

Outside Breaks

By Richard Fiore

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



Outside Breaks is an attractive figure that is frequently seen in a variety of rhythm dances. This figure is also referred to as Outside Partner Breaks, Parallel Breaks and Offset Breaks. Its main feature is the outside partner dance positions. Outside Breaks are commonly danced in rumba, cha cha, mambo, bolero and other rhythm dances.

Outside Breaks can be danced in the standard closed dance hold or open facing dance position. When dancing this figure in open facing position it is recommended that a two handhold is used. This helps with the subtleties of leading and following in and out of outside partner dance positions. Using rumba as an example, Outside Breaks typically commence with the first half of the basic box step. The leader then leads the follower to dance a side chasse where he steps side, together and then side and slightly forward. Assuming that both partners have a well-connected hold, the lady follows by stepping side, together and then side and slightly back. The last step of the chasse is the critical setup step that prepares partners to step to an outside partner dance position.

In this step, the leader prepares to step outside partner on the followers left side by placing his right foot to the side and slightly forward. He then tracks his left foot forward in-line (CBMP) to step to the outside partner on left side dance position. After replacing weight back to his right foot, the leader typically leads another Outside Break on the opposite side by placing his left foot side and slightly forward, preparing to step outside partner on the follower's right side. He then tracks his right foot forward in-line (CBMP) to step to the outside partner on right side dance position. Left and right side outside partner dance positions refer to the specific side of both partners bodies that are in proximity. Therefore, Outside Partner on right side occurs when both partners right hips and outside portion of their legs are in proximity and alongside of each other. As a technicality, the one stepping forward is in Outside Partner position while the one stepping back is in Partner Outside position. In either case the feet are in-line (CBMP) respectively with partners' legs aligned together on either right or left side depending on which Outside Partner position has been assumed. The leader's normal Outside Break is a forward rock step into outside partner followed by a back rock to Partner Outside dance position. The lady follows this by rocking back and finishing with a forward rock in the natural opposite movement.



A common variation of this figure is revealed when the leader steps side together then side and slightly back. The lady follows by stepping side, together then side and slightly forward. In this variation he rocks back in Partner Outside dance position as she rocks forward in Outside Partner dance position. Again, the key lead in-step is the last step of the chasse. The man's side and slightly back foot position will lead the lady to dance the natural opposite, i.e., side and slightly forward. Another attractive way to initiate this figure is to precede it with a Cross Body Lead which may be overturned by an additional 1/8 left. This allows partners to enter the Outside Break with the traditional 1/8 of a turn offset from the normal closed hold starting point. Outside Breaks can also be danced from a Cross Body Lead with no turn. In either instance the feet are in-line (CBMP) while in the Outside Partner dance position. Continuing to use rumba as an example, the leader has the option to initiate another Cross Body lead after three Outside Breaks to end with the 2ND half of the basic. There are many figures that can follow that work quite nicely in combination with Outside Breaks.

Here are some important techniques that will optimize dancing this figure for an additional element of style. Outside partner figures generally involve small amounts of turn and even less upper body turn. Be sure not to overturn this figure. This is the concept of 'body turns less' and is always a good practice for outside partner figures in both rhythm and smooth dances. The initial amount of turn needed to enter an Outside Break is no more than 1/8 as referenced between the stepping foot and the standing foot. Outside Breaks should have the appearance of the lower body turning from waste level down with little or no turn of the upper body. Outside Breaks look more stylish as partners face each other to maintain parallelism throughout the 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.

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