

English Country Dance Glossary of Terms for Positioning, Dance Steps, & Movements

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Dance Positioning

Couples (Partners)

1st Couple – First couple(s) are the partners at the top or head of the set. If a duple minor set or dance this is every other couple (or set of partners) down the set counting from the top.

2nd Couple – Second couple(s) are the second partners from the top of the set and every other partner and so on down the line of the set.

Corner

In a square set your corner is the person diagonally across the set from you.

In a three couple or triple minor set the terms *first corner* and *second corner* are sometimes used as in Scottish dances where you are in the middle and your first corner is the person of opposite sex diagonally to your right, and your second corner is diagonally to your left.

Corners (very simply, are your diagonal neighbors)

1st Corners is the corner which consists of the 1st man and 2nd lady.

2nd Corner would consist of the 2nd lady and 1st man. Basically it is your neighbor's partner or the other person of the opposite sex (or the person who holds that position), diagonally across from you within your group of four.

Neighbor

When the set forms, it is the person or position you are dancing along side of in the line. In a grouping of four at duple minor set it is your opposite set of the couple you are dancing with. Usually, unless improper it is a member of the same sex on your same side up or down the set.

Partner

The person you are dancing with, your date. (Remember?) Try giving an encouraging smile from time to time. Apart from being friendly, you could give each other cues as to what the next move of the dance is.

Most musical groups will give you an introduction or opening chord to let you honour your partner at the start of the dance, and there is usually a chord at the end too. It is conventional at the end of a dance to thank your partner for the pleasure you have had dancing with them.

Proper & Improper

Proper and Improper relates to merely the side which you are on. The "Music" almost always dictates or holds the position of "the head of the set" therefore, when the gentlemen are lined up together in a row on the proper side, looking from the position of music at the head of the set, their line is on the right side. The ladies are lined up in a row on the left. To be improper, is for the gentlemen either one, or all of them, to be on the wrong side; or as with the ladies visa versa.

THE Set

THE Set, or A Set is the design or position of how the formation of the dance is constructed. This is not to be confused with "setting" or "to set" which is a dance step or movement. The "THE Set" is the way in which the dance is lined-up or the orientation in which it is situated. It is the structure up and down the line of the dance. Terms like "...up and or down the Set", "...across the Set" "...head of the Set", or "...bottom of the Set" mean the position of where you are, or are supposed to be in the dance formation. The "head" or top of the set is determined nearly always by the location of the music except when and where there is a "PRESENCE" or head table of dignitaries at a different end. In that case, the "PRESENCE" determines the position of the head of the set. In the centuries before, the King and Queen, Governors, Generals, hosts, special guests, etc. were what they termed as the "PRESENCE" and they would be either at one end or the other of a large hall. The head set then would be perpendicular to them, directly in front of them, regardless of where the music was situated.

Dance Steps & Movements

Allemande

Allemande is a Square Dance term for a turn, so Allemande left your corner translates into turn your corner with the left hand. The exact grip you use varies from place to place, and generally doesn't matter much. Square dancers hold each other's arms just above the wrist, Scottish usually hold hands (either with a shake-hand hold, or an elbow-lock), the English usually do the same as the Scots, or cup hold of each other's elbows.

Back to Back (do-si-do)

This is the same as up a double and back, but going round someone as you do it. Commonly the someone is your partner: you face each other and pass right shoulders, pause and fall back to where you started, passing left shoulders. Usually this

takes eight steps, four there and four back. Sometimes you start passing left shoulders (and come back right); this generally happens in a dance where you do two back to backs in succession, or sometimes because it fits the flow of the dance better (eg. after a left hand star). So long as the two of you agree which way you are going it doesn't matter too much, though it may make the set look untidy if you do it the other way from everyone else.

The American and barn-dance term for this move is *do-si-do*.

Balance

This can mean one of three things: Balance and Swing, Balance back, or Balance in Line. In Balance and Swing the balance is a more enthusiastic form of setting. You step onto your right foot and hop on that while kicking your left foot across, then step onto the left and kick the right across (equals four steps worth of music). That counts as one balance: you are often told to balance twice and then swing someone. Kicking to the right first is not a universal convention - you may have to co-operate to avoid getting your ankle damaged. Americans generally hold right (or both) hands and balance forwards (onto the right foot) and back (onto the left) before a swing. Local convention, age or exhaustion may dictate a set instead of the balance.

Balance back is a fudge to soak up some music; you take a small step back before doing some move such as corners cross. If you have been standing still before some move it is often nice to do a balance back on the end of the phrase of music before you are supposed to do your move; this warns others that you are about to do something, gives you a feel for the music, and it gives you extra space for the real move.

Balance in Line tends to be when you are in a line facing in alternate directions (so you are holding someone's right hand in your right, etc.). It is essentially a matter of everyone setting, either in a kind of concertina effect, or everyone takes a small step forwards, then back (the step has to be small as you don't let go while you do it). Square dancers term a line of four people facing in alternate directions an *Ocean Wave*.

