

WHAT IS WEST COAST SWING?

West Coast Swing provides the versatility of beauty, elegance, and high-energy. Dancers enjoy a wide variety of music, including Blues, Country, Disco, Pop music. And age is no ruler!! For the beginning dancer or a novice West Coast Swing dancer, the following should help you understand just the surface of this great dance!

West Coast Swing is a slotted swing dance. The man leads the lady up and down a “slot,” while moving out of the slot when she passes. West Coast Swing basics are 6-count and 8-count patterns, with many variations that may extend a basic pattern.

The footwork of the West Coast Swing basic is comprised of two walking steps, on beats 1 and 2, followed by two triple steps (3&4, 5&6). The first triple (3&4) is characterized by compression between the partners with a release away, toward the ends of the slot. The anchor triple (5&6) is danced in place.

Variations on the specific feel of the steps can be “community oriented” toward a particular area, region, or even city. But the general pattern of a basic six-count “walk-walk, triple step, triple step” or 8-count “walk-walk, triple step, walk-walk, triple step” is universal.

The West Coast Swing basic contrasts to the basic of East Coast Swing, where the first 2 steps begin with a backward movement of the rock step. The following triples move to the sides, and the direction of dance is more circular, rather than slotted.

West Coast Swing dancers tend to “glide smoothly” in their dance, as compared to East Coast Swing, Lindy Hop, and Jitterbug dancers, who tend to move with a bouncing motion.

Unlike many of the ballroom dances, West Coast swing does not always have a “mirrored” look. The footwork of the leader and follower frequently vary from each other. Therefore, a great emphasis is placed on the leader’s ability to lead and the follower’s ability to follow, using proper frame and connection.

There are many aspects of West Coast Swing and other dances that define their unique characteristics. Hopefully, this provides an overview for the beginning dancer.

– *Jeanne DeGeyter*