

The Cha Cha Chasse Step

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The chasse step is an element of dance that is used in virtually all rhythm and smooth dances. It consists of quick gliding steps with one foot always leading. The chasse generally consists of three steps taken in a given direction. The word chasse is derived from the French language and literally means to chase. In essence one foot chases the other. Several key aspects of the chasse step sequence used in cha cha will be discussed in this article.

The cha cha basic consists of a rock step followed by a chasse step sequence, then repeated in the opposite direction. For example, a rock step is danced followed by a chasse (side-together-side) to the right, and then another rock step is danced followed by a chasse (side-together-side) to the left. Similarly, in the forward and back progressive cha cha basic, a rock step is danced followed by a chasse (forward-together-forward) then another rock step is danced, followed by a chasse (back-together-back). The term together indicates that the feet close toward each other during the chasse sequence.



Timing: It is important to have a clear understanding of cha cha timing to achieve a clean basic step. The music is written in 4/4 timing meaning that there are four beats in one measure of music. Cha cha is danced continuously to the timing of 2,3,4&1. The chasse in cha cha is danced over two beats of music with syncopation. A rock step is danced over beats 2,3 (two steps) followed by the chasse, consisting of three steps danced over 4 & 1. The beat value for the chasse is ½ beat + ½ beat + 1 beat over counts 4 & 1. In the measure we have two beats for the rock step plus two beats for the chasse step for a total of four beats in which five steps are danced.

Weight Changes: A dance step normally implies a weight change from one foot to the other. In the chasse there are three steps with three corresponding changes of weight. It is important to fully change weight over all the steps; otherwise, you may affect your partner's rhythmic flow. There are instances in which the leader does not change weight over one of the steps. This is known as a 'fake' and is used to intentionally put both partners on the same foot for patterns where partners face in the same direction in a side by side or shadow dance position.

Footwork: The footwork describes what part of the foot is in contact with the floor over each step. Chasse steps in rhythm dances are typically taken as ball-flat. The step starts on the inside edge of the ball of the foot and then lowered to the flat part of the foot. This footwork helps us to achieve a corresponding leg and hip motion that is characteristic in cha cha as well as other rhythm dances.

Step Width: Taking wide steps over a chasse is a common problem. Stepping wide makes it more difficult to keep proper timing with the music and simply does not look as elegant. A more compact step pattern will always make it easier to close your feet over the chasse. Smaller steps will also give you greater overall stability and is a good habit to develop.

Variations: In cha cha we can dance the chasse as described above as well as several other variations. An example of another step sequence that can be danced to chasse timing is the Cross Triple. This is danced as forward and backward progressive steps in which there is a locking action of the feet on the 2ND step. Another example is a running chasse consisting of three small steps forward and back that is danced to chasses timing in an open cha cha basic.

Other Applications: Chasse steps are found in other rhythm and smooth dances. In Foxtrot the chasse is danced to the rhythm slow, quick & quick. Similarly, in Waltz the chasse is danced to the timing of 1,2,&3. The progressive chasse in Quickstep is danced to the rhythm slow, quick, quick, slow over 1 ½ measures of music rather than two beats as

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All students are required to wear masks. Partner rotation will not be allowed. Enrollment with a partner is recommended.

Please wear comfortable clothes and leather bottom shoes or dance shoes. Sneakers or rubber bottom shoes are not recommended.

Instructor:

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in cha cha. In the international Latin dance Paso Doble, the chasse is danced side, close, side, close step in place then repeated in the other direction all to marching tempo. Perhaps the best practice for the chasse is found in the Merengue. This dance consists of continuous chasse steps each on a single beat. As such it provides an excellent way to develop a more polished chasse step with hip and leg action.

There is a general misconception that cha cha tempo is very fast when in fact it is only 30 measures per minute on average. It is important not to rush through the steps. Accordingly, timing and feet positioning must be precisely controlled. The secret is to relax, stay in rhythm, take smaller steps, and enjoy the music.