

# Brazilian Zouk

WHATSAPP TIP BY ARTHUR SANTOS



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# WHATSAPP GROUP OF TIPS

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## Tip 1:

One of my greatest realisations that I (Arthur) had with my mentor, Walmir Machado, owner of Academia Sport Dance, was when he told me this: **“In dance, we deal with vanity.”** So be careful with your EGO, use it wisely. **Humility must come before TALENT!** Just as our body has limitations, so too does our mind. It is important that you look in the mirror and discover your psychological limitations, for example: depression, low self-esteem, trust issues, among others. Many people who “cannot” dance, or have difficulties learning certain types of movements, do not always present a physical limitation/difficulty, but instead a mental one.

For example, I was extremely negative towards my dancing. I have always been a perfectionist and to this day, continue unsatisfied with my dancing, causing me to always seek new learning and understanding in order to improve more and more. But it was different; I blamed myself for every error, always believing I was rubbish. I put myself down so often that eventually my mind became an obstruction preventing my body from expressing its potential. It was only after eliminating this psychological barrier that my dancing took flight. As I mentioned before, I still have a lot to improve, but this is the path to success – both in dance and in life: Never stop being a student and never stop learning.

Ballroom dancing, primarily, teaches us much more about life and people than simple movements do. The slogan for Sport Dance Goiania – where I learnt to dance – says this: **“Dance through life”** Today I am able to understand its true meaning. I used to think it meant having to dance every moment of every day – which is amazing. However, the real meaning is this: take what you learn in dance and use it in life, and not the other way around. I am not talking about the ‘steps’, but instead, its values.

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## Tip 2:

### **Advice about videos and workshops:**

Firstly, we would like to emphasise that learning from videos, particularly for dance styles such as Brazilian Zouk, is not advised. It is important to take classes in person, with videos serving as a supplementation of information, reminders and new ideas. However, here are a few tips on how to get the most out of videos and classes:

- In class or a workshop: Watch first, and then try. Instead of attempting the movement while it is being explained, listen firstly to the teacher while they are talking or demonstrating the movement. Generally the teachers will demonstrate two or three times in the middle of the circle. This is so the students can observe important elements occurring on the bottom and top half of the body. Therefore, study the motion of the legs first, then the motion of the arms. Feel free to ask the teachers to repeat the movement so that you can observe other details also. Do not be distracted by the effect of the movement; pay attention to the details.

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Watching a video: Remember that in order to “learn how to run, you should first learn how to crawl and walk”. Meaning, do not attempt something seen on a video that you perhaps are not ready for, in order to prevent injuries in you or your partner. When watching a video, analyse it in 15-20 second

blocks. For each block, watch it at least 5 times (why?): watch only the right hand, then watch only the left. Do the same next time with the legs, and then watch the entire movement as a whole. Brazilian Zouk deceives our eyes due to its effective movements. So take care ;) remembering that practice is very important.

Often people are in a hurry to arrive at the final product (movement) and end up creating an incorrect muscle memory in the process. Do not rush.

**Dance needs to be seen as a way of life and not just a hobby!!!**

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## Tip 3:

**Today's tip: Look after your body, after all, we only have one.**

When we are learning a new sport, dance, or something containing movement, our brain tends to associate information quicker than our bodies. This of course, depends on the level of body awareness in the individual. Dance is nothing more than body awareness, knowing when to activate certain muscles, where to maintain one's weight placement, etc.

When we see professionals executing certain types of movements with ease, it is not simply because he trained the movement for a long period of time, but because he constructed his physical condition in a manner that would support that movement. For this reason, if you want to improve your dance, it is not simply doing classes and training more that will do it, but also dedicate time to work on your mobility, muscular activation, strength and flexibility.

The greater your understanding and physical strength, the easier it will be to learn. Put aside between 30 minutes to 1 hour of time to work separately on your correct posture and strength (back, abdomen, gluteus, legs), isometric movements, and the strengthening of your ankles, calves, and legs, as they are your base of support – not your shoulders and hands. Therefore, before learning any type of movement, make sure your body is prepared for that movement. This is applicable from the "simple" basic step to more elaborate movements. Often we cannot execute a movement and think we must just keep practicing, but it is not quite like that. Sometimes it is your body that is not ready for such a movement. In that case, stop and use accessory exercises to prepare your body for that movement. If not, your movement will be executed with a waste of energy, creating a messy movement lacking precision and dynamic, and you will risk causing injuries.