Cast

Typically in a longways set casting down a place; unless you are already facing out or down you turn up and out of the set (the long way round), and then move down the set past one person.

Common variations are to cast to the bottom of a set instead of just one place, or to cast left or right in circular sets. If a caller tells you to cast left one place he probably means turn to your left, but then move one place to your right, but there again he may mean move one place left. Use initiative!

Casts take four or eight steps depending. Slower dances give you a sweeping eight steps, faster ones don't.

Changes

There are Changes of all variations but the most common are "rights and lefts" by twos threes, and or fours. The Change is usually always starts directly across the set with your partner. Partners extend their right hands to each other, take hands and pull across the set to exchange places; with them across the set that is one Change. Now improper, to accomplish two Changes is to continue on to extend your left hand up or down the set to your neighbor's partner and pull by to exchange places with him or her. The third Change is to extend now again your right hand to your partner now improper directly across the set to get back proper again. If the goal is progression, you have achieved it at the execution of the third Change. If your goal it to return to you orinal spot, you need to continue by extending your right hand again one last time to your neighbor to return back to place. You now have accomplished a full square. *It is impriant to note whom you are dancing with and your corners and you poeiotn. You will always "turn in" toward the box or square, never turn out. It is also important to get and hold eye contact, because if confused, you may get a cue from your partner or one of your neighbors.*

Chasse

Is a foot chase with yourself ... sideways. (*the second foot chases the first foot*) It's almost like a sideways slide-step gallop step. The first step moves sideways slide-step motion and the second foot meets up to it, immediately the first foot slide-steps again and so on.

Circles (4 hand turn)

Holding arms half bent allows maximum scope for coping with error. Generally circles are to the left, possibly followed by one to the right. Circles left then right are usually slipped, those only one way are at a speed dictated by the music.

Generally you get eight steps for a circle once round, and another eight for a circle back. Some dances give you a circle half way in four steps.

Playford described circles for four (six) people as 'Hands four (six)', so people sometimes use that term to mean go round in a circle as well as taking hands to number couples off.

Corners Cross

The given (first or second) corners change places (conventionally passing right shoulder) in what is usually four steps. In some dances you get eight steps to change places (usually described as a *Hole in the Wall* crossing, after the dance) where

you pass each other right shoulders and immediately turn to face nose to nose during the first half of the music, and reluctantly back away into place during the second half.

It is worth looking at the other corner person before you move, both because you are dancing together, and because it gives you a check that they are planning to cross with you.

Some dances have explicit balance backs before the cross, and some others have a fast sequence of first corners cross, second corners cross, first cross back and second cross back in a total of about eight steps.

Cross

A common way for a first couple to move down a longways set. They simply cross over the set passing right shoulders and go down the outside one place.

Hole in the Wall Cross - is a cross, but there is a rise and fall in the center of the cross usually stepping out and toward the center whether straight or on the diagonal rising to an eleve' close to meet face to face and then exchanging places by turning and falling back into the other's position across the set.

Cross and Cast

A common way for a first couple to move down a longways set. They simply cross over the set passing right shoulders and go down the outside one place (the next couple moving up a little to let them in). Some three couple set dances use first couple cross and cast, cross and cast as a way of getting the top couple to the bottom. Usually danced to a skip change step.

Dip and Dive (London Bridge)

I never know which is the dip and which the dive. Anyway, holding inside hands, a couple will go under an arch made by another couple, arch over the next, under the next and so on. A dip and dive can either be round a Sicilian Circle, when all the couples facing one way will be told to start by making arches, and the others to go under, or in a set dance where the dip and dive is started by an end couple going under an arch made by the next, over the next and so on until they get to the far end, other couples join in when the starting couple gets to them, and when you get to the end you turn round and start going back by going under an arch. Generally a dip and dive in a set dance will be until you get back to where you started; in a Sicilian Circle it will usually be for four places.

Fall Back

To fall back is to step or move backwards gracefully usually a step used to make room for the next following step. It's used to create distance and interval of spacing.

Figure Eight (and its variations)

Generally one couple dances a figure eight path round another couple. You and your partner lead through that couple, crossing with your partner as you do, go round behind the person who was next to your partner, into your partner's place. Thus far is a half figure eight; for a full figure eight you continue, crossing again with your partner to get home. Ladies first is the convention in the crossings, senior first if it is two people of the same sex doing the figure eight.

A variation of the figure eight is a double figure eight; as one couple crosses through the other, the other couple casts into their place and then leads through crossing so that both couples follow the same track with everybody moving. Bored couples having a full figure eight done round them can confuse the others by turning it into a double figure eight.

Half figure eights are a common way of getting improper couples back onto their own sides.

