



Edinburgh University Swing Dance
Society notes on:
6-beat Jive: the basics



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These notes apply to the type of dance we teach in ‘swing taster’ classes; it is based on a simple social dance that is called ‘Jive’ in the UK and ‘East Coast Swing’ in the USA.

The basic rhythm;

Beats	Leader (man)	Follower (woman)
1,2	Rock step L,R	Rock step R,L
3&4	Triple step LRL	Triple step RLR
5&6	Triple step RLR	Triple step LRL

The leader and follower are therefore dancing in mirror image to one another.

“Rock step” means rock your weight back to the indicated foot, placing it a little behind you, and then return it to the other foot underneath you. Your upper body stays still – the ‘rock’ affects the lower body only, and is quite subtle in this kind of dance.

“Triple step” means transfer your weight from one foot to the other and back, and transfer again, all in the space of two beats. You can do the middle step precisely on the ‘&’ half-beat if you want to, but since this is a ‘swing’ dance you can delay it a little if you like (see our pages on swing music for more information).

Common problems;

- 1) Getting confused over which foot to move. There is a golden rule about this – when you step, always commit your weight 100% to the foot on which you step and never stand with your weight distributed between your legs. If you follow this rule, you will always know which foot to step with next (it will be the one on which you are not already standing!).
- 2) Getting confused over whether you are supposed to do a rock step or a triple step. This is understandable, because this is a six-beat rhythm done to eight-beat music, so the rock step comes at a different place in the bar each time. Just keep practising, and if necessary chant ‘rock step, triple step, triple step’ to yourself.

Dancing together in ‘the basic’

Stand with the follower to the leader’s right, both facing the same wall. Leader, put your right hand on your follower’s right hip; follower, put your left hand on his nearest shoulder, with your elbow somewhere behind (not above) his right arm. Leader, offer your left hand in front of you, at about diaphragm height, between you, and follower, take it (a gentle placing of one hand in the other, not a Vulcan Death Grip please). Now edge a little inwards so that there is an angle a little greater than a right angle between you.

When you do the rock step, each open out so that you are facing the same way (the leader leads this mainly by opening his right arm, not by pushing with his left). When you do the first triple, close up towards each other, the leader again leading this with his right arm, so that you are at

about 90 degrees to each other, and on the second triple, start to relax this. It helps if you move forwards a little on the first triple, and backwards a little on the second (this is not necessary to dance well, but helps you get the feeling of the rhythm when you are learning).

When you have practised for a while, the leader can try moving a little around to the right on his first triple step. If he takes his right arm with him, the follower will feel it and will also move around, so that the couple are now facing a different part of the room.

Practice this simple basic until you are really comfortable with it before going on to sheet 2.

To make suggestions or to request up-to-date copies, e-mail Jamie@swingdoctors.org.uk

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Swing Dance Society**