basic Step

The Lead steps side L (ct 1); hops L bringing his R in the air behind his L (ct 2); scuffs his R foot downward to the ground and away to his R (ct 3); hops L (ct 4). Repeat opposite side.

The Follow dances opposite steps, mirror image.

Style: Vertical posture, very loose and easygoing, with free hands floating easily, with a downward bouncing throughout like a jackhammer.

Texas Tommy Polka

The Lead steps side L, at the same time flicking the R foot out to the R side (ct 1); R approaches L (ct 2); steps side L as above (ct 3); hold (ct 4). Repeat opposite. The Follow dances opposite steps, mirror image. Shoulder-Hold Position. Posture is lower to the ground than the Texas Tommy Basic Step.

Texas Tommy Galop

Version A: Counts 1 and 2 of the Texas Tommy Polka repeated, traveling toward the Lead's left side.

Version B (not done in class): The Lead drops L in place while at the same time flicking the R foot out to the R side (ct 1); take weight with the extended R toe and L approaches R. Repeat traveling to the right side.

Texas Tommy Pivots

The Follow steps R in place, pointed toward the R, as the Lead steps L around the Follow's R foot, rotating halfway CW (ct 1); Repeat with opposite roles (ct 2). Repeat, traveling in LOD.

continued

— Figures —

Texas Tommy Basic

The Texas Tommy Basic Step done in an open 2-hand hold facing partner, neither rotating nor traveling.

Back-to-Back

Same step, letting go of one hand to roll away to back-to-back position and re-take free hand. Return to facing partner. Take either hand, and turn in either direction.

Right-to-Right Hands

Just that, doing the same step, holding right-to-right hands.

Follow's Underarm Turn

Using the same step, the Lead encircles the Follow's head to lead her to turn CW or CCW. This works with either the right or left hands.

Tandem Position

From right-to-right hands, the Lead turns the Follow clockwise under his arm halfway, so she has backed in front of him, both facing the same direction, taking free left hands, above shoulder height. While doing the same basic step, the Lead swivels the Follow alternately to the left and right, looking at each other at each side. Exit with a Follow's CCW turn into a Face Loop (Neck Drape), with her R arm around his neck.

Free Spin

While doing Pivots, the Lead lets the Follow go, she does one full pivot turn solo. He catches her R hand with his L and immediately brings her back in to more pivots. Or he catches her R hand with his R hand to bring her into Tandem Position.

Hand Behind the Back Swingout (Hammerlock)

The Lead places the Follow's R hand comfortably behind her back during the pivots, takes it with his R hand behind her back, then lets her unwind to swing-out position and rewind back in again, placing his free L hand on her R shoulder. Keep held hands as low as possible during the transitions out and in.
Or from this R-to-R hands, he may bring her into Tandem pos.