



Edinburgh University Swing Dance
Society notes on:



West Coast Swing: 1) the basics

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West Coast Swing is not a style that we teach much at EUSDS (because it does not date back to the true swing age). We do, however, sometimes teach it at our swing taster classes in Freshers' week, which is why we are providing these notes.

The slot: West Coast Swing is a 'slotted' dance; the man should imagine a narrow path on the floor, the width of his partner's hips – he needs to lead her so that she is only ever going up and down that path, and nowhere else. In general, he will be either occupying the same slot with his body, or will be stepping out of it a little to the left or a little to the right, but only occasionally going along it. [Some flashy variations break the rule of the slot, but these are used sparingly and are not beginners' moves anyway].

Stance: West Coast Swing is danced with a much more upright stance than Lindy Hop; the upper body is vertical, but the knees a little bent.

Rhythm: for all of the moves to be covered in our introductory classes to West Coast Swing, the rhythm is a six-count;

beat	leader	follower
1,2	Rock-step - rock weight back a little on your left foot, then return it to your right foot, transferring your weight completely each time.	Rock-step - rock weight back a little on your right foot, then return it to your left foot, transferring your weight completely each time. Sometimes, when the man draws you forwards, your rock step will be replaced by a walk.
3&4	Triple step - left, right, left	Triple step - right, left, right
5&6	Triple step - right, left, right	Triple step - left, right, left

* - many teachers will begin from the triples; we are beginning from the rock step because we do this in most of our other styles (and because it makes no difference to the dance).

Practice the rhythm lots before adding any actual figures.

Beginners' Figures:

Push-out: Begin side-by-side (lady to man's right, man's right hand on lady's right hip, her left hand on his nearest shoulder). The lady is standing in the 'slot' and the man is to the left of it. Rock step side by side. On the first triple, the man gently pushes the lady forwards along the slot. On the second, he moves into the slot where she has vacated space, and she turns to face him as she 'runs out of arm'. There is some tension remaining in the connected arms at the moment this move finishes.

Sugar push: As the man does a rock step, he uses the tension in his left arm to draw the lady forward (so she does a walk-walk forwards). He also raises his right hand to shoulder height, palm outwards. On the first triple, the lady places her left palm against the man's right palm, and there is a feeling of compression (which the man can guide into a sinuous twisting motion by turning his body, when he has the hang of the basic step). On the second triple, the compression is released by the lady moving backwards. You end up in the same position you started, and can repeat the figure.

Right side pass: This move requires the man to use his 'rock-step' to get out of the slot. As he does his rock step, he steps back on the left and then crosses his right foot over and steps on it, so he has moved just out of the slot. Tension in his left arm as he begins the rock step guides the lady forwards along the slot (men, be careful not to take your left hand to the side of the slot when you take your body there). On the triple, the man raises his left hand in front of the lady and she carries on going forward down the slot for as long as she can, before 'running out of arm' forces her to turn (ideally on the last triple). On the last triple, the man moves into the slot, now vacated by the lady, and turns to face her as she turns to face him. Lower the connected arm at the end.

Under arm turn: As the man does a rock step, he uses the tension in his left arm to draw the lady forward (so she does a walk-walk forwards). He stays in the slot. On the first triple, he raises his left hand to be about a fore-arm length above the lady's right shoulder, and converts it to a flat palm. There is a feeling of gentle compression in this arm by the end of the triple. On the second the triple, he leads, by means of a gentle and small (1 inch or so) push with his hand, the lady to turn clockwise on the spot (she triples during this, and does not actually spin; she also moved back down the slot a little). The hand remains connected and is lowered at the end.

Push spin: As the man does a rock step, he uses the tension in his left arm to draw the lady forward (so she does a walk-walk forwards). He stays in the slot. On the first triple, he raises his left hand to about the lady's shoulder height (or a little below), and converts it to a flat palm. There is a feeling of gentle compression in this arm by the end of the triple. On the second the triple, he leads, by means of a gentle and small (1 inch or so) push with his hand, the lady to turn clockwise on the spot (she triples during this, and does not actually spin; she also moved back down the slot a little). The man let's go once the lead is accepted, so that the lady turns freely. He may then catch her right hand with either his left or his right hand.

Comb: Starts with a right-to-right hold. As the man does a rock step, he uses the tension in his right arm to draw the lady forward (so she does a walk-walk forwards) and raises right hand up in front of his face. He stays in the slot. On the first triple, he lowers his right hand (with the lady's hand attached) over and behind his head, with a 'combing' action, and places his left hand on the front of the lady's left hip as soon as she is close enough (this would be while the combing is taking place). On the last triple, he lets go with his right hand and gently pushes the lady away with his left. Her left hand follows down his arm so that it finds his left hand easily.

Leg-raised pose: Starts with a right-to-right hold. As the man does a rock step, he uses the tension in his right arm to draw the lady forward (so she does a walk-walk forwards). The man stays resolutely in the slot, and (by bending his elbow back) simply draws his left hand to be beside his left waist. The lady comes in straight to face the man, close. The man then stands still during beats 3,4,5,6 (when the triples would normally be). On beats 3&4, where the triple would normally be, the lady reaches behind his head with the open palm of her left hand, and raises her right knee *outside* the man's legs, so that her thigh is at about 45 degrees and her foot, pointing downwards, is next to the man's calf. This position is held until the man ends it by pushing away with his left hand, when the last triple happens. Done well, this move looks very intimate (although no improper contact actually takes place).