



Turns, Spins and Dizziness

Spinning on the dance floor are like drinks at the bar: one or two feel great but, too many and you might take a hard trip to the floor.

Fortunately, there's a number of ways you can cure your dance dizzies, or at least recover more quickly when they come upon you.

Dizziness on the dance floor is actually vertigo, or motion sickness.

We all have small balls of fluid, located in our inner ear, that flow with every change of direction and give our body the sensation of movement.

The trouble starts when we quickly stop after a turn.

The fluid continues to slosh about for a while longer, creating that 'world spinning' sensation...so, how can we counter our body's natural reaction?

Spotting: The Dancer's Cure-All

One of the first things most dancers are taught about avoiding dizziness is how to spot.

Spotting literally means to pick something in front of you before starting the turn, and quickly snap your head around as the turn completes (if you're neck hurts after doing this, you turned your head too quickly).

Here's how it works:

Pick a spot at roughly eye level, like a picture, or your partner's collar.

As the turn begins, leave your head behind, continuing to point your nose at the spot.

When your body can't turn any further without unscrewing your head, snap the head around to refocus on the spot again.

The fluid in your ears reacts to turn length, but less to turn speed therefore a fast head turn actually makes you less dizzy than a slow gradual one.

The Alternative: Building a Tolerance

Studies show that dancers who practice turning frequently, gradually reduce their feelings of dizziness...their brains are trained to ignore the signals coming from the inner ear and rely more on other senses to get them through without a crash.



It's a less dramatic solution but, not every turn can be spotted, especially as you move into more advanced spins.

Other tricks that can reduce dizziness include:

Let your eyes blur until your return to your forward position.

Focusing on objects traveling past you will increase your dizziness.

Avoid alcohol before dancing!

If both can make you dizzy, imagine what will happen if you pair them together.

Wear loose-fitting, breathable clothing.

Being hot and sweaty, especially on a crowded floor, can create dizziness even without turning.

Take a break every third dance to get some air.

For the Leader: Reducing Your Partner's Dizziness

Sometimes you may get a request from your partner to turn her less...especially if she's relatively new to dancing so, how can a leader protect his partner from dizziness?

The first way is to simply do as she asks.

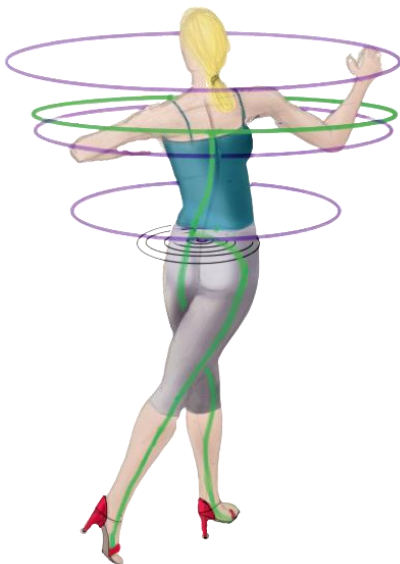
It's worthwhile to practice a number of patterns that don't involve much turning, especially in a faster dance like Salsa or the Hustle.

The second is to include turns in both directions and to alternate them when you dance.

For instance, following up a ladies broken left turn in salsa, with a right underarm turn.

This method doesn't work for everyone however, so tone it down if she starts to sway or hang on to you.

Tips for Great Ballroom Pivots



Ballroom pivots are often a source of admiration and angst.

The continuous partnered rotation, moving straight down line of dance looks absolutely amazing when done well.

Pivots can however be a source of major challenge and cause more than their fair share of partner arguments so here are 10 tips for great ballroom pivots, which will certainly help.

Part of the problem with ballroom pivots is that they look deceptively simple.

The truth is however, that they can be considered a milestone in ballroom proficiency given the requirements of very specific foot position, weight change, body position, and partnership balance.

Additionally, ballroom pivots are unique in dance as the pivots in jazz and salsa hardly resemble ours and are typically simpler than the Ballroom style, unless there is significant choreographic variation therefore, previous dance experience may not help much.

To start, let's understand the definition of the classic ballroom pivot:

- a) A single pivot is a 180 degree rotation of the bodies of both partners around common axis.
- b) During the rotation, the ball of the standing foot swivels on the floor to a maximum of a ½ turn.

