

A Ballroom Dancing Primer by Jorge Morales

Ballroom dancing is an enjoyable pastime for millions of people around the world. Where there is music, people's feet are always tapping along to the beat, driven by a desire to simply get out and dance, perhaps a slow-moving, emotion-filled Waltz or a sexy Cha Cha.

And now, you have decided to take up ballroom dancing.

Like any other physical activity, dance is best learned by "doing," and the more opportunities that you find to practice and develop your skills, the more chances you have to become a potentially great dancer. But, how do you get started?

Here, you will discover a few hints to help you get your feet moving into the world of ballroom dancing.

First, **frequent dancing spots** in your area, such as Latin or swing nightclubs, or studio dance parties. In fact, most cities have a variety of places to dance that are beginner friendly and welcome newcomers who demonstrate a willingness to learn and are eager to have fun. Fortunately, most dancing hotspots offer introductory classes — and often intermediate classes — at the beginning of an event. These classes help newcomers learn basic patterns, which can be immediately taken onto the dance floor. Attend these types of events as often as you can for a few weeks, as you will become acquainted with the rhythms and the general idea of dance, and most importantly, discover the cultural environment of ballroom and Latin dancing. And, do not worry if you do not have a dance partner. Actually, in most cases you do not even need to bring a partner. Instead, focus on the music and what inspires and motivates you. Remember, the more you "do," the faster you will learn and improve.

Next, **check out studio group dance classes**. Here, you will receive a more structured approach to learning new dance steps and techniques. Beginner classes will introduce you to the basic foot patterns, turn combinations and lead/follow techniques, giving you an overall foundation that is critical in helping you to reach more advanced levels. Intermediate and advanced classes will build upon the foundation you gained in basic classes, incorporating spins, turns and footwork, as well as more involved choreographed combinations.

Perhaps your successes with group dance classes will encourage you to take your newfound skills one step further with **private lessons**. One-on-one sessions allow you to challenge yourself — with more complex footwork and turn patterns — to go beyond group class material and push the limits of your dancing. These sessions allow you — and perhaps your partner — to meet with a dance professional, who will evaluate your personal strengths and weaknesses, help you target your specific dance goals, and encourage you to get the maximum enjoyment of the dance. Also, expect to work on developing choreography with the option to receive training for shows and competitions.

Of course, you do not need to wait to take private lessons. If you are eager to get a jump start on developing your dancing skills, a professional instructor can take you from the beginning, moving you at your own pace and challenging you where appropriate.

Getting started in the exciting world of ballroom and Latin dance is easy and fun. From there, the sky is the limit!

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