

American Spin Turn

By **Richard Fiore**

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



The American Spin turn is an attractive hallmark figure that is danced in East Coast Swing, Jive, Lindy Hop and other swing dance styles. The actual turn is typically danced by the follower as a free spin turn to the right.

An American Spin turn is technically known as an open tuck-in free spin. This figure is most commonly initiated from a handshake hold, i.e., man's right hand to lady's right hand, in open facing dance position. It utilizes a preparation lead followed by a free spin. A free spin describes a turn in which the leader releases the hold, having lead the lady to spin on her own. In an American Spin, the lady turns sharply to her right covering up to $\frac{3}{4}$ to 1 complete rotation. The actual spin begins at the end of the 3RD step of the first triple chasse step, 1&2, on count 2. The leader creates a twisting action on the preceding triple, causing the follower to tuck-in to her left in preparation for the turn. Her upper body winds to the left in response to this action. At the end of the next triple the man leads with a quick push from his right hand to initiate the lady's spin to her right. She dances a pivoting action on the ball of her right foot to free spin approximately $\frac{1}{2}$ turn at the end of count 2 of the first triple. She then dances an additional $\frac{1}{2}$ chasse turn to face her partner over counts 3&4.



An American spin appears simple but it can be quite tricky. Both partners have to understand the basic elements of this figure. In a tuck-in open spin turn, the leader has to create a proper set-up for the follower before her actual spin. This is done on counts 3&4 of the preceding triple. Over this triple, the man winds the lady slightly to her left and then draws her in over counts 1&2. In this figure, the man's leading right hand is positioned at or slightly below his hip as he marks time in place. Both partners need to maintain adequate tone in their right arm. The lady needs to brace firmly into the man's right support arm especially during the preparation into the spin turn. This toned connection serves as the only link that enables both partners to coordinate the turn. The man initiates the lady's spin by providing a short duration impulse push from his right hand at the end of count 2, the last step of the first triple. The lady responds to this by turning sharply to her right with a pivoting action on the ball of her right foot. In East Coast Swing the spin is typically $\frac{1}{2}$ turn to the right followed by an additional $\frac{1}{2}$ chasse turn. In faster tempo international Jive, the spin can be $\frac{3}{4}$ rotation followed by an additional $\frac{1}{8}$ rotation. The amounts of turn are approximate and are lead and tempo dependent. The man generally marks time in place during the lady's spin turn; however, in some instances, he may turn a small amount. This will influence the lady's amount of turn since she is expected to end facing her partner.

Here are some common errors worthy of mention:

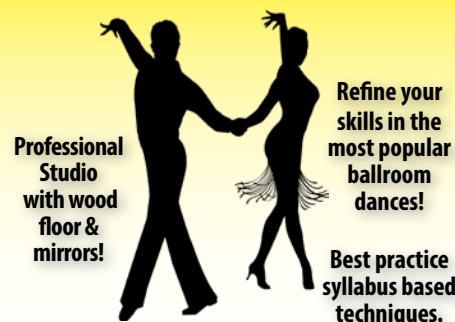
- Improper set-up on preceding triple
- Little or no tuck action
- Delayed or mistimed tuck lead
- Leader's hand above his waist during the tuck lead
- Loss of tone through the arms
- Lady's elbow positioned behind her back
- Lady's loss of balance during the spin

Any of these conditions will make this figure more difficult or impossible to achieve. The tuck-in action is especially important

in that it serves to signal the lady prior to her spin. It also creates rotational momentum to her left followed by a smooth transition into the spin to her right. If the man fails to lead the tuck-in action properly, the lady can easily miss the turn altogether. She needs advance and accurate set up in order for her to know that a spin turn is being initiated. This helps her to prepare for the spin beforehand. If the lady does not respond appropriately to the tuck lead, she will likely miss the actual spin altogether. This can happen if her right elbow drifts behind her back. Maintaining a toned single hand connection is a critical factor.

The American spin turn is an attractive stand alone figure with sharp accented movements that can precede or follow many other figures. Elegance is revealed through accurate timing, good directional transitions and balanced spin action. Danced correctly, it exhibits artistic flare.

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