

Fifth Position Breaks

By Richard Fiore

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



The Fifth Position Break is an attractive figure that is commonly seen on the dance floor. It reveals partners' opening up and away from each other as though hinged together from one side of the body to form a V shape between their bodies. The name of this figure is derived from the classical ballet fifth foot position. In this foot position the feet are together

forming parallel lines with the toe of each foot touching the heel of the other foot. In ballroom dancing, the feet are slightly apart with much less turn out. The fifth foot position in this context is taken as toe to heel with the toe turned out.

Fifth Position Breaks can be applied to a variety of ballroom and rhythm dances. In rumba and cha cha, this figure is initiated from a chasse step where the last step of the chasse is placed to the side and slightly back. The leader opens 1/8 turn to his left as the lady follows by opening 1/8 turn to her right to form a V-shape between their bodies to end in fallaway dance position. Each partner looks forward toward the outside of their joined hands. Using rumba as an example the figure is structured as follows from the leader's perspective:

- 1ST half of basic, (feet move side, together, forward) (QQS)
- Chasse step to the side, right, left, right (QQS); man's right foot is placed to the side and slightly back on the last step of the chasse
- Left foot crosses behind right foot, toe to heel with toe turned out (Q)
- Transfer weight forward to right foot (Q)
- Right foot forward and across in promenade position and CBMP (S)
- Various continuation options may follow

There are various options to augment this figure. For example, another Fifth Position Break can be repeated on the other side mirroring the same feet positions, i.e., right foot behind left foot, toe to heel with toe turned out, etc. The man also has the option to lead the lady to his left side to end in a left side by side position with his left hand holding her right hand. Both options create an attractive presentation as partners turn synchronously in opposite directions while opening up and away from each other and then back to face each other. These sequences are typically danced several times. However, a single Fifth Position Break can also be danced followed by an underarm turn, a single rumba side rock or directly to the 2ND half of the basic to end the figure.

As previously mentioned, the Fifth Position Break refers to a foot position. There is an important distinction to be made between foot position and dance position. Partners' will pass through an array of dance positions throughout this figure. In rumba or cha cha for example, this figure starts in a closed dance position for the first half of the basic. At the end of the chasse step, the man leads the lady into a Fifth Position Break from a closed dance hold. Their bodies form a V-shape where the man's right side is in contact with the lady's left side.



The lady's left hip is in contact with and slightly behind the man's right hip. As partners rock back into the Fifth Position Break, they are in fallaway dance position. As they transfer their weight forward with their bodies held in the same V-shape, they move in promenade dance position. The man may then lead the lady to finish with an underarm turn in open position or to a rumba side break in open facing or closed position.

If the man chooses to lead the lady to dance another Fifth Position Break on the opposite side, he will release his right hand from the lady's back as she releases her left hand from his shoulder as both turn ¼ turn in opposite directions. As partners' rock back on this side, the left side of the man's body is now in contact with the right side of the lady's body to form a V-shape. The corresponding dance positions for this Fifth Position Break are open counter-fallaway and open counter-promenade positions respectively. It is common for partners to dance a series of Fifth Position Breaks in succession. The leader will then reestablish a closed dance hold to finish the figure.

American style rumba has a special consideration when transitioning from a Fifth Position Break from promenade position back to the box step. In this style, the man leads the lady to pivot ¼ turn left from promenade to end facing him in closed dance position. He then leads with a forward step as she follows with a back step. The figure can be finished with the 2ND half of the basic.

The Fifth Position Break is a very attractive figure by its own merit. It has applications in many rhythm and ballroom dances. One of its main features is the diversity of dance positions used throughout the figure. This especially gives dancers' an opportunity to utilize their own unique styling for a more elegant appearance while transitioning between the various dance positions of this figure.

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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.

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Class Dates (Winter 2022): Friday evenings starting in January

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