

Feet Positions

By Richard Fiore

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Feet positions describe where the feet are placed on the floor over each step. This is occasionally mistaken for footwork which describes the part of the foot that is in contact with the floor over each step. A clear understanding of feet positions helps one to establish a visual map of where the feet need to be placed throughout each figure. Proper and consistent feet positioning will always make partner dancing feel more effortless.

There are various ways that feet positions can be illustrated. In modern classical ballet, there are five positions of the feet known as first through fifth position respectively that defines standard placements of the feet on the floor. These feet positions are also used in conjunction with movement exercises that serve to condition and strengthen the legs, feet and ankles in preparation for dance. In ballroom and rhythm dance styles, feet positions are best defined as the landing position of the moving foot relative to the standing foot. Feet positions need to be accurately implemented as they provide an efficient method in which to move through each figure. The following are the most common feet positions used in partner dancing.

Close: This foot position occurs when the moving foot closes to the standing foot. This is similar to 1ST ballet feet position with less foot turn out.

Forward and Back: This is simply a forward or back step. The length of the step depends on the particular dance style. For example, a forward and back step in rumba is typically more compact than the same steps taken in foxtrot or tango.

Side: This is a step to the side with the insteps of both feet aligned on the same axis. In most spot dance styles, the feet are spaced approximately shoulder width apart. This is similar to the 2ND ballet feet position. A side step in some smooth styles can be wider. For example, a side step in a waltz box is considerably wider than a rumba side step. There are several variations to this foot position.

Side and Slightly Forward: This foot position is established by placing the moving foot to the side with the toe turned out 45 degrees or 1/8 turn away from the standing foot. The insteps of both feet remain aligned with each other on the same axis. This foot position is commonly used to initiate underarm turns and crossover breaks.

Side and Slightly Back: This foot position is established by placing the moving foot to the side with the heel turned out 45 degrees or 1/8 turn away from the standing foot. The insteps of both feet remain aligned with each other on the same axis. This foot position is a common set up for initiating a 5TH Position break.



Foot Crosses Behind Standing Foot with Toe to Heel / Toe Turned Out: This is a common foot placement similar to the ballet 5TH feet position; however, with notably less foot turn out. For example, a 5TH Position Break in rumba is initiated with one-foot placed side and slightly back followed by the free foot crossing behind the standing foot to end in a 5TH Position Break. This foot position can also be used to initiate a back spot turn from a side step by placing the free foot behind the standing foot with toe to heel / toe turned out. An alternative foot position for the back spot turn is heel to instep as in the 3RD ballet feet position.

Forward or Back in CBMP: Contra Body Movement Position (CBMP) describes a foot tracking action in which the moving foot is placed in-line with the standing foot resulting in an outside partner position. This foot position is also used for pivot turns. While stepping forward in CBMP the turn is taken on the front foot with the back foot held in CBMP. This also applies to stepping back in CBMP while the front foot is held in CBMP for a back pivot turn.

Replace: This foot position is more subtle and trickier to visualize because the free foot does not move. Instead, there is a transfer or replacement of weight from one foot to the other. This is commonly used in rock steps. For example, in a back rock, a back step is taken followed by replacing weight forward. Conversely, in a forward rock, a forward step is taken followed by replacing weight back. Side Breaks, also known as Second Position breaks or cucarachas also uses weight replacement. A side step is taken followed by replacing weight back to the free foot. This is followed by closing the feet and stepping to the other side and then replacing weight back to the free foot.

Using precise feet positioning makes it easier for both partners to progress through the dance. It ensures more accurate tracking alignment between partners. This allows partners to move together in a coordinated fashion making the dance feel more natural.

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Time: 7pm - 8:30pm

Candidate Dances: Foxtrot, Rumba, Waltz, Cha Cha, Swing, Salsa/Mambo, Bachata, Tango & Meringue

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

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