

# Floor Craft for Social Dance

By Richard Fiore

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Floor craft is a skill that helps couples to navigate the dance floor unencumbered while avoiding collisions with others. It involves managing floor space in relationship to other dancers and objects. Floor craft is a dynamic skill that involves accurately sensing the immediate surroundings and traffic conditions on the dance floor while quickly adapting to these conditions accordingly.

It is helpful to assess the general outline and spatial characteristics of the dance floor beforehand. For instance, some floors have an equal length and width aspect making it a perfect square. Others are under-square, meaning that the length axis is greater than the width axis. The more exaggerated this offset is, the more difficult it will be to navigate, especially if the floor is small. The overall floor space and the amount of dance traffic are also important factors to consider. Some dance floors are spacious with plenty of room while others are smaller and more crowded. This plays a key role in determining the best strategy to use for safely navigating the floor. Floor craft techniques apply to both traveling dances such as foxtrot and waltz as well as spot dances such as rumba and cha cha. The goal is the same for both styles; however, the techniques differ.

The leader has the overall responsibility for safely navigating the dance. In traveling dances, the leader controls the direction of travel, i.e., room alignments, distance covered by each step and speed of travel. Therefore, it is essential for the leader to understand exactly where he is navigating in reference to the room and other couples. The line-of-dance (LOD) is the main corridor in which dance traffic travels. It encompasses the space between the wall and the center line of the room. Traffic moves counterclockwise (CCW) along concentric lanes or pathways down the LOD. Every couple occupies a lane in which to travel. In social dancing it is always safer to stay in this lane rather than to cut across the floor. This will reduce the potential risk of collision especially on a crowded floor. Other dangerous actions include stopping to do spot figures and dancing against the line-of-dance. These practices should all be avoided at social dance venues. The leader should also minimize the use of rocking or hesitation steps in heavy floor traffic conditions. It is wise not to stop suddenly or dance figures that are tightly confined to a small area on the floor. Improper actions will increase the chances of collision with other couples and is also likely to create an annoying traffic jam.



In spot dances, it is still the leader's responsibility to apply good floor craft practices to ensure enjoyment while minimizing the potential risk for collisions. Spot dances are confined to a smaller area or spot on the dance floor as they do not travel around the room. One of the most important factors to consider when dancing spot patterns is the spatial boundaries in reference to neighboring couples. This space bubble is variable, meaning that it can change at any instant. Therefore, constant awareness of the immediate surroundings is essential. For example, everything can seem nicely under control until the leader throws the follower out to an open facing position. If this is done without regard to where other couples are at that exact instant, the outcome can be disastrous. The leader has to account for the spot positions of all neighboring dancers and make quick and accurate decisions as to the speed and distance of the throw-out action. Another example is seen with the Cross Body Lead. The leader needs to know beforehand that there is enough space behind him to ensure the follower's safe passage to the other side of the slot. Any move that can result in drifting into another couple's space bubble has to be acted upon in real time. A compact hold and smaller steps are a helpful floor craft technique in many of these instances. It is always prudent to initially make sure that there is adequate space on the floor especially in crowded conditions. If the required space does not exist, it is better to wait for the next dance or until space opens up.

There are instances where traveling and spot dance styles are danced to the same music. For example, much of the music used for quickstep is also suitable for various swing dances. In this example, those dancing quickstep should use the outer lanes away from the center to travel around the room, while those dancing swing should use the area at and around the center of the floor. It is always safer to dance spot patterns near the center of the floor in this scenario. There is a lot more that can be said about floor craft techniques; however, the most important objective is to utilize the space effectively and create a safe and enjoyable dance experience for yourself, your partner and other couples on the dance floor.

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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.

**Dates:** Fridays – 9/15, 9/22, 9/29, 10/6, 10/13, 10/20, 10/27, 11/3, 11/10, 11/17 and 12/1

**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.**  
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