

INTRODUCTION TO JIVE

Jive is danced internationally as a competition rhythm but its home is decidedly America. It is distinguished from other types of swing dancing by the use of “triple” steps within most of its figures. It falls into the “Latin” category of dances because it is danced mostly in open position with no rise & fall.

RHYTHMIC INTERPRETATION

When doing jive, give it a little bounce, as though in sheer joy. Steps are small; jive is about action, not traveling. Take a deep breath and imagine a meat hook snagging you at the sternum, like a slab of beef in a meat locker. This will lift your torso and make your steps lighter.

MUSICAL TIMING

Jive timing is 4/4 (four beats in each measure). Music is generally fast (40 to 46 measures per minute, as compared to 28 to 30 in rumba, for example), and this is why the steps have to be small.

Jive figures usually begin with two even steps, followed by a triple (also called a chasse) or sometimes two sets of triples. The typical counts go like this:

A. 2 steps and one triple:

12 3a4 or QQ QaQ

B. 2 steps followed by two triples:

12 3a4 5a6 or QQ QaQ QaQ

Each quick counts as one beat. Each “a” is $\frac{1}{4}$ beat. In example A, in order to fit those five steps into 4 beats of music, you steal some time from the “Q” before the “a”, thusly:

Timing:	Q	Q	Q	a	Q
Beat value:	1	1	$\frac{3}{4}$	$\frac{1}{4}$	1

DANCE POSITION

Jive is danced most often in open position, like other Latins. Connection is through the arms, like in the other Latins. Both dancers should have a slight pressure towards the other’s hand. This creates a physical feel of being “connected”. Like in the other Latins, this connection is from the body through the arms and the hands to the partner. Hands are joined equidistance between the partners, and are “aimed” at each other, forearms parallel to the floor, so that energy is directed through the connected hands, toward each other’s hips.

Arms are never limp. Use the free arm rhythmically. What you do with them is a matter of personal taste, but best keep it simple.

There are three categories of leads:

A. Weight changes: Follow his weight shift

B. Physical: Man increases the tone in his arm; Lady responds by moving in the direction indicated until he restricts the movement.

C. Shaping: Man shapes his body and arms, indicating a direction to the Lady.

In open position, you may be told to “shake hands” or use double handhold but most often Lady’s right hand will be in the Man’s left hand.

In closed position, unlike smooth dances, you are not trying to have body contact. Stand about six inches apart. In semi-closed, the Man may be in promenade but the Lady may be opened out away from his left side.

FOOTWORK

Throughout jive, the knees are flexed and veer inward slightly, causing the inside ball of the foot to touch the floor first, and then roll onto the flat of the foot. Hips work up and down in the triples, like a pendulum swinging. Flexing of the ankles creates the bounce.

Poise is forward with weight carried over the balls of the feet.

Most jive steps begin with a “rock recover,” or QQ in the basic count. Step back; think of opening the hip like a door swinging open. Recover; think of closing the door. Keep the body straight and to your partner.

BASIC STEPS

Jive Chasse: QaQ QaQ

In closed position, Man steps side left, closes right to left, steps side left again, then side right, close left to right, side right. Lady does the opposite. This will usually have the rock recover in front of it.

Change of Places right to left (can also be left to right): QQ QaQ QaQ or 12 3a4 5a6

Man: Rock back, recover, side left, close right to left. Side left raising joined hands to turn Lady to the right. Step forward right, almost close left to right, step forward right facing Lady.

Lady: Rock recover, side right, almost close left to right, forward right starting to turn right, step back left continuing to turn, almost close right to left, back left into open facing position (facing Man and RLOD).

Change Hands Behind the Back: QQQaQQaQ or 12 3a4 5a6

Man: Facing wall, rock recover, chasse forward left/right, left starting left-face turn, place right hand over Lady's right hand; chasse right/left, right changing Lady's right hand into left hand behind the back.

Lady: Rock recover, chasse forward right/left, right starting right-face turn; continuing turning with chasse left/right, left, completing one-half turn to face wall.

Whip: QQQaQ or 123a4

Man: Cross right behind left turning right face leading Lady to your right side, side left still turning, swivel on left and step side on right, almost close left to right, side on right completing a $\frac{3}{4}$ right face turn.

Lady: Forward left to Man's right side (slight turn to the right), continue turning with a step forward on right between Man's feet, swivel on the right and step left, almost close left to right, side right.

Double Whip: QQQQ QaQ or 1234 5a6

Man: Cross right behind left, turning side left, still turning cross right in back of left, still turning side left, still turning side right, almost close left to right, side right, completing 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ turn right-face turn.

Lady: Forward left, forward right between Man's feet, forward left, forward right, side left, almost close right to left, side left.