

Common English Country Dance Figures – La Grande English Country Ball 2019

These are the figures we will use in the set of dances we plan to teach in this class and do at the ball.

(Up,Back,Forward) a Double - go forward (or backward) for four beats of music with three steps, then closing on the forth.

Back to Back - two dancers move forward past each then back up passing on the opposite side to end where started. Normally start by passing right shoulders first, then left on the way back. If a “left shoulder” back-to-back is specified, passing starts with left shoulders first.

Circle - taking hands in a ring and moving around that circle. Move to the left (clockwise) unless circle right (counter-clockwise is specified). Normally the upper body is facing the center, while the hips are turned towards the direction of travel. A **slipping** circle is done with the whole body facing the center, with the leading foot sliding in the direction of travel, and the following foot sliding up next to it (uncomfortable for some people). In a **single file** circle, no hands are taken and dancers face in the direction of travel.

Hand turn - for single hand turns, taking hands with another dancer in a relaxed handshake-style grip but with extended arms and bent elbows. Keeping a little tension between the dancers, circle around the joined hands as the pivot point. **Right hand** turns are clockwise, **left hand** turns counter-clockwise. For **two hand turns**, take two hands with other dancer (not crossed) and turn around each other, normally to the left (clockwise) unless to the right (counter-clockwise) is specified. The wider the spacing between dancers, the longer the path of travel, the shorter, the quicker the turns can be made. Adjust the spacing and speed of movement to comfortably match the timing of the phrase of music.

Hands-across star - taking hands with the diagonally opposite dancer, as if for a hand turn, with shoulder in towards the center and facing the direction of travel, four (or sometimes six) dancers circle around their joined hands. Often referred to as simply “hands across”. Right hands across moves clockwise, left hands across moves counter-clockwise. There is no convention for who’s hands are above or below.

Setting - a little leap to one foot, bringing the other to it for two quick steps, then repeat, but with the opposite foot. Usually, but not always, done to the right foot first, then the left. In triple-time dancing, done with a step to one foot then bringing the other close, touching the floor but not changing weight.

Turn Single - walking as an individual in a small circle, clockwise (to the right) unless “left” (counter-clockwise is specified). Imagine there is an open manhole cover near you. Walk around it in 4 steps (3 or 6 steps for triple-time music).

Lead (up, down, out, in, across) - two or more dancers traveling side by side in the same direction. Customary to take nearest hands while leading.

Cast - English style way to move from side to side. Start by turning away from the direction you want to go – for example, loop left to move to the right. Continue the loop past where you started, then loop back in just beyond. To move left, start your loop to the right.

Rights and Lefts or **Circular Hey** - Each person travels clockwise or counter-clockwise around a set of four (sometimes more) people, alternately pulling by with right then left hands. Number of pull-bys are referred to as “changes”, and can be two, three or four. Called a **circular hey** when no hands are given, just passing alternating shoulders.

Half Figure 8 - A couple goes around another (standing) couple to trade places with each other. Start by crossing paths in the gap between the standing couple, then looping around that diagonally opposite person to end in your partner’s starting place.

Gate or Wheel-around - A hand turn, but starting with both people facing the same direction. Taking adjacent hands and pivoting around them, with one person backing up while the other person moves forward. The backing person is referred to as "gating" the other, forward moving, person. Done both clockwise and counter-clockwise. When the term wheel-around is used, the turn is generally only half-way, ending facing the opposite direction.

Shoulder around or Gypsy - Two dancers orbit around each other in a circular path, as if they were turning in a hand turn, but using their eyes instead of their hands (a great time for eye contact). Can be done either with right shoulders in (clockwise) or left shoulders in (counter-clockwise)

Poussette - Each couple, facing their partner with both hands joined, moves as a unit around the other couple, facing in the same direction the entire time. Can be thought of as a kind of back-to-back, but as couples instead of individuals. A **half-poussette** is done just halfway, to trade place of one couple with another.

Shoulder (or Shaw) Siding - Two dancers "double" forward to end right shoulder to right shoulder with each other, then double back to place. Often followed by the same move, but going left shoulder to left shoulder instead.

"Hole-in-the-Wall" cross - a special style of crossing and changing places with another facing dancer. Dancers approach, then swivel past each other clockwise, keeping their faces towards each other, than back into the opposite place. Often done with a rise and a poise-point at the swivel, with backing away a separate movement.

Hey - Weaving figure for three or more dancers. In a hey-for-three, each person follows a figure-eight path, each person alternately weaving through the center. Generally done till each person has completed one circuit and is back in their starting place. *Note: We don't have a ball dance this year with a simple hey in it, but this helps explain a mirror hey, which we do have.*

Mirror Hey – Weaving figure for six dancers, in two parallel lines of three. Each dancer does a hey in their own line, mirroring their partner in the other line. In the most usual form, a **Grimstock** hey, couples come "meet" (come together) at the ends of the set, and "bulge" (separate from each other) as they pass through the middle of the set. In a **Morris** hey, it is the reverse; couples separate at the ends, and join together in the middle.

Other common figures:

Arming - In **right** arming, two dancers approach each other, hooking right elbows and turning around each other and back to place, releasing arms. **Left** arming is using the left elbows and turning in the other direction.

Figure 8 or Full Figure 8 - A couple goes around another (standing) couple in a full figure eight pattern to end in the place they started. Start by crossing paths in the gap between the standing couple, then looping around that diagonally opposite person, then cross again and loop around your neighbor to end in your starting place.