Figure eights are generally danced to a skip or skip-change step, though it is a nice touch to slow down to a walk for the last four steps.

Gate or (Gatepost)

Typically in a longways set a working couple leads up round another couple (the posts) and back to where they started. The posts hold nearest hand with the working couple and help them round. In fact the posts should move backwards in a small circle so both dancers move the same distance, pivoting about their joined hands. It is important that the posts give enough weight to make their presence known; otherwise this figure degenerates into 'working couple lead up and cast back to place', which takes too long. Usually this figure takes eight steps; show-offs can swing round twice instead of the official once (but you have to agree with the other dancer ahead of time).

Gipsy

Two dancers walk round each other shoulder to shoulder gazing lovingly into each other's eyes. The first instruction I was given for a gipsy was to imagine a sixpence on the floor and the pair of us should walk round it as close as we could; the principle of this is sound, but years later someone had to ask me why I always stared at the floor in a gipsy when I had my partner so near. I have heard it described as "walk round touching noses with your partner, making full use of available space".

Heys

Also known as *Reels*. There are umpteen varieties of heys, mostly obscure and irrelevant, and all defying explanation. The basic principle is that a line of dancers face in alternate directions up and down the line and move along passing each other alternately by the right and left in a serpentine path. When you get to the end you turn round (counting that as passing someone) and work your way back down the line starting with the same shoulder again. As described this rather implies lots of dancers doing the hey for ages; in practice heys are usually for three or four dancers, and frequently for only two or three changes.

Heys should usually be danced to a skip change (or skip) step rather than walked (or plodded); a common failing is to finish them ahead of the music.

Circular Heys

Circular heys are even easier than straight ones because there are no ends to cause confusion. In a proper longways set a circular hey for four changes means pass your partner right, crossing the set, your neighbor left up or down the set, your partner right again across and finishing up by passing your neighbor left to get home. This usually takes sixteen steps, four for each change which is fairly leisurely. *Three changes of a circular hey* leaves you in your neighbor's place, and is a common way to make you progress up or down the set. Usually you are only given eight steps for the three changes, which makes it impossible to treat it as three distinct changes. People quite often offer hands in four changes so anyone in doubt can tell which side to pass (and be steered in the right direction), but this is much less common in the brisker and less well phrased three changes.

A common failing is to turn 270° instead of 90° the shorter way; this may work, but it costs unnecessary time and effort and worries other dancers that you might be lost.

Straight Heys

Three couple longways dances often have straight heys on the sides. In these the top and middle dancers face up and down, and pass right, then while the original middle person turns round to the right the original top and bottom dancers pass left, then while the original top turns round to the left at the bottom the other two pass right. In some dances the hey stops at that point (*half a hey on the side*) with the end dancers having swapped places and the middle one back home. In other dances the hey continues until everyone is back where they started.

Other Heys

Heys are a good way of moving so you meet other dancers, so it is not surprising that they are common, and come in assorted varieties. All the ones described below are for a three couple longways set.

Grimstock Hey

If both the men's line and women's line do straight heys together then the whole set is dancing, but you don't see much of your partner. If the men's line starts by the top two men passing right shoulders (as is conventional), but the top two women start by passing left then as you come in to the hey from the end you have a chance to hold your partner's hand. This is not as romantic as it might sound because as soon as you have collected your partner's hand you have to push it away hard as you separate to let the next couple in from the other end. Grimstock heys are so called because they appear in a dance of that name. They are also referred to as symmetric or mirror-image heys.

Morris Hey

A Morris hey is the exact opposite of a Grimstock one: instead of leading in from the end the middle couple lead up the middle while the tops cast out to meet in the middle and lead down as the bottom couple cast up. This is exactly the same path used in the Grimstock hey, but danced in the reverse direction. Morris heys are extremely rare in English (non-Morris) dances.

Cross Hey

So far as the bottom two couples are concerned this is the same as a Grimstock hey, but the top couple start by giving right hands and crossing over as they go down through the twos so that they go between the bottom two dancers of the opposite sex. As the hey is completed the first couple will find themselves back at the top, but on the wrong side, so most dances with cross heys have two in succession (the top couple giving left hands the second time: ladies first).

Honour

It is only polite at the start and end of a dance to acknowledge that your partner exists with a little bow or curtsy. Some dances have an explicit coda added to the end for a more formal honour where you take a small step to the right and bow or curtsy, possibly followed by a step left and another bow or curtsy. Many of the Playford dances have the instruction *set*, but eight steps' worth of music; this is usually translated as *set and honour*, or *step and honour*, where you are expected to step right and bow or curtsy, and then left and bow or curtsy. Many *set and honours* could equally well be set and turn single instead.

