

## Argentine tango steps and figures

Most Argentine tango teachers teach complex figures, but then break them down into simpler parts. They then teach students how to improvise their own figures. Here is what might be taught in beginner classes.

- **Baldoso** - ("tile", "square") a six-step figure similar to the ballroom box step. The man starts with his right foot, then steps back, side, FORWARD, forward, side, together.
- **Salida** - ("exit", also "beginning" - as of a journey) any of several patterns that begin a figure. The first half of the baldoso is one such pattern.
- **Caminadas** - "walks" in Spanish
- **Resolución** - any of several patterns that end a figure. The second half of the baldoso is one such pattern.

An Argentine tango figure, then, is the pattern **salida + caminada + resolución**. This makes for flexible, ever-changing patterns unlike those of conventional partner dances. This gives leaders exceptional opportunity to improvise, and is part of why the Argentine tango is unique in the dance world.

There are other basic steps than caminadas, including the following:

- **Paso Basico Con Salida Atras**
- **Paso Basico Con Salida Comun (doble)**
- **Paso Basico Con Salida Americana (doble)**

**Paso Básico** - "basic step" There are several, including the baldoso and the molinete. Another popular one begins with the three-step salida from the baldoso. However, on step 2, the side step, the leader steps outside his partner. After step 3 he then leads his partner into the two steps of the cruzada. The three steps of the resolución makes eight steps in all. This eight-step pattern is abbreviated the 8CB (eight count basic).

Other dancing figures:

- **Cadencias** - "cadence" as when soldiers "count cadence" by stepping in place. (The word is sometimes mistakenly applied to the following.)
- **Cunitas** - rock steps, to side, forward, or back. Comes from rocking a cuno "cradle"
- **Cazas** - "chases" when one foot steps forward and the other chases it to step beside it. Can be used as a resolución.
- **Stepping outside, walking outside** - the man moves further to his left (or less often right) so that both his feet are outside his partner's
- **Cruzada** - (from cruzar - to cross) the follower steps back right then back left, crossing her left foot over her right before finishing the step. A "chase" with a "cross". One way to go from the outside position back to the inside position.
- **Ocho** - a figure-8 traced by the follower's feet when moving forward or backward.
- **Giro** - a turn (in either direction), often a complete 360-degree turn
- **Media Luna** - a half moon, the shape of a half giro
- **Molinete** - (windmill, wheel) the follower walks in a cadena (chain, braid, grapevine) around the leader, the hub of the wheel

Intermediate steps further spice up the caminadas, including the following "dueling feet" actions. These are ways for leaders to challenge and tease their partners.

- **Sacada** - the leader displaces his partner's unweighted leg outward as they walk.
- **Parada** - the leader halts the motion of the other dancer with her legs apart and weight on both feet
- **Barrida** - one partner sweeps the others foot, displacing it along the floor
- **Arrastre** - (drag) synonym for "barrida"
- **Sandwich** - leader places both feet on either side of the other dancer's forward foot.
- **Gancho** - one dancer hooks their leg around their partner's leg.

Women also can contribute to the in-the-moment improvisations of tango dancing with adornos ("adornments"). These include the following.

- **Golpecitos** - "little toe taps" done between steps.
- **Golpes** - "toe taps" which rebound high behind the woman - not recommended on a tight floor!
- **Amagues** - "threats, feints" a kick by one foot across in front of the other. May be very small kicks, or very high (though usually only in choreographed show routines).
- **Boleos** - "throws" when an ocho is quickly reversed in the middle, the woman's foot is thrown to the side and wraps around her leg at the knee.
- **Caricias** - "caresses" usually by woman, who rubs her calf, or foot down her body.
- **Pasada** - Stepping over the man foot in an elegant way. Depending on woman's preferences she can do variations such as lustrada (gracias); she can raise her leg high or keep it low.

Advanced tango steps are often borrowed from tango shows, but modified for the tight spaces and flow of other dancers around the floor.

- **Saltitos** - "little leaps"
- **Elevaditos** - "little lifts"
- **Colgadas** - spins around a common center while leaning outward
- **Volcadas** - extreme leans, usually followed by an adorno (ornament). These include amagues or front boleos, a drag of the woman across the floor, and calesitas (carousels, or merry-go-rounds).

**Repeated steps, multiple figures, are usually denoted as "doble".**