Now, let's look at the components of a ballroom pivot:

- 1) A strong clear heel-toe step of the forward moving partner establishes the location of the common axis and the momentum for the pivot.
- 2) The stepping foot is along the path of the other foot for a contra body movement position.
- 3) The contra body movement position supports a clear right side lead and, the $\frac{1}{2}$ turn swivel of standing foot enables partners to exactly exchange positions while moving down line of dance.
- 4) With this change in position, the partner that initially set the axis and initiated the momentum of the turn now receives the position and momentum from the other partner to complete the next $\frac{1}{2}$ turn.

Finally, it is important to understand that balance, rotation and responsibility make the difference to success:

- 1) Turn from the base, with a light and static connection at the top.
Propelling the turn from the top will cause you to lose balance.
- 2) In stepping forward, keep your foot straight forward with your knee and thigh also straight forward.
A slightly turned in foot is typically OK because it keeps your weight centered and your knee and thigh will still face straight forward.
An even slightly turned out foot will make you more likely to overturn; lose couple balance or change the direction of the line that the pivots follow.
The foot that steps back also needs to be straight.
- 3) Ensure that your weight is fully on the standing foot before you turn.
This supports balance and precision for an exact 180 rotation on the ball of the foot.
- 4) Make sure that your ribs are compact and not puffed out; your chin is parallel to the floor; your pelvis is straight and held right under your shoulders; and your knees are soft.
This all just good form but, in pivots, you cannot get away with cutting corners.
- 5) Your legs need to be held in a locked position; with your thighs together; firm and connected to your partner.
This establishes a solid common base for your couple and is important to make the pivot possible.
- 6) Take the momentum from your base and think of moving your sides from one side lead position to another.
This supports a clean vertical rotation; exactly around the common axis by exactly 180 degrees.
- 7) Keep the heel of the back foot off the ground at all times to prevent a harsh stop to your movements.
- 8) If all of this is done correctly, the pivot should look and feel effortless.
Undue body tension will draw weight to the tense area of the body and will unbalance you.



- 9) Practicing will show you the amount of power you need to drive the right momentum. Too much power and you will not be able to do a clean position change to 180 degrees. Too little power and you will not get to 180 degrees.
- 10) Both partners have completely equally responsibly in dancing. Pivots show this point very clearly. Some people claim that it must be their partner's fault for problems with pivots because they are able to do them perfectly on their own. The fact is that on your own, you can often compensate for small errors...it is harder to hide errors with a partner.

If things are not going well, check the detail of everything you are doing first; then figure out what you need to do together.

Discovering Your Confidence with Dance

The difficulties in life have a way of sneaking up on us all, especially in this day and age and with the world in our pocket and sometimes on our wrist, we are only a phone call, text, or email away from someone who needs our time, energy, or thoughts.



It is a lot to balance work, family, friends and personal life if anything is left in us and at the end of many days, we are left feeling drained.

Confidence can slip away with every missed deadline or pile of laundry waiting for us.

You are probably scratching your head, wondering how dancing has anything to do with regaining confidence but many dancers, experienced or not, are surprised to find confidence-building as a side effect.

1. Practice Builds Perfection

All good things take time and practice. Although dance classes are designed to help you reach your dancing goals quickly, practice is essential.

The growth you see in yourself will give you a confidence boost and you will soon take pride in all of your work to improve your dancing ability and learn new moves. There is no doubt others will notice your achievements and will see the newfound 'skip' in your step.

2. Be Challenged

Don't be afraid to take on a new challenge.

Challenges force you to push your limits and give way to opportunities for growth and experience.

A challenge might be just what you're missing so, why not choose something that isn't just challenging but also fun? There are so many incredible things that come from dancing and overcoming challenges makes a person feel accomplished; which boosts self-esteem.

3. Brush It Off

Brush off whatever happens; that forces you back into your shell.

When dancing, you will focus your mind on the steps and moves you are working toward achieving and will be surprised at how easy it will be to brush off your troubles and enjoy being you again! In those moments, nothing else will matter so, enjoy the experience of your body and mind working together.

4. Increase Your Self-Esteem

Age and stress can change how we perceive ourselves when looking in the mirror. We are our own worst critics, but we all know staying active helps reduce stress and eases the aches and pains that each birthday so generously gifts us.

Exercise releases endorphins which improve mental health and self-esteem and if you're going to exercise, you want it to be fun and exciting!

No one wants to spend their free time under a set of weights when they can be on the dance floor dancing away their stress and improving their health and self-esteem!

