

## WEST COAST SWING

**History:** Swing began in the Southern US. Around the 1920's with the birth of jazz and blues. The dance was called the Shag-when you were Shaggin' it meant you were moving from R to L in a bouncy, jittery motion. In Harlem, NY a dance called the Lindy Hop, after Charles Lindbergh's exciting Atlantic crossing in 1927, was invented by Frankie Manning. The Duke Ellington Band played NY's Cotton Club, and introduced Swing music to Europe between 1927-1933, with the motto, "It don't mean a thing if ain't got that swing".

Arthur Murray included the Shag in his curriculum during the 1940's, which became intermingled with the Lindy Hop. Shag became the official state dance of S. Carolina in 1984, but the Shag of today has lost its bounce.

Cab Calloway coined the word Jitterbug, a dance derived from Shag and Lindy Hop, in the 40's. During WWII American soldiers brought the dance to Europe, where it became known as jive. East Coast Swing or Eastern Swing is the popular dance derived from the Shag, Lindy Hop and Jitterbug.

In the 1930's, country western swing was popularized by Bob Willis' Band, the swing feel achieved with mandolins and fiddles. The slotted style of swing we know as West Coast Swing, evolved due to crowded dance floors and became California's state dance.

### **Styling Tips & Footwork:**

1. When the count is & 4, & something, it means you must move your feet twice as fast to cover 1 beat of music. In music we call this double time.
2. Avoid the East Coast Swing bounce in your West Coast Swing dancing. It should be smooth.
3. Followers-keep your hands always available for your partner. Don't ever put your hands down.
4. The track belongs to the followers, the leaders must move aside.
5. Slot direction may be changed when it is safe to do so.
6. Add hip and arm movements to accentuate certain beats.
7. Lean back on the anchor basic and always provide tension in your bent elbow.

### **Leading and Following**

1. Leaders should not force a follower to do a pattern she does not know.
2. Followers should have strong muscle tone in their R arm. That arm must be bent, parallel to the floor, and the elbow should never go past your back.
3. Leaders use a pistol grip, followers a stop & hook handhold.

4. Maintain good posture, stay centered.
5. Followers should wait for a forward lead.
6. Beginning Under Arm Pass, followers should run until they run out of arms-then turn.
7. Be aware some patterns are not lead able-but recognizable. Good eye contact with your partner is needed.

**Syncopation:** In music syncopation happens when you shift the accent from the standard strong beats (1, 3) to a weak beat (2, 4). Dancers use this word loosely to mean footwork that deviates from the normal beat.

**Spins and Turns:** Learn to spot, don't look down on the floor or up at the ceiling. Turn  $\frac{1}{4}$  first and perfect that before trying  $\frac{1}{2}$  turns, then full turns. On crowded dance floors, keep turns tighter.

**Basic 7:** With these 7 steps, you are on your way. Use variations and combinations to improve your West Coast Swing.

1. Starter Step-closed basic
2. Throw-out
3. Sugar Push
4. Under Arm Pass
5. Side Pass
6. Sugar Tuck
7. Basic Whip