

FIRST DANCE

Think on Your Feet

EASY STEPS TO SPICE UP YOUR FIRST DANCE—THROW THEM IN WHENEVER THE MOOD (OR MOVE) STRIKES.

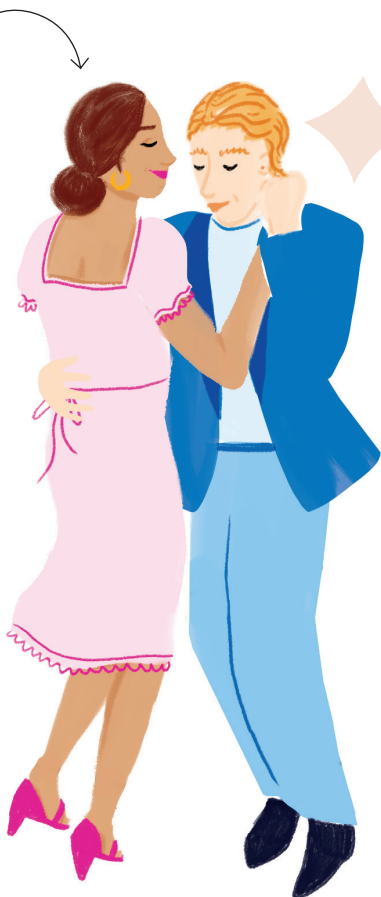
By Cathryn Haight | Illustrations by Tiana Crispino

So you're not the type of couple who wants *Dancing with the Stars*-level choreography for your first dance.

But you also don't want to succumb to the dreaded "middle-school-dance sway." We tapped Liza Marians of Dance With Liza in San Diego—a pro with a ballroom background who specializes in wedding dance lessons—to provide a handful of back-pocket steps you can practice at home and add to your first dance on the fly.

The Step-Sway Switch

- 1 Begin with the basic step-and-touch move from side to side, mirroring your partner.
- 2 Plant both of your feet and then slowly sway your bodies back and forth.
- 3 Return to the step-and-touch move, but this time, move in a circle so your guests can admire you from all angles.

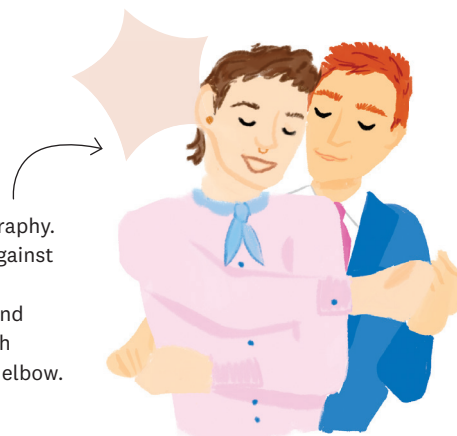


The Frame Flip

- 1 Start with an intimate hold, wrapping your arms tightly around each other (the "prom hold"). One partner can rest their head on the other's shoulder, or they can take the other's right hand in their left and place it over their own heart.
- 2 Shift to a more formal ballroom frame. The leading partner's right hand is on the following partner's shoulder blade with their right elbow up, and their left hand is at a similar height holding the follower's hand. The ballroom frame is useful for spins and other traditional moves.
- 3 Execute any relevant steps in the ballroom frame and switch back and forth to and from the prom hold as you see fit.

