

Basic Waltz Hesitations in 3 / 4 Time

When Ragtime and Edwardian waltz music became faster and faster at the turn of the 20th century, dancers learned to “hesitate” (leave some steps out) in order to keep up with the music.

While the music was playing 1,2,3 4,5,6; 1,2,3 4,5,6; the dancers count 1 & 2; 3 & 4; doing 6 steps in 12 beats of the music. This creates a pattern of quick, quick, slow; for the footwork. The slow step should not be a dead stop. Use your knees to roll through it, and if possible any turn should occur on the slow step.

Closed Promenade can be used instead of backing the lady. The stronger frame of promenade allows the partners to stay in better synch with the slower steps. When done as forward promenade steps, you can think of counts 1 & 2 as “step, close, slow”, and then 3 & 4 would be the same on opposite feet.

Turning Waltz is done as a sideways “glide, close” followed by a half turn. It starts with the man facing out of the line of dance and the couple steps to the man’s left and then close their feet with weight on the man’s right and woman’s left. They then take 1 step to exchange places in a slow half pivot. Man is now on the outside of the circle and woman is on the inside. They repeat the steps again, on the opposite feet, in the line of dance and at the end of that, they have turned another 180 degrees and the man is now facing out again. To the count of 1 & 2, the couple have done “glide, close, half turn;” and then on 3 & 4 they do a “glide, close, half turn;” on the opposite feet, completing a full turn.

HINT: you can make the half turn easier by pre-turning your stepping foot in the direction you are turning. That way you are halfway there by the time you put your foot down. The trailing foot should hover just above the floor, not too far away from your body and if you pull it in close to your ankle as you turn, it can add momentum to your turn.

Ladies Turn Starting from promenade, on the count of “1” the man raises his left arm and lets the lady turn. The man continues forward, dancing “step, close, slow; step, close, slow;” until the lady has used 4 measures to complete her turn. While she turns, the lady dances “glide, close, half turn; glide, close, half turn;” completing a full turn in 4 measures.

Yale Figure Starting from closed promenade, set the figure up on step 4. The man will turn clockwise to place his back to the line of dance. While doing this he will guide the lady to his left side, hip to hip, lady facing forward. If the man extends his left arm out to his side and brings his right arm across his chest near his left shoulder, this will guide the lady to the correct position. The couple can dance in this position for 1 & 2; 3 & 4; and on the “4” step they flip by the man turning counter clockwise until the man faces forwards and the lady backwards on the man’s right side. To guide the change in position, while he is turning, the man extends his right arm and draws in his left arm until it is in front of his chest with his left hand near his right shoulder. This figure can be exited by doing the flip but stopping about halfway through the turn, when the partners are facing each other directly rather than continuing to turn until they are hip to hip.

HINT : this works best when the “flip” is accomplished in only one step, rather than spread out over a couple steps.

Pomander Turn is done from Yale position when the man is facing forward. Starting on the count of “1” the man guides the lady into a spin by guiding backwards with his right hand and turning to the right himself. They spin around their center. 1 & 2; 3 & 4; will get them halfway around, and turning 360 degrees will take a full 8 measures. They can stay in Yale position and proceed forward, or the man can guide the lady into promenade on “8” by extending his right arm and drawing his left arm closer to his side.

Hint: Since this is not a travelling figure it should be done as the ending of the dance, or in the center or corner of the room to avoid blocking other dancers.

Basic Waltz Hesitations in 5 / 4 Time

One of the more unique dances at the turn of the 20th century was the half and half waltz, which was a variation using hesitations in 5/4 time. It was only popular for a brief time, but during that period many composers of dance music tried their hand at it. Today, the 5/4 waltz can be found in French, Breton and possibly other types of folk music.

When danced as a hesitation, it can be counted as 1,2,3, 1,2; 1,2,3, 1,2; using the first three beats as the hesitation. If you lose the beat, you can usually pick it up again by listening for the final 1,2 of the measure. Again, try not to stop dead on the hesitation, but roll through it using your knees. Use the hesitation step for turns, as much as possible.

Closed Promenade can be used instead of backing the lady. The stronger frame of promenade allows the partners to stay in better synch with the slower steps. When done as forward promenade steps, you can think of the count as "hesitate, step, close" and then the next measure would be the same on opposite feet.

Turning Waltz is done as a slow half turn followed by a sideways "glide, close". It starts with the man facing out of the line of dance and the couple takes 1 step to exchange places in a slow half pivot. They then step to the man's right and then close their feet with weight on the man's left and woman's right. The man is now on the outside of the circle and woman is on the inside. They repeat the steps again, on the opposite feet, in the line of dance and at the end of that, they have turned another 180 degrees and the man is now facing out again. It can be counted as "half pivot, glide, close; half pivot, glide, close."

HINT: you can make the half turn easier by pre-turning your stepping foot in the direction you are turning. That way you are halfway there by the time you put your foot down. The trailing foot should hover just above the floor, not too far away from your body and if you pull it in close to your ankle as you turn, it can add momentum to your turn.

Ladies Turn Starting from promenade, on the count of "1" the man raises his left arm and lets the lady turn. The man continues forward, dancing "hesitate, step, close; hesitate, step, close;" until the lady has used 2 measures to complete her turn. While she turns, the lady dances "half pivot, glide, close; half pivot, glide, close;" completing a full turn in 2 measures.

Yale Figure Starting from closed promenade, set the figure up on step 1. The man will turn clockwise to place his back to the line of dance. While doing this he will guide the lady to his left side, hip to hip, lady facing forward. If the man extends his left arm out to his side and brings his right arm across his chest near his left shoulder, this will guide the lady to the correct position. The couple can dance in this position for two measures (1,2,3, 1,2; 1,2,3, 1,2)and on the "1" step of the next measure they flip by the man turning counter clockwise until the man faces forwards and the lady backwards on the man's right side. To guide the change in position, while he is turning, the man extends his right arm and draws in his left arm until it is in front of his chest with his left hand near his right shoulder. This figure can be exited by doing the flip but stopping about halfway through the turn, when the partners are facing each other directly rather than continuing to turn until they are hip to hip.