Inside Hands

The hands given to your partner, neighbor, or neighbor's partner that are closest to the inside of the set

Lead Down and Back and Cast

A common sequence where you notionally have eight steps to lead down the inside of the set, and then eight to come back up to where you started and cast round one couple to progress. The usual mistake is to stride out for eight steps, then turn and find you have six steps to come back and do the cast as well. It is better to lead down with small steps, turning on the

end of the phase of music, to give yourself a full phrase for the back and cast bit. Often the lead down is walked, and the lead back danced to a skip change step, which also gives you more time for the cast.

Pass Through

An American dance term. It generally happens from two lines of dancers facing each other. To pass through, simply walk forwards past the facing dancer passing right shoulders. Strictly speaking since this is a Square dance term you should then stay facing out until told to do something else.

Poussette

A poussette is a way for two couples to change places. To do a poussette you hold hands with your partner, and one of you pushes to move forwards, while the other moves backwards. The move should be on a diagonal towards the other poussetting couple, and having moved a double out from the set you fall back diagonally into their place (they moving in the opposite direction into your place). This far is described as a *half poussette*. To do a full poussette you keep moving so you get home having gone round a complete diamond track. Who pushes and who pulls depends on the dance, but by default the senior man should push. Poussettes tend to show up whether people are listening to the music; it is obvious where you should be at the end of each phrase of the music, but it is very easy to get ahead of it. Pulling your partner by bending your arms while standing still is only allowed in extremely crowded halls.

A *draw poussette* is like a half poussette, but instead of a shunting move the person backing up moves backwards in a complete semi-circle so that as a couple you change places with the other couple, but as individuals you have swapped sides of the set.

Rigadoon

We know that a rigadoon was a fancy bit of stepping on the spot, but different people suggest various interpretations. A common version is to tell dancers to jump on the spot with feet together, hop on the left foot with the right leg out to the right, jump feet together, hop on the right with the left leg out to the left. (The sequence is usually then repeated.) I quite like a restrained heel and toe step: hopping left touching my right heel on the ground, hop again putting my right toe on the ground, hop right with a left heel, hop right with a left toe.

Setting or "to Set"

Playford describes this as 'A single to the one hand and then to the other'. (A single means 'step and close' - from standing with feet together take one step and bring the other foot to meet it so you are back with feet together.) We generally interpret this as a step to the right and bring the left foot beside it, followed by a step back to the left and bring the right foot back - a total of four beats of music. ***To prove that they have completed the step to the right some people will lift the right foot off the floor once they have brought the left to meet it; I regard that as unnecessary showing off*** - I can see their ankles taking the load and do not need to see the other foot off the ground. Setting is usually a courtesy move to introduce you to some dancer, the instruction might be *set to your partner*, so you should take note of whom you are setting to (and conversely who is setting to you); usually you can move towards them as you set, and then recover your position during the next move. (So a Set and Turn Single turns into a set and spiral home, but sometimes the next move will not lend itself to such cheating so you have to plan ahead.)

Note: In this class we do prefer trying to make a "polka 1,2,3...1,2,3" type of step with the Setting step keeping it within the 4 beats. Lifting the opposite foot momentarily off the ground does add a little flair to the step and character to the dance, if it can be done with consistency and fluidity, keeping it within the beats allowed.

Siding

The problem with siding is that when Cecil Sharp published *The Country Dance Book* he didn't know what siding was (when Playford published his dances 'everyone knew it' so it didn't need explaining). It was fairly obviously a move like up-a-double-and-back and Cecil Sharp suggested that we treat it as change places with your partner, and change back ('half a left hand turn followed by half a right hand turn without actually holding hands'). Eventually people discovered that it was originally lead forward to stand beside your partner, and then fall back (so side twice would be meeting right shoulder to right the first time, then left to left the second), but by then everyone was so used to Cecil Sharp's suggestion that they refused to change. We now tend to talk about 'Cecil Sharp Siding' or 'Pat Shaw Siding' to describe the two. Some people talk about 'the older' or 'the newer' forms, but you can never be sure which they mean; others say 'curly' (or 'banana' or 'swirl') siding as opposed to 'into line' siding.

In general if I have to side twice in quick succession I prefer the Pat Shaw version, but if siding once, in a crowded room (where four steps towards my partner will put me in the next set) I prefer the Cecil Sharp version. So long as you and your partner agree it doesn't matter anyway.

Siding (Cecil Sharp)

It is a siding that causes you to go beyond the halfway point and to pass on the inside shoulder 7/8s of the way around your partner or your corner and return to your place. As you pass you turn and match opposite shoulders on your return. It is

usually a “flirty” movement gaining close proximity to your dance mate. It is usually almost always done on the corners diagonally - 1st man 2nd lady or 1st lady 2nd man.

Stars or (all or Right hands in/Left Back)

Stars are turns for (usually) four people. You should reach out with the given hand and hold hands with the opposite person. A good rule is ‘hands at shoulder level for the shortest person in the star’. Although you are mainly holding hands with the opposite person you should try to catch hold of the other pair's hands with a spare thumb or finger if you can. You should aim to have your arm slightly bent to allow room for error.