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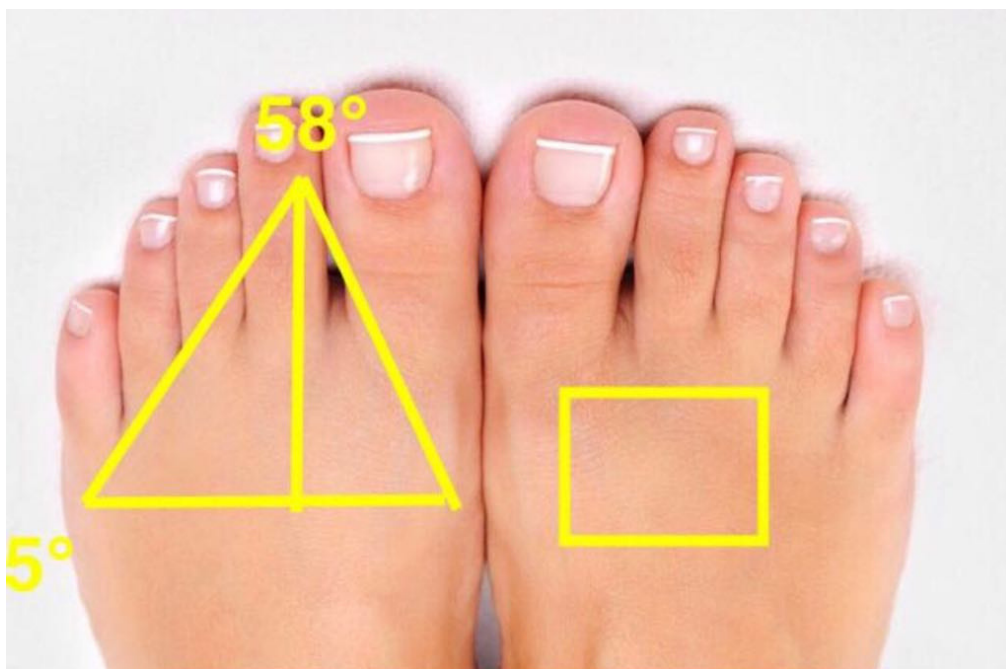
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## Tip 4:

**Giovanna's question:  
Tips for dancing in heels**

- Strengthen your ankles and legs in order to obtain more stability in the demi point position.
- Learn to do everything in flats first.
- Start dancing in lower heels, of 3-5cm in height, and later in heels no higher than 7cm.
- Don't be lazy. Don't allow your weight to transfer to your heels, even when wearing dance heels.
- Always maintain your weight in the middle of your foot between your big toe and second toe. **(See picture below)**





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## Tip 5:

**Stephany's question:  
Exercises to improve balance in heels and spins**

**Tip 4 will help to answer this question. However, it is worth pointing out that for spins:**

- Remember to 'spot' (either your partner or the direction in which you are headed). Your head should be the last to turn and the first to arrive;
- Do not use your upper body to turn; use your hips and feet instead;
- Maintain your abdomen and back engaged and in place, your arms lightly relaxed, and maintain the little 'cup' position with your hand;
- Whilst turning, always 'brush' your feet (pass your feet past each other).

### **Moving/travelling turns:**

- People tend to lose their balance due to incorrect body positioning (posture) and not turning around the central axis while moving. Work on your mobility, flexibility and functional exercise particularly centred on your CORE muscles (your core consists of the muscles surrounding your centre of gravity; in other words, the umbilical region. Simply put, they are your abdominal muscles around your pelvis – the lumbar and hip region).
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## Tip 6:

**Mariana's question:  
Tips for better balance in the Lateral (pivot)**

The lateral is the principal and most important technique and movement for the followers, with almost all of the zouk movements starting from it.

- Draw your leg before transferring your weight/stepping.
- It is your base leg that causes you to transfer your weight and push you forward.
- Maintain contact with the floor and always brush your feet.
- The pivot should occur on the second step. When having to pivot to the right, think about using your left leg, and visa-versa.
- Keep the size/length of each step the same.
- You should aim to have your chest facing the leader while your hips and legs face the direction of travel (forwards), thus creating a slight torsion - do not force.

**Remember to use the energy created by your legs as opposed to relying on your arms.**

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## Tip 7:

### THOUGHT OF THE DAY By Arthur Santos

Sometimes we stop living in the **present** and moving forward in life due to our **past** or what we fear may happen in the **future**. Focus on the good memories from the past and use these as motivation to move forward; as for the others, learn and grow from them. Use the uncertainties of the future as determination and focus to help you reach what you desire. And be grateful for everything in your life. #gratefulness

*“In life, sometimes we win, sometimes we learn.”*

**The only way is forwards.**

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## Tip 8:

### Hair in the face during head movements?

**Followers:** In order for your hair to stay out of your face, you should execute the movement with a centrifugal energy/force (