

Center of Balance Part 2: Finding Your Center of Balance

By Richard Fiore

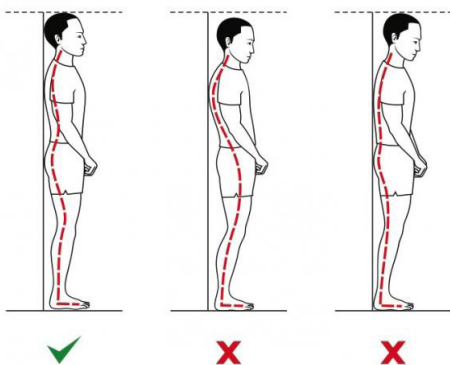
(Licentiate, (LAB, LAR, T) US Imperial Society of Teachers of Dancing)



In the previous article, the ideal center of balance (COB) was described as a balance position that exists along an imaginary vertical line that starts from ground level and extends directly upward through the center of the body. This article will discuss how to locate the ideal COB line for ballroom dancing. In addition, exercises that reinforce center of balance positioning will also be presented.

As previously mentioned, each person's center of gravity is at a well defined fixed point. Its specific location is dependent on the body's natural shape and weight distribution. Conversely, the center of balance can be significantly influenced by postural factors. Ideally, the total balanced distribution of weight should be along a vertical line perpendicular to the floor that bisects the body straight down the middle. Here are some essential postural guidelines that will help you to establish a proper vertical COB body line.

- Head is held up with chin in and parallel to the floor
- Shoulders are pulled down, slightly back and relaxed
- Ears are aligned over the shoulders
- Shoulders are aligned over the hips



- Stomach is pulled in with abdominal muscles engaged
- Hips are held level and aligned over the ankles
- Weight is held slightly forward and over the balls of the feet

An excellent way to align the body vertically and perpendicular to the floor is by practicing a technique that I refer to as the 'wall method'. This exercise requires standing with your back against an unobstructed wall. The body can then be readily aligned once light contact with the wall is established. Start by holding the chin parallel to the floor while looking straight ahead. Next, bring the back of the head, shoulders, buttocks, calves and the backs of the feet in light contact with the wall. Hold this posture for about one minute and then slowly walk away from the wall. Gradually increase the time duration of this exercise. It is important to try to retain the aligned posture for as long as possible after completing this exercise. The corrected posture may seem awkward at first. This is usually due to poor postural habits that have already been learned. For example, many people do not maintain a proper head and neck line. Rather it is more common for the head and neck to slope forward. This is likely a result of modern day activities such as working at a computer terminal for many hours each day while in a misaligned posture. Hence, unconsciously tilting the head and neck forward eventually becomes perceived as normal by the individual. Good postural habits have to be reinforced by constantly practicing postural alignment exercises. The wall method is one that is always very helpful in aligning the body's posture as it provides immediate corrective feedback. It is beneficial to do this exercise frequently as a means of correcting and maintaining good posture.

Here is another good exercise that can be done practically anywhere. It will help you to find your COB line. Start by standing straight while maintaining a vertical posture. Use the postural guidelines stated above to properly align the body to a vertical position. With the feet spaced about a shoulder width apart, slowly rock forward, bringing the weight onto

the toes, making sure not to release the heels from the floor. Then slowly rock slightly back, bringing the weight onto the heels making sure not to release the toes from the floor. Shift the weight from the ankles while maintaining a vertical body line. In doing so, you will be able to gain a sense how your COB line tracks in relationship to your weight shift. In essence you are tilting the COB line slightly forward and backward. This exercise should be repeated until a strong sense of balance is perceived over the balls of the feet. The same exercise can be repeated by bringing the feet together with ankles lightly touching. This compact stance makes finding and holding the COB line more challenging. Remember to do the exercise slowly and carefully so as not to lose your balance. The ideal COB line for dancing is vertical and slightly forward so that the weight centers over the balls of the feet.

There are several factors to consider with finding and maintaining a proper COB line. Good posture is a key element that will ensure alignment of the body's weight along a vertical line. Once in this alignment, minor adjustments can be made in order to maintain the correct body line for dancing. The exercises mentioned in this article are ideal for identifying and maintaining a proper COB line.

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