Another (older) term for star is ‘Hands Across’ which gives a better idea of dancing with the others; one often sees people putting out an arm and more or less pushing everyone else away instead of pulling them in.

In Western Square dances there is a convention that in a men's star each man holds the wrist of the man in front of him. Usually a right-hand star is followed by a left-hand one; in such stars you can be as fast or as slow as you (plural) wish; some stars are a set distance (eg. once round) in a set number of steps which determines the speed.

Turn (Right-Hand, Left-Hand, or Two Hand)

Turns can be with either two hands or one. If with one it should be specified, as in ‘turn your corner by the left then partner by the right’. In a two hand turn you should aim to have the pair of you and your arms roughly making a circle - neither keeping the other person at arm's length, nor making it look as though you are fishermen describing the one that got away. In a single hand turn you should aim to have your elbow slightly bent as a buffer (if you both lock your arms straight as you meet then one of you is going to have a shoulder wrenched off). In general you should offer your hand as though shaking hands.

Need I remind you that when holding someone's hand it is a good idea to make them feel wanted by smiling at them and giving weight to make them feel your presence?

In English dancing you generally have eight steps for turns; in many modern dances you only get four. For a turn in four steps you need a much closer hold than described above, either cupping each other's elbows in your palms or, as is common in American dances with a fast turn, holding your hand up as though to demonstrate breaking a brick with a Karate chop and then loosely wrapping your fingers around the other person's hand.

Turn Single (or Turn around Yourself)

Turn single means you turn alone (as opposed to turn your partner I suppose). It is not a case of putting your weight on one toe and giving a good shove with the other foot to twizzle round in nothing flat (and then stand like a lemon while the music catches up). You have four steps for what has been described as ‘walk round a dustbin lid’. Conventionally you turn in a clockwise direction (which makes sense in set-and-turn-single as you step right, then left, then right again into the turn), but when two people lead somewhere, or meet, then turn single it looks prettier (for the fly on the ceiling at least) if you turn in opposite directions.

Up a Double and Back

Facing ‘up’ you go forwards for four beats of music, and then backwards for four, which gets you back where you started. Since you are usually doing it with your partner beside you it makes sense to hold your partner's hand as you do it; indeed the figure is often called Lead up a Double. ‘Up’ is either towards the top of the set (conventionally the end nearest the music), or in to the middle if it is a circular set. Four beats of music lets you take three steps, and then bring your feet together, so people variously describe it as ‘four steps’, ‘three steps and close’, ‘three and a half steps’ or ‘it's obvious’. Few people fuss much as to which foot you move first, but if you insist on a rule then moving the right foot first is usually safer. The term ‘double’ derives from earlier dances where a single was one step and close (two beats of music), and a double was twice as much music.

Waltz Step

Not used often, it is a “1, 2, 3 type” of step mostly if not always used in $\frac{3}{4}$ time pieces. Usually in slow pieces, it is used to be a graceful time utilizing step.

Other Dance Steps & Movements

Arming

Usually with your partner, you link arms (almost always right the first time, and left the second), go once round each other and then fall back to place. You have eight steps for this, which is usually more than enough, so it is a good idea to keep this as a slow move, and have an explicit fall back to place on the end to use up the music. If you have the space you can try linking arms by holding your arms out nearly straight and hooking the backs of your hands behind your partner's elbow so you have further to travel; in a crowded room you will just have to hook elbows and move slowly.

Back Ring

What it says. Instead of forming a circle facing in you do so facing out. Conventionally the circle still moves in the same (clockwise) direction. There is a running debate as to whether you should hold hands up at shoulder level, or low down. In general I prefer hands down because it is easier; for a display I might use hands up to show off.

Basket

A basket is a swing for four people. You should advance to join it as a couple, with the man's right hand round his partner's waist, and her left hand on his nearest shoulder. When you meet the other couple the women rest their right hands on the other man's left shoulder, and the men put their left arms round the other woman's waist and grasp each other's wrists. (Sometimes a woman prefers to be squashed by hands round her waist rather than having a wrist digging in her back.) Everyone puts their right feet in as though for a swing, and scoots round. If the women lean in and do a slip step instead of a swing's pivot step then their feet will go flying from under them and they will fly round held up by their arms on the men's shoulders and the arms round their waists. Men have some control over whether this happens: holding the women above the centre of gravity and/or picking them off the floor will provoke it. Women who do not want to go flying can *a*) push down with their elbows, *b*) keep the basket slow by tripping up the men, *c*) grab the men round the neck to strangle them or 'accidentally' digging a thumb in under the ear or *d*) determinedly lean back. Most 'respectable' dance clubs prefer to keep the women under control (which leads to a faster basket); the barn dance crowd likes to show off. I leave it to the women to say whether they want to go flying, and don't do it at all in a crowded room since flying feet are quite heavy weapons.