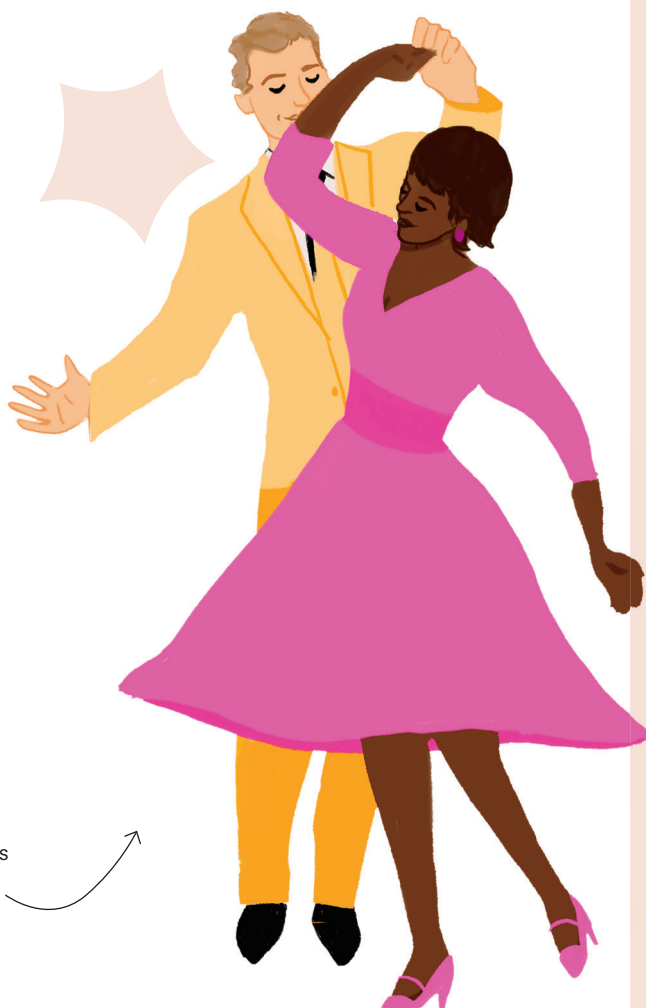
The Hello-Goodbye

- 1 Varying levels of closeness will add flair without complicated choreography. Start close together; dance cheek-to-cheek or with the follower's back against the leader's front, swaying back and forth in a sweetheart position.
- 2 Open up your position and add some space between you. Keep one hand clasped with your partner's and the other on their shoulder or waist. Both partners should position their hand-holding arms with a soft bend in the elbow.



The Simple Spin

- ❶ The leader steps forward on one foot and raises their arm on the same side—the arm that is currently holding the follower's hand.
- ❷ As the leader makes a halo above the follower's head with their raised arm, the follower spins (counterclockwise if the leader is stepping on the right foot, clockwise if the left) underneath their arm over the course of four or eight beats in the music.
- ❸ The leader brings their arm back down and shifts the couple back into the ballroom frame (one hand holding the other partner's and the other hand on their shoulder or waist).



The Dramatic Dip

- ❶ The leader supports the follower's middle back with one hand as they lunge forward with one leg (left leg for left dip, right leg for right dip), holding a stable core to support the follower's weight.
- ❷ Once they feel that mid-back pressure, the follower will gently bend backward, also tightening their core for stability. As they descend, their outside leg (with a pointed toe) lifts up. They can choose to look at their partner, at their guests or toss their head back for a little flair. They could place their hand on their partner's arm (which is around their waist) or let it extend.

First Dance Tips

Bust a move—don't make your first dance a bust.

★ **Select your song wisely:** “Choose a song with sentimental value and a clear, steady beat to follow,” says Marians, preferably a medium tempo. “Tempo changes are okay if you have time to practice. If you're pressed for time, pick a song with a steady beat.” Also know that your DJ can cut the song short (maybe two to three minutes) if you don't want to be in the spotlight for too long.

★ **Embrace emotion:** “Show the love, gratitude, happiness and romance in your eyes, smile, vibe and body language,” Marians says. “The easiest thing couples can do to show their love is to maintain eye contact throughout the dance.”

★ **Hit the highlights (and high notes):** “Pay attention to exciting parts of the song, such as an obvious phrase change, or the beginning or end of the chorus. Use those moments to throw in a spin, lean, dip or lift,” says Marians.

★ **Let it linger:** “I probably give this advice more than any other,” says Marians. Hold dips and leans for a second or two, spin slowly to let your gown (if you're wearing one) flare out and extend your arms with intention. “Couples should pretend they're dancing underwater to give the dance a more graceful look.”

★ **Probably practice:** “I can show couples some moves or a simple routine really quickly, but in order for them to execute it well and make it look natural, they need time to practice,” says Marians. Even with a few accessible steps in your repertoire, a little spin rehearsal ahead of the wedding doesn't hurt.

★ **Take Instagram inspo with a grain of salt:** “Couples show me wedding dance videos that they've found on social media and ask if I can teach them the moves,” says Marians. “They don't realize that most of the dancers in the videos are professional ballroom dancers with years, if not decades, of experience. I often use the videos for inspiration and show them similar, but easier, moves.”