

Open Dance Frame - Part 2

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An open dance frame describes the physical linkage between partners that is established in an open dance position. As such, it is implemented with a single or double handhold. Accordingly, all lead and follow transactions occur primarily through the pathway of the handhold. The frame provides a means for a stable connection between partners that is sustained by the structural shape of the upper body. In either open or

closed hold, a toned frame is necessary in order to achieve an effective lead and follow.

Initiating figures from an open frame requires additional awareness of the use of arms through which the connection is established. The process of lead and follow in an open frame is more complex than in a closed frame. Open frame leads are more subtle and therefore require special consideration. In a closed hold the shifting of body weight can be used as a significant part of the lead. In contrast an open hold relies solely on connection through the pathway of the arms. This requires the arms to be maintained with a degree of tone while moving through the dance. Any vagueness through the handhold and arm connection will hinder one's ability to accurately lead and follow.

A good comparison between two related figures that are danced in closed and open hold respectively is the Cross Body Lead and Left Side Pass. These figures are similar in their navigational pattern on the dance floor. They both create a rotation of 1/2 turn to the left. The Cross Body Lead is danced with a closed frame whereas the Left Side Pass is typically danced with an open frame from a single handhold. Therefore, an extra measure of awareness of arm connection is needed for the Left Side Pass to ensure a more precise lead and follow action. The leader has to convey the forward path and change in direction to the follower. The follower needs to be able to accurately sense the lead instruction through the leader's hand and arm movements in order to accurately navigate through the figure.

The J-lead is an example of a common open hold lead that involves shaping the follower's movement with a single handhold through a toned open frame. In this action, the leader executes a J-shaped hand movement through the connected single handhold. J-leads are most frequently used in hustle. This lead is also used in lindy and west coast swing (WCS). These dance styles rely heavily on shaping leads through single handhold actions. The J-lead shapes



the followers walk toward the leader while rotating her in a clockwise direction to bring her into a sweetheart or right shadow position. The follower has to interpret the subtleties of this lead and react accordingly. This lead action has to be precisely executed in order for it to work properly. It relies especially on good dynamic tensioning and compression through the connected arms as well as maintaining the body's topline structure.

J-leads are used in WCS; however, they become very tricky in this dance. For example, it is a common open lead for a whip. The issue is that WCS is a linear slot dance in which the lady travels back and forth within a single track. Visualize a J-lead action where the man moves his hand in the shape of a wide J. If the lady is following this lead correctly, it can easily suggest that she step out of her track. This is the reason that many avoid using the J-lead in WCS. An important caveat when using this lead in WCS is to leave the hand positioned in front of the lady and inside her track while creating a smaller and more compact J-lead action. The follower will respond by executing a sharper turn.

All open frame leads convey an intention to guide the follower through the handhold to create travel lines and changes in direction. The changes in direction can be gradual and shaped as to guide the follower to walk a curved path or it can be more rapid as to lead the follower into a pivot turn. Any lead from any hold is an exchange of energy that provides an implicit instruction to guide the follower. Partners communicate through the frame to navigate through each figure. The key is to keep arms toned and connected so that energy can flow. Remember that the frame has to remain a stable structure. It does not initiate the movement but rather responds to the movements of the lower body. The goal is to accurately communicate subtle body movements through the frame. A properly held and maintained frame provides one of the best enrichments in partner dancing.

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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 2022): Fridays - 9/16, 9/23, 9/30, 10/7, 10/14, 10/21, 10/28, 11/4, 11/11, 11/18 and 12/2

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. **Registration with a partner is recommended.** Call Noreen DeNicola at (516) 877-4260 or email ndenicola@adelphi.edu