Many callers (and many women) are adamant that the women should not go flying because of the very real risk of the men dropping them.

Box the Gnat

An American dance term. Typically used at the end of a grand chain: a couple meet offering right hands, they change places with the woman going under their joint raised arms, and turn to face each other still holding right hands. This means that they swap positions, and end up facing back the way they came.

Swat the Flea is a less common variant, where you use left hands instead of right.

California Twirl

An American dance term. Starting with a couple facing in the same direction holding inside hands (man's right, woman's left) she turns left and moves into his place under their raised hands while he moves a step forward and then turns right and moves into her place. The couple ends up facing in the opposite direction from where they started.

Circle to a Line

An American dance term. Typically the call is *Head couples to the couple on your right and circle to side lines*. The head couples move to the given side couples (in this case) and they circle four, but instead of completing the circle the head men let go of the side women and unwind the circles to form lines of four on the sides, with the original top head couple at the top of their line. Sometimes this is called by *Head men break to form a line* when people are already in the circle. This is an easy move for the head man leading the line, but the woman at the end of the unwinding circle feels a whiplash effect as she gets flung into place. Rather than her following the full circular path to get there the man holding her hand can raise it and she can take a short cut by going under it, turning left into place.

Courtesy Turn

This is an American dance term (the older English dances were invented in days when you were not allowed to put an arm round your partner, and hooped skirts enforced the rules). It can be added to the end of a Right and Left through or a Ladies chain, and is simply when the man (already holding the woman's left hand) puts his right arm round her waist to help her complete the turn. She can give him her right hand to hold by putting it palm out on her right waist, but she may prefer to keep her hand free if she is about to need it eg. for a ladies chain. Note that a courtesy turn leaves both dancers facing in the same direction, whereas a left hand turn leaves them facing in opposite directions - this can sometimes dictate whether or not a courtesy turn is appropriate.

Flutter Wheel

A less common American dance term. It is similar to a half ladies chain, but swaps the men instead of swapping the women. Starting from two facing couples the women do a half right hand turn, and then complete the turn after collecting the other man's right hand in their left. The men have to start moving before they get collected so the women can keep moving smoothly to do a full right hand turn.

Grand Chain

You face your partner and pass your partner giving right hands. As you let go of your partner's hand you take the left hand of the person coming towards you, and pass them by the left. Keep on passing right and left alternately until told to stop. This will typically be when you meet your partner half way round a square set.

Conventionally this results in the men going anti-clockwise round the set and ladies clockwise. Square dancers talk about a 'wrong way grand [chain]' if you go in the other direction.

As described it is a mistake if you meet someone of your sex, but some English dances have chains in them where this is supposed to happen.

'Weave the Ring' is the Square dance term for a grand chain without hands.

Grand Square

An American dance term. It only applies in a square set. What happens is that you and your corner can be thought of as standing on the diagonally opposite corners of a small square, and you move round that square as everyone else goes round their equivalent squares. The call is usually Sides Face: Grand Square. On this call the side couples face their partners and move backwards four steps while the head couples face in and move forwards four steps, people carry on moving with the original sides going to head positions, and the original heads falling back into side positions and so on. Hence as a head dancer you lead in with your partner to meet your opposite, turn to face your partner and back out with your opposite to side place, turn to face your opposite and back away, then turn to face your partner and come forward to meet them; as a side you face your partner and fall back, turn to face your opposite and come forwards, then turn and lead in with your opposite to meet your partner, turn to face your opposite and fall back to place with your partner. This gives a total of 16 steps to get everyone home. At this point there is usually the call Reverse, whereupon everyone does the same move in reverse - the heads fall back away from their partners while the sides lead in. *Heads face: Grand square* is allowed, but unusual, variant.

Ladies Chain

This typically involves two facing couples, each with the man on the left. The women cross over giving each other right hands, and do a left hand turn about three quarters with the opposite man to end up beside him where the other woman started from. This is quite a difficult figure for the women as they start off aiming to the other woman's right, but then have to go round the man's left. The men can help, first by moving to their right so the women coming to them don't have so far to go, and then by swinging them round firmly in the left hand turn. The turn can either be a real turn (in many older dances written for polite society), or a courtesy turn by the man putting his arm round her waist (she can grab his right hand with hers if she wants to avoid being tickled), and they can swing round as a couple. (Sorry, that should read "she can hold her hand palm outwards at the intersection of the right hand seam and her waistline to receive his hand.")

What has been described so far is a *Half Ladies Chain*, it is often repeated to make a *Full Ladies Chain*. Callers who tell dancers to do an unspecified 'Ladies Chain' risk confusion, though in the square dance world it is defined to mean a Half Ladies Chain.

A ladies chain where the man does not put his arm around the woman is often called an *Open Ladies Chain*.

