

Cross Body Lead

By Richard Fiore

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



The Cross Body Lead (CBL) is one of the most essential building blocks in nearly all dances. It is a gateway to more advanced figures and combinations of figures. A CBL is danced over relatively few steps; however, there are some subtle details that need to be considered in order to optimize dancing this figure.

In the Cross Body Lead the man leads the lady to cross directly in front of his body in promenade position.

It commences in normal closed dance hold, then to promenade and ends back in normal closed dance hold. This figure is frequently combined with other figures for a more stylized presentation. For example, it can be used in conjunction with inside and outside underarm turns commonly seen in salsa and other fast tempo dances. A Left Side Pass is a figure that is commonly referred to as a type of Cross Body Lead. It is danced in an open hold, i.e., leader's left to follower's right handhold or two hand hold. It is similar to a Cross Body Lead with the exception of the open dance hold.

To initiate a Cross Body Lead, the man turns to promenade as he steps to the side and slightly forward with his toes turned out. This step serves to open the track for the lady to cross through. He leads her to pass directly in front of his body and then closes the track as he reestablishes the normal dance hold. In rumba for example, the man steps side and slightly forward with his left foot on the 1ST step while turning 3/8 left as he leads the lady to step forward with her right foot. He then places the arch of his right foot near the heel of his left foot on the 2ND step. The lady steps forward with her left foot as she crosses in front of the man's body and then pivots 3/8 left at the end of this step. On the 3RD step the man steps forward with his left foot as the lady steps back with her right foot. The 2ND half of the rumba box typically follows as an additional 1/8 turn to the left is taken over these steps by both partners to complete 1/2 turn to the left. In summary, the man opens the path for the lady to pass through. He guides her to walk directly across and then pivot to her left as he continues to turn left to face her. This is analogous to him opening a door for the lady to cross through and then closing the door after she has passed the front of his body. This basic structure for a Cross Body Lead is the same for all dances.

There are various figures that can be combined with a Cross Body Lead such as underarm turns, outside breaks, Cuban walks, right side pass, and others. For example, in a Cross Body Lead to Outside Breaks, the man



leads the lady directly into an Outside Break from a CBL. Typically after three Outside Breaks the man has the option to lead the lady into another CBL to repeat the same action on the other side or to simply end the figure.

The leader needs to give a clear indication that he is about to initiate a Cross Body Lead by looking over his left shoulder. This provides a valuable visual cue. He must intentionally move his left foot side and slightly forward with his toes turned out to open the track for the lady to pass through. If he fails to move his foot sufficiently out of her way, it creates an obstacle that will force her to take a curved walk around him rather than a straight linear walk. In extreme cases this may result in tripping the lady. The leader must not force the lady through the move. It is always better for him to gently guide her. He must not rush the figure and always maintain accurate timing with the music.

The lady has to properly interpret the man's lead. She has to take a straight line path crossing directly in front of the man's body provided the path is opened for her to do so. She steps forward with her right foot and then forward in-line on her left foot to pivot. If the pivot is not executed correctly she will likely be misaligned with her partner on the following step. Ideally, the pivot should be taken with the left foot in line with or slightly across the center line of the right foot with the right foot held in line (CBMP) during the pivot. This action requires good dynamic balance. The lady's focus should be on dancing a clean pivot turn. This will add greatly to the precision and styling of the Cross Body Lead.

The Cross Body Lead is a highly versatile and functional figure that can be used to initiate attractive combinations of figures and routines. It is a gateway to more advanced dancing that adds a refined styling to the dance.

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Enrollment with a partner is recommended. 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 (Winter 2022): Friday evenings starting February 4, 11, 18 & 25. March 4, 11 & 25. April: 1, 8, 15 & 22

Instructor: Richard Fiore — Dual Licentiate, 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