

The Elements of Style: Good Hand Turn Techniques

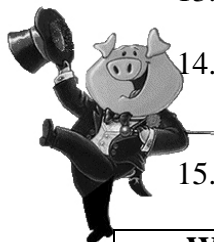


The 10 Commandments of Good Hand Turns

1. Prepare on the upbeat and move into the turn on the down beat of the appropriate musical phrase. Both dancers in a turn move at the same time, even the one who starts the turn from a stationary position (as in Widows Shall All Have Husbands). Otherwise the circularity of the move will be deformed.
2. Make the turn round, dancing off on a tangent to connect with the other dancer.
3. Point your shoulder at the other dancer to ensure proper orientation and to make the turn round.
4. Give weight in each turn. Half turns still get full weight. Weight comes from pulling back with the muscles of the arm, not pushing down or leaning back.
5. Ease out of each turn, dancing forward to line, not backing up (except in dances like Zephyrs and Flora or Michael and All Angels). Don't hold on till the bitter end.
6. Look Backward: Keep the social connection till the very end in grand chains and in R&Ls with no polite turn. Also in ½ turns by R or L (De'il Take the Warr).
7. Don't Look Backward: Going from a hand turn into a circle, take the hand of the one before you and extend your hand to the one behind without looking back. Look in the direction that the circle moves (clockwise or counterclockwise).
8. Take and release hands in a dancing manner, notably in a dance like At Rainbow's End, where the taking of hands is somewhat ceremonial, but really in all dances. As Fried said, "the hands are dancing." Also, Raise and lower arms in time to the music, as in Hole in the Wall (raise hands on last beat of B music for the h-4). Don't raise the arms early.
9. Keep appropriate set size. A tight set when the turns are brisk; a wide set when they're not.
10. Use extension and retraction to regulate a turn's timing. A pivot swing that flows into a star (as in Face the Music) is a good example of how extension and retraction aid timing. These techniques used in concert also communicate intimacy, for instance in the R- and L-hand turns in Well Hall or Fandango.

WET HOGS 'R US and Other Tips

11. The "delayed turn": Move on the down beat but don't necessarily take h then. Employ the "delayed turn" to maintain flow. That is, regulate the timing to finish at the end of the phrase and not "stomp hoofs." (Sun Assembly, 4 for the Gospel Makers)
12. Avoid the "rushed turn"—barreling across the set to begin, taking long strides during the turn, and ending with a "polite" (square on) finish. (How many steps to cross the set, but many people barrel across in just 2)
13. The Slow Release: Employ the slow release from one 2-h turn into another when possible, as in Childgrove & Easter Thursday.
14. The accelerated less-than-8-count turn: M step up above P, W below; makes 4- or 6-count turn possible because not doing full 360 degree turn. Avoid ending in polite position straight on, with arms deeply bent at elbows and hands back near shoulders. (First Lady, Easter Thursday)
15. WET HOGS 'R US. Try to perfect the following in your turns:



• Weight	• Height	• Roundness	• Preparation on the Upbeat
• Extension	• Orientation		• Smiles & eye contact
• Timing	• Grip		
	• Set Size		