In a *North Country Ladies Chain* the woman follows the same path, but the man collects her with his left hand, holds it above her head so she goes under his arm and then while he still faces in the same direction he transfers her hand from his left to his right so that they end standing side by side holding inside hands. Rather than fumbling to change hands behind his back an accepted alternative is for the man to turn to keep looking at her as he changes hands.

All Four Ladies Chain is a common move in Square Dances. Instead of giving right hands to one other woman the women form a right hand star and go half way round; effectively the two pairs of opposite women do separate ladies chains.

A few dances have three or five ladies chains. By analogy with four ladies chain the women form a star, pass their partner, pass the next man, and chain out to the next (the one that would be opposite in a four ladies chain). This is the point where *Levi Jackson Rag* falls apart.

Shy men must appreciate that women *want* arms round waists, or at least they do in this figure because they have to turn rather fast and have to be swung round somehow.

Lead Down in Line of Four

A common figure in American Contras where (typically after a swing neighbors or ones swing) all four face down and lead down in a line of four. The turn to come back can either be turning as couples (when the man should back up and swing the woman round) or turn alone (when it is polite for the middle people to turn outwards so they can acknowledge the ends; if the middles turn in they can admire each other but they are turning their backs on the ends). Commonly the return is followed by a call to Bend the Line where the ends swing in while the middles lag a little to form a circle; the other common finish is for the middles to cast when the ends lag and swing the middles around them to reform the longways set.

Kissing

A few hundred years ago kissing was almost on a par with shaking hands on being introduced, so it is not surprising that many Playford dances contain kisses. Cecil Sharp in transcribing them for a Victorian public usually replaced kissing by 'Honour whoever'. Every so often people look up the original description and try to resurrect the original kisses.

It all sounds good clean fun, but usually people are unsure how intimate they should be with the total stranger they have just been told to kiss. (The converse is that one is very happy to kiss one's partner, but would prefer to do it in comfort at a time and place of one's (two's?) own choosing.) The only time I have seen successful kissing dances was at an Inter Varsity Folk Dance Festival where a quick peck on the lips was the approved style. At more general folk festivals and dances where most people are supervised by their spouse the woman can offer a demure cheek, but usually a quick hug is substituted (possibly with a kiss delivered somewhere about six inches off the other person's ear). The best version I have seen was a man successfully collecting the woman's hand and kissing that with great formality.

Pot Hooks

A fairly obscure move. In a duple minor longways set it swaps the couples by the first corners crossing right and almost immediately the second corners cross left; everyone stays facing out and then backs into progressed places passing their partner left shoulder. When I do it I think of it as a back to back, but falling into the other place; as a first corner I do a determined wide back to back, and as a second corner I do a timid left shoulder one so I start a bit behind the first corners and then keep inside them as I fall back.

Promenade

Generally on the end of a dance in a circular or square formation. Usually the promenade is anticlockwise (sometimes called *Ballroom direction* from ballroom dance conventions), which means that the man is on the inside and the woman on the outside. The hold used will depend on how the couple ended the last move, but a cross hand hold in front is the most common, or his arm may be round her waist from the previous figure. Some people use a Gay Gordons (butterfly) hold. If you use a cross hand hold you can end the promenade with a flourish by the man stopping and as his partner comes into place beside him she does a turn single under their raised right arms. (So four steps before the end of the music the man will stop, let go of her left hand and raise their right hands, she moves forwards under their right arms, and then turns clockwise as she moves into place beside him.) In a progressive square dance this can be a helpful signal to her that she is now 'home'. A *Half Promenade* applies either to square sets, or a longways set, where you promenade half way round (across) the set and then turn as a couple to face in.

Right and Left Through

This figure starts with two dancers facing another pair, frequently facing across the set to your partner, but sometimes facing up and down the set. Anyway, facing as directed you change places with the one you are facing giving right hands as you pass, then turn to your neighbor and change places with them giving left hands, ending up holding left hands and both facing back in to the set. Usually you start a right and left through with a man standing beside a woman, the man being on the left. As they finish off the right and left the man can put his spare right arm round the woman's waist to bring them into place facing across. A right and left is so frequently followed by a second that it is dangerous to describe it as such: usually what has been described is called 'a half right and left through', and two in succession 'a full right and left through'.

Star Through

An American dance term. Starting with a man facing a woman the man holds up his right hand (like a policeman stopping traffic) and she holds up her left so they touch palms. Each move forwards, the man turning right after passing her, and the woman left after passing under their joint raised arms. The couple ends up holding inside hands both facing the same direction. I find it easier to recall this move by remembering that it is often followed by a circle, so leaves you set up holding inside hands ready to circle four with another couple.

Strip the Willow

A move where the end couple of a longways set gets to the far end. The end couple turn each other by the right (probably with an elbow hold) once and a half to get to the other side, and then turn the next person on the side by the left, go back to their partner for a right turn, the next person on the side by the left, back to their partner by the right and so on, turning everyone of the opposite sex by the left in between right turns with their partner. At the far end the working couple need to turn half or once and a half to end up on the correct side.

