

## On Balance Part 2 - Posture

By Richard Fiore

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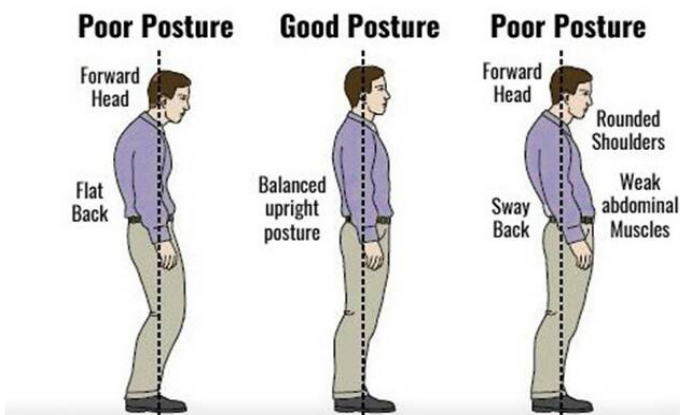
Several key factors regarding balance were presented in the previous 'On Balance' article. Balance was defined as an even distribution of weight enabling our body to remain upright and steady. The concept of 'center of gravity' was discussed in the context of ballroom dancing. Several examples of common balance issues were presented.

Another key aspect of balance worthy of discussion is posture. Good posture helps us to stand, walk and sit in positions that do not strain the body. The importance of good posture cannot be overemphasized. It is essential for elegant ballroom dancing as well as for normal everyday activities. There are numerous benefits associated with maintaining correct posture such as:

- Improved quality of dancing
- Conveys confidence and poise
- Keeps bones and joints in correct alignment
- Helps prevent abnormal wearing of joints
- Reduces stress on muscles and ligaments
- Prevents fatigue by allowing the body to move more efficiently
- Prevents the spine from becoming set in abnormal positions

Maintaining good posture on the dance floor can be quite a challenge. Unfortunately, modern day lifestyle practices have cultivated some bad postural habits. For example, most of us spend many hours sitting in front of a computer screen each day. This can easily lead to upper body misalignments. There is a tendency to extend the head forward to look at the screen. This is one of the most common postural issues associated with the upper body. Misalignment of the head and neck will affect balance. The body will automatically try to compensate for an imbalance by using muscles that counteract the off balanced condition. Unfortunately, the body starts to adapt to this misalignment. Over time it is unconsciously accepted as normal posture. Interestingly, postural habits are such a gradual process that one may not even be aware of their progression. Incorrect posture on the dance floor will not only affect your balance but it can also affect your partner's balance as well. The head and neck need to be maintained over the supporting spine to sustain correct balance throughout the dance. Ballroom dancers should be especially mindful of this fact.

Consider the analogy of holding a bowling ball. As the ball is held straight out in front of the body, its effective weight is multiplied by the perpendicular distance from the body. This makes it feel much heavier than its actual weight. Similarly, whenever we project our head forward, it becomes misaligned with the rest of the body. As a result, this will strain the joints, ligaments and muscles especially along the cervical spine. This also shifts your center of gravity forward, which will have to be compensated for by your partner. Therefore, it is important to keep your head and neck line straight with the chin parallel to the floor in alignment with the supporting spine.



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**Description:** This class offers an opportunity to gain experience in social / ballroom dancing. It is an excellent choice for those looking to develop fundamental dance skills as well as building on previous experience. The instructor will break down all dance figures and combine them to form amalgamated routines. Best practice syllabus-based techniques in timing, feet positions, alignment, footwork, and lead and follow will be demonstrated. This class is suitable for first time dancers as well as those with previous experience. It is designed to build confidence and enhance social enjoyment on the dance floor. Social dancing gives you a more positive outlook on life!

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 2021):** Fridays – Fridays – 10/1, 10/8, 10/15, 10/22, 10/29, 11/5, 11/12, 11/19, 12/3, 12/10 and 12/17

**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](mailto:ndenicola@adelphi.edu)

Body alignment needs to be maintained throughout the dance. Good posture involves a level of whole-body awareness from head to toe. It needs to be looked at as a dynamic process that requires constant monitoring of head, neck, torso, hips, legs and feet. As we dance, our bodies move and shape in many ways, making balance an especially unique challenge on the dance floor.

### Dance Posture Basics:

- Pull the chin in and align the head so that the ears are directly over the shoulder blades
- Stretch the head upward as though it is being gently pulled by strings; gaze is straight ahead and slightly upward
- Expand the chest so that the ribcage feels lifted and centered over the hips. There should be a sense of lengthening the spine. Be careful not to hinder your ability to breathe normally in this process
- Stomach is tucked in
- Tailbone is tucked in slightly
- Hips should be kept centrally positioned; do not tilt hips forward or backwards in order to avoid misalignment of the lower spine
- Knees should be slightly bent
- Weight should be slightly forward toward the balls of the feet with weight evenly distributed when standing in place

The use of mirrors and videos provide helpful feedback in evaluating our ability to maintain good posture and balance on the dance floor. A quick way to spot check overall postural alignment is to stand with your back lightly touching a wall while observing each point of contact from the head down. Postural alignment adjustments should be made accordingly. Good posture conveys confidence and allows the body to move more efficiently and elegantly on the dance floor. Take pleasure in the benefits of dancing with good posture.