5. Express Yourself

It's no surprise that dancing is one of the best ways to express yourself.

Although dance steps are purposeful and part of a routine, the dancer has the freedom to add as much self-expression with their style as they please.

Be as creative with your dance style as you want to be.

Break out of your shell, welcome the confidence hidden inside and show everyone your true colours.

6. Face Your Fears

Trying something new can be scary and you're definitely not alone!

Most first-time dancers admit they were nervous stepping onto the dance floor for the first time, however, they quickly tossed their fears away while discovering something new about themselves.

The good news is that most dancers around you are focused on themselves and how they are dancing and, how they can improve their skills. Their focus won't be on you and where your skill set is so, you can relax, enjoy yourself, face your fear and overcome it... giving you the confidence that you can try something new and, enjoy doing it.

7. Get to Know Others and develop Stronger Communication Skills

Good communication is critical in every aspect of life and it's no surprise that communication skills are essential in dancing as well. Sometimes you'll be paired up with your instructor and other times you will have the privilege of dancing with others during classes.

There is so much value in dancing with a variety of partners; Interacting with others will help you learn to communicate with different people and understand the differences in others' movements and how to respond to them.

You will gain the ability to practice social skills in various ways and not just in the dance studio. You will find yourself applying these skills in other aspects of your day-to-day life.

(A Brief History) How the Castle's changed the perception of Dance - Part 2/4

In the very early 1900's, fiery preachers across Europe and especially in America denounced ballroom dance as the devil's work and exhorted their followers to avoid it like the plague. In their view, the idea that men and women should dance so close together was evil.

Some would tell young women that if they even thought about dancing, they would immediately be relegated to the fires of hell and damnation with no hope of redemption.

Into this world stepped a young Irene Castle and in the eyes of women around the world, she was exempt from damnation.



She made it all smart and sensible and wholesome. She was elegant. She was young. She was married.

This teenager made change safe. She validated the free, modern woman, who must be more engaged with society and men and life than her mother's generation.

As Thompson describes it: *"Irene and Vernon Castle took what were previously feared as satanic and 'dangerous impulses,' accompanied as they were by ragtime music, and on the dancefloor made it fun and aloof from sexual metaphors.*

They looked like a couple of kids having a good time.

That Vernon and Irene were married and happily so in such a public romance, excited a psychological appeal: you too could be slim and healthy and in love – if you danced."

And so, everyone wanted to dance like them and whatever steps Vernon and Irene did, everyone wanted to learn them and, adjusted for inflation, they collected fees equivalent to USD \$35,000 for a single performance and charged the modern-day equivalent of USD \$2,300 per hour for lessons!

The Castles were the ultimate source of information about ballroom dance and invented new step patterns and movement characteristics that remain to this day.

It is said that much of the Hesitation Waltz (now known as the Slow Waltz or Modern Waltz) was developed through the work of this couple. They created a dance known as the [Castle Walk](#) that eventually evolved through their influence (and that of Harry Fox) into today's Social Foxtrot and later the Quickstep and are also credited with having invented the concept of the 'Tea Dance'.

They published guides for dancing; taught private and group lessons and they performed everywhere; sometimes double-booked due to Vernon's lack of organizational skills but even against the craziest barriers, they made it all work.

While the dancing may seem tame by today's standards, this video clip of Vernon and Irene Castle from the silent film ['Whirl of Life'](#) recreates the 1912 Paris performances that made them famous. At that time, it was revolutionary to see a couple moving in such harmony and connected to each other so closely.

Gilbert Seldes wrote the following description in 1924, which sums up so much of the unique character of the Castles: *"That these two determined the course dancing should take is incontestable. They were decisive characters, for they understood, absorbed, and transformed everything known of dancing up to that time and out of it made something beautiful and new.*



Vernon Castle, if it is possible, was the better dancer of the two but if he were the greater, his finest creation was Irene. No one else has ever given exactly that sense of being freely perfect, of moving without effort and without will, in more than accord, in absolutely identity with the music.

There was always something unimpassioned, cool not cold, in her abandon; it was certainly the least sensual dancing in the world; the whole appeal was visual.

It was as if the eye following her graceful motion across a stage was gratified by its own orbit and found a sensuous pleasure in the ease of her line, in the disembodied lightness of her footfall, in the careless slope of her lovely shoulders.

There was only dancing, and it was all that one ever dreamed of flight, with wings poised, and swooping gently down to rest."