

# On the Technique

## Connection Points

### Part 2: Common Errors

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The importance of a proper dance hold was discussed in the previous issue. The concept of fundamental connection points in relationship to the dance

frame was highlighted. Emphasis was placed on maintaining a stable upper body connection through a well-connected dance frame. This article will discuss common errors that occur with establishing and maintaining the necessary connection points with a partner.

The manner in which partners connect with each other through their dance hold is the most significant factor that makes lead and follow possible. The leader has to be able to nonverbally communicate his intention to direct the follower's path through the dance hold. In turn, the follower has to be able to clearly discern the lead signals so that she can respond accordingly. As previously stated, quality dancing is dependent upon establishing key points of physical connection while in the dance hold. Think of the connection points as wires that enable an electrical circuit to work. For simplicity, visualize a simple doorbell. If there are loose connections or no

connection with any of the wires, the bell will not ring. Similarly, the primary connection pathway in partner dancing is essentially through the arms. Loosely connected arms will degrade the lead and follow process. This is the number one lead and follow killer. Some of the most common connection issues are related to improper arm connection, misdirection of applied the force, improper hand grip and common center hand positioning. If either one or both partners exhibit any of these anomalies, it will make lead and follow more difficult.

Arm connection refers to how actively the arms are connected between partners. There are various ways that partners connect in dance hold. Assuming that Isaac Newton was correct in that every action there is an equal and opposite reaction, then it must also apply to the dance hold. For example, if one partner is applying excessive arm force, the other will have to counteract this with an equal and opposite force. Conversely, a weak untuned arm, frequently referred to as a 'noodle arm' offers little or no connection within the dance hold. When tone in the arm connection is lost, it is nearly impossible for the leader to communicate any instruction to the follower. Either way, an incorrect amount of arm force, i.e., too much or too little will hinder lead and follow. The arms should be maintained in front of the body and connected such that the applied forces are moderate and kept equally balanced between partners. The forces within the arm connection should be maintained at approximately chest level. If for example the follower exerts a downward force through the joined hands, it will cause a misalignment of the applied force resulting in a poor connection at the topline of the body. The leader is forced to overcompensate by applying an upward force in this scenario. There are also instances where the leader may apply improperly directed forces that result in a similar condition. Both scenarios are likely to destabilize the lead and follow action.

The joined hands should be comfortably clasped together. It is not uncommon for one or both partners to exhibit a tight grip. This is always problematic as it limits lead and follow accuracy. Another classic problem is what I call the 'thumb crunch'. This refers to

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clamping down tightly around our partner's thumb that is sandwiched between our thumb and index finger. Imagine what would happen to fingers during an underarm turn in this scenario. Conversely, too light a grip is also problematic as it does not provide adequate handhold connection.

The joined hands should be maintained at approximately midway between partners at a point known as the common center. Some leaders have a tendency to dominate the hold by pulling the joined hands closer to their body. This action does not allow adequate space for proper balanced movement and progression through the dance and can also intimidate the follower. It can especially offset the dynamic balance between partners. The one who does this may cause their partner to unnaturally pitch their body forward, thereby forcing their center of balance forward. This becomes awkward for both partners throughout the dance.

Adherence to good connection practices will always enhance dancers' ability to lead and follow. The connection between partners should be toned and relaxed. This helps to ensure the most efficient lead and follow potential. Using the right amount of connectivity is essential. The hold should be toned but not overbearing. The intent is to use connection as a means of communicating the silent language of lead and follow.

