

# On the Technique

## Connection Points Part 1: The Basics

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Quality dancing is dependent on establishing key points of physical connection while in the dance hold. Each of these connection points needs to be properly maintained by both partners throughout the dance. This provides the means by which accurate lead and follow interactions can take place. The fundamental connection points necessary for smooth ballroom dancing will be discussed in this article.

Let's begin with the connection points associated with the standard closed ballroom hold. This is the most common dance hold used in ballroom dancing. It is important to apply all of the connection elements of this hold in order to optimize the potential for good lead and follow. In this dance hold, partners stand facing each other with the lady positioned slightly to the man's right. In this manner, their bodies and feet are offset. Light body contact between the front right sides of each partner's body is established and maintained throughout the dance. The palm of the man's left hand is placed in contact with the palm of the

lady's right hand. The man's fingers are lightly clasped over the side of the lady's right hand. The man's right hand is placed comfortably on the lower portion of the lady's left shoulder blade with his fingers and thumb together. The lady's left arm rests comfortably on the man's right arm with her left hand placed just below his shoulder. From this perspective we see that there are four physical connection points in the standard closed ballroom hold. All of these points of connection help to create a physical connective structure through the upper body known as the dance frame. This is what makes lead and follow possible. A good dance frame refers to the shape of the upper body that is maintained through a connected dance hold with toned arms and an upright posture. Any loose connection point between partners will create vagueness within the frame that will ultimately hinder the efficiency of the lead and follow action.

The physical structure of the dance frame provides the primary means by which dancers communicate and control their movements with each other on the dance floor. Shifts in weight, changes of direction and travel speed are all communicated through this connected framework. It works best when each connection point remains intact throughout the dance. Therefore, it is important to reinforce good habits by following several basic principles. Partners need to initially establish a body offset so that the right front side of their bodies are aligned and in light contact. This will enable both partners to have separate tracks that will serve to open up the required space for them to travel. The offset will also align the man's right hip to lady's left hip. This connection point helps partners to navigate more easily along the dance floor as one unit. Moreover, the connection at the hips greatly helps with turning patterns such as a pivoting action. Turns are further assisted by maintaining space between partners' heads. This is known as keeping 'a big top'.

Other factors include proper use of arms, hands and elbows. It is helpful for the man to keep his elbows toned, slightly outward and maintained at chest level with the torso stretched upward. The lady should

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also maintain arm tone and an upward torso stretch. She needs to keep her elbows in-line with her wrist. This will help her to sense the lead more easily as it creates an in-line transfer of energy from wrist to shoulder. In the closed hold, the leader's right hand can be thought of as a steering wheel while his left hand closes the hold. The connection through the hands should encompass the man moving his hands inward with a slight compressive force while the lady counteracts this action by moving her hands outward in opposition with a slight tensile force. In this manner, a good connection is more easily established thereby enabling the man to give clear leads. The lady also benefits through this connection method by gaining a greater ability to quickly decode the lead and react accordingly.

Quality dancing can only be achieved with good physical connection between partners while in the dance hold. The goal is to have each partner's physical connections form a well-connected structure that will enable clear communications between both. The benefits of establishing and maintaining these connection points are numerous. It allows dance couples to achieve a more efficient and elegant dance experience.