Swing (*more of a technique than an dance step*)

Swings are worth working at to get right. The principle is that two dancers stand side by side facing in opposite directions, they then cling together while moving forwards; the result is that they move together in a tight circle, and if they know what they are doing they can move rapidly and smoothly, whereas if they do not they can't.

The simplest instruction is to stand beside your partner right shoulder to right shoulder, take half a step back, and then put your right feet in so the feet are adjacent. A more precise version is to take the dustbin lid from your turn single practice (described later), and put a saucepan lid in the middle of it. Put your right foot forward onto the edge of the saucepan lid and your left foot on the edge of the dustbin lid. To swing you simply walk round keeping each foot on its circle, taking your weight on the inner foot, and using the outer foot to push you round like working a scooter. Remember to pick the inside foot up to move it round the circle - some people tend to keep their inner foot nailed to the ground.

You can practice a swing by yourself by standing on your right foot and propping yourself up with your left foot a little behind and to the left of the right one. If you do a determined step with your right foot and then catch up with your left you can find yourself going Step and Step and Step and... which will match the beat of the music when you do a swing for real. Obviously if you practice by yourself you will move slowly forwards, when attached to a partner you should move in a circle.

How you hold your partner is largely a matter of choice (I have seen the *scruff of the neck* hold work). The rule I give is that it is up to the man to make a decision, but he will of course do whatever the woman suggests - this allows the woman to decide, but means the man has to make a rapid decision if she doesn't.

The standard hold is a *Ballroom hold*: the man puts his right hand in the middle of her back (level with her centre of gravity, which is usually just above her lowest ribs) and this arm does all the work; she rests her left hand on his right shoulder, and they hold the other hands loosely out to the side (in crowded rooms they slide these hands up the arms to hold elbows instead). Note that in a swing you should be beside your partner, and if you are confident of each other and want to squeeze up close you can clamp your hips together - dangerous if you are not synchronized, but intimate if you are.

The easiest accepted hold is simply a cross-hands hold: you hold right hand in right, and left in left (conventionally right hands on top), and skip round in a much wider circle. When faced with this I usually try for a hold with a bit more togetherness by holding left hands as before, but putting my right hand on my partner's right shoulder with my right arm held straight (they should do the same, but it doesn't matter much if they don't). This arms-length hold means we can swing more as one unit. Note that this can be dangerous in a crowded room because you can fling your partner into someone else, and as you have them clamped at arms length they can't leap close to you to avoid the collision.

The next step up from the arms-length hold is to use my right hand to hook round their left waist (and their right hand to grab my left waist); this holds us quite close so we can get a reasonably fast swing. This is an easy swing to teach (and

being the same hold for each sex helps), but it has the risk that people will stand facing one another and learn to swing by a side slip, rather than stand beside each other and swing with a forward step. (Men who try for this swing on women who are not expecting it will find that women have fast reactions to grasping hands reaching across in front of them.)

A better swing hold (but regarded as showing off) is to grab the other person's waist with your right hand, and join left hands out of the way above your heads.

In a step-hop dance where there is a serious risk that you will step while your partner hops a tight hold is not recommended; in this sort of dance I usually use a cross-hand hold, modified so we cup hold of each other's right elbows with our right hands.

Women need to have it pointed out that some men do not know where a Ballroom hold hand in the middle of the back should go; if he gets it wrong you should tell him as otherwise you cannot expect him to learn better. Unsure men should err towards too high rather than too low.

Texas Star (Star Promenade)

A Square dance term for a men's star where the men put their outside arms round their partners' waists so all dancers are moving (the ladies scampering along on the outside, and the men slowly in the middle). The women are supposed to place their inside hands on their partners' nearest shoulders, reserving the despairing grab round his neck for extreme cases. They may find it easier just to put their arms round their partners' waists instead.

If you are a woman who fails to get collected by your partner then don't waste your time running after him; you will do far better standing still and waiting for him to come round again.

Turn Contra Corners

(Often abbreviated to Contra Corners.) An American dance term, though the figure appears in some English dances as well. If you are the middle person in a three couple longways set then opposite you, from right to left, you have your first corner, your partner, and your second corner. In other words your first corner is to your diagonal right and your second corner to your diagonal left. The turn contra corners figure is for the middle couple to turn by the right a bit over half way, turn their first corners by the left, each other right about three quarters, then second corners left and meet in the middle - typically for a balance and swing.

You can do this move in a duple minor longways set, but the corners have to be awake as they are someone's first corner, and also someone else's second corner; the simple advice for the corners (generally the second couples) is to hold a left hand out and cooperate with whatever comes.

The turns are usually with hand-holds, but if the music inspires you to skip you may prefer a forearm hold instead.