

DANCE FRAME

Dancing is a team sport. Every team needs a leader to call the plays and players with assigned responsibilities to get the job done. Dancing is no different.

In fact, dancing is probably the hardest team sport because the players are working in a small space to accomplish a big picture, and communicating without talking.

The man has traditionally been designated the “leader” in a dance partnership, if for no other reason than the fact that he is going forward and can see where the partnership is going.

The lady has the job of “following” the leads but knowing what part of each step is her responsibility. The person going forward, for example, be it man or lady, is responsible for creating the power to move the partnership forward.

The number one rule for each partnership is to maintain a proper dance frame. Each partner is responsible for the dance frame. A good dance position allows each partner to have space and not interfere with the movement of the partnership on the floor.

Although many people complain at first that a good frame looks like just so much “styling,” it is an important part of the overall technique. A proper dance frame is not just done for the sake of looking good. You can learn steps, but if you can’t execute them because you keep getting in each other’s way, you won’t enjoy your dancing.

So, what is a good dance frame? It is different for smooth dances than for Latin. It is different for tango than the other smooth dances. But in any rhythm, a good dance frame has tone, not a vice grip and not spaghetti arms.

In smooth dances, the partners are offset so that each can swing his or her legs forward and back unimpeded. Each partner has a “window” to look through over the other partner’s shoulder. The lead is felt through the torso.

In Latins, the man leads through his arm, but he is not shoving his arm at the lady; the arm is an extension of movement in his body. When his partner feels the lead, she is reacting by moving her entire body, not just her arm.

A good dance frame is consistent. Leading and following is a conversation between partners, without words. You don’t have to yell, just “talk.” In any form of communication, you want to cut down the amount of “static” or noise being transmitted with the message. If the man’s frame is consistent, his leads will be heard (felt) clearly and understood. If the frame gets floppy or tightens, or worse disappears, the message transmitted is garbled and the partner cannot follow.