

Second Position Breaks

By Richard Fiore

(Licentiate, (LAB, LAR, T) US Imperial Society of Teachers of Dancing)



Second Position Breaks have a unique appearance that adds flare to both American rhythm and international Latin dance styles. This figure is also known as Side Breaks, Side Rocks and Cucarachas. The term second position is derived from the ballet second foot position where the feet are turned out pointing in opposite directions, with heels spaced approximately twelve inches apart.

One difference worthy of noting, is that in American rhythm and Latin dance styles, the feet are not as turned out but rather are only slightly turned out and are spaced about shoulder width apart. Second Position Breaks are most danced in rumba, salsa and mambo but can also be applied to a variety of other rhythm dances.

Second Position Breaks consist of two three step patterns that are taken alternately to each side. This figure has the feature of providing a transition from the normal back and forth motion to side-to-side motion. Second Position Breaks are generally phrased to eight beats of music and therefore danced in even sets to ensure that the following figure will commence on the correct foot. In rumba for example, Second Position Breaks are danced to the rhythm quick-quick slow + quick-quick slow. The man commences with his weight settled into his right hip taking the first step with his left foot to the side. The lady commences with her weight settled into her left hip as she takes her first step with her right foot to the side. The lady dances the mirror image or natural opposite throughout the figure. The man's feet positions for American Rhythm style are:

American Rhythm Style:

1. Left foot side
2. Replace weight to right foot
3. Left foot closes to right foot
4. Right foot side
5. Replace weight to left foot
6. Right foot closes to left foot

Second Position Breaks can be danced in several dance positions. This includes the normal closed position, open facing with man's left hand holding lady's right hand, or double hand hold. It can also be danced apart without hold where the lady follows with a visual lead. Any combination of these dance positions can be danced consecutively or randomly.

Weight changes in American style rhythm differ from that of the international Latin style. In the American style rhythm, the weight is fully changed over each step. A common error occurs as one lightly taps to the side rather than changing weight. One of the challenges of this figure occurs with weight changes on the 2ND and 5TH steps. Over these steps the feet stay in place as the weight is transferred to the opposite foot. This is referred to as replacing weight. These two steps in particular serve to greatly enhance the appearance of this figure.

The footwork for Second Position



Breaks is predominantly ball-flat meaning that the step is initiated on the inside edge of the ball of the foot and then finished by lowering to the whole foot. The hips will rise and lower over each of the steps in response to the footwork. As weight is taken onto the stepping foot, the knee straightens as the corresponding hip rises. Similarly, as weight is taken onto the other foot, that knee straightens as the corresponding hip rises. This gives a distinct hip movement especially when dancing side steps. The combination of proper footwork and weight change provides an opportunity to express a more stylized figure eight hip roll action.

In the international Latin style, weight changes for Second Position Breaks may be partial. This variation is acceptable in this style. A step taken in this manner where only partial weight is transferred is known as a pressure step. Accordingly, steps 1 and 4 are pressure steps in this style. This technique will give this figure a somewhat different appearance. The man's feet positions for International Latin style are:

International Latin Style:

1. Left foot side, partial weight
2. Replace weight to right foot
3. Left foot closes to right foot
4. Right foot side, partial weight
5. Replace weight to left foot
6. Right foot closes to left foot

Second Position Breaks in any style provides the dancer with an opportunity to use hip and body movements more flamboyantly. It also serves to break the monotony of linear back and forth motion. Side Breaks have the added feature of not using a lot of floor space which can be an advantage on a crowded dance floor. This is an excellent figure to include in all rhythm dance routines. It combines very nicely with almost any other figure to create a more stylized routine.

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Enrollment with a partner is recommended; however, singles are welcome. Participants should wear comfortable clothes and leather bottom shoes or dance shoes. Sneakers or rubber bottom shoes are not recommended.

Candidate Dances: Foxtrot, Rumba, Waltz, Cha Cha, Swing, Salsa/Mambo, Bachata, Tango & Meringue

Class Dates (Fall 2021): Fridays – 10/1, 10/8, 10/15, 10/22, 10/29, 11/5, 11/12, 11/19, 12/3, 12/10 and 12/17

Instructor: Richard Fiore – Dual Licentiate, US Imperial Society of Teachers of Dancing

Location: Adelphi University, One South Ave., Garden City, NY 11530 - Woodruff Hall Dance Studio

To Register: \$125/person for general admission. Call Noreen DeNicola at (516) 877-4260 or email ndenicola@adelphi.edu