

MOVEMENTS

Advance and retire With either inside hand hold or R hand in R, partners dance into the set (2 bars) and fall back to place (2 bars) dancing skip 3s. It is often danced twice to make an 8 bar movement.

Cast off

Prior to this movement, couples, or one couple only as in the [High Cauled Cap](#), will have danced side-by-side across the set. To cast off, partners separate, the gents moving anti-clockwise and the ladies clockwise to meet again at some defined point within the set.

Chain

A movement in which dancers pass each other, either to cross the set or to move half way or all the way around the set. They pass on alternate sides, first passing R to R, then L to L and so on. The hand hold is a light handshake hold at about waist level, although the purists will tell you it should be at shoulder level. This high hold looks fine for display dancing but is not altogether necessary for social dancing.

House

The verb 'to house' is now generally accepted in set dancing circles as the act of moving in a general anti-clockwise direction around the set while simultaneously turning clockwise one full turn in each 2 bar sequence. I have borrowed it to describe a similar movement in figure dancing.

House around each other

When any two couples dance anti-clockwise, while turning clockwise as above, into each other's place and back home. (8 bars) The crossed hand hold with which this is danced is best achieved if the lady's and gent's fingers are hooked together, the gent's R hand above, and touching, his L hand, and hands held at about chest height.

Lead around

A movement normally danced by all four couples, using one of a range of hand or partner holds, partners side by side and facing anti-clockwise around the set. All dance 3s around the set and back home. (8 bars)

Slip sides

Where partners, couples or corner dancers exchange places using the sidestep.

PARTNER HOLDS

Ceili hold

Partners face each other, take L handshake hold and pass their R hands inside their partner's L elbow to lie flat against the small of the back. This hold was devised when Ireland's figure dances were sanitised under the auspices of the Gaelic League around the turn of the century. Its aim was to keep partners a respectable distance apart so that closer contact should not afford an 'occasion of sin'.

Crossed hand hold Partners face each other holding R hands crossed over L in front of the body at chest height, with each dancer's fingers hooked around the others' and the gent's R fist resting upon his L. This hold was introduced by the reconstructors to replace the waltz, or 'English', hold and again keep dancers a respectable distance apart.

Inside hand hold When dancing into or leading around the set - lady's L hand in the gent's R. Where the lead around is followed by a lead back - lady's R hand in the gent's L. In both cases, the hands are held with elbows bent upwards.

POSITIONS

Corner couples

(X = gent O = lady)

Opposite
couple
O X

1st corner couple	X O	O X	2nd corner couple
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X O
Home
place

Top and Side couples

2nd Top
couple
O X

1st Side couple	X O	O X	2nd Side couple
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X O
1st Top
couple

At a ceili the 1st Top couple is always the couple with their backs to the band.

STEPS

Rise and Grind The step is danced to jigs and often follows a sidestep as e.g. in [The Eight Hand Jig](#). It is described as if following a sidestep to the R. After a sidestep to the L it is danced on the opposite foot. In the [Haymakers Jig](#) it is danced first on the R foot then on the L to make a 4 bar movement.

	Rise				Grind					
	and	1	and	2	and	1	2	3	4	2 bars
R		out		back	hop		step		step	
L	hop	hop	hop			step		step		

On 'out', the R leg kicks forward, the toe pointed and raised to a level somewhere between ankle and knee depending on the vigour of the dancer. On 'back', the same leg is brought smartly back behind the L to take the weight.

Sidestep This is a crossover step danced to the count 1 2 3 4 5 6 7-(Jigs) or 1234567-(Reels) (2 bars). When the dancer is moving to the R the weight will initially be taken on the R foot, the L passing behind the R and taking the weight on the count of 1. On 2, the R foot moves a little to the R and again takes the weight as the L foot passes behind and takes the weight on the count 3. This alternating sequence is repeated to finish with weight on the L foot behind the R on count 7. The sidestep is usually followed, in reels, by two 3s in place and in jigs by either the Rise and Grind or Sink and Grind step, each of these again taking 2 bars.

Sink and Grind This jig step is danced as a step in place in [The Harvest-time Jig](#). It is rather similar to the Rise and Grind, the major difference being that, starting with a jump on both feet, it doesn't change foot on the repeat.

	Sink				Grind					
	and	1	and	2	and	1	2	3	4	2 bars
R		jump		out	back	step		step		
L	jump		hop	hop		step		step		

Skip threes This is the normal travelling step used in both jigs and reels. It employs the same shift of bodyweight as does a walking step. The whole weight is on the back foot and the step could be said to be walked but for two significant differences. The first is that the leg is not held rigid as in a walk, but bends slightly at knee and ankle throughout the step. The second is that the step is preceded, on count 4 of the previous bar, by a slight movement which ensures that the weight is held, as it should be, on the ball of the back foot. The movement is referred to in these Study Notes as 'skip' and is really a much diminished hop i.e. the whole weight lifts very slightly from the floor and lands again on the same foot. The step could be counted - skip 1 2 3, skip 2 2 3 (2 bars) and so on, the step changing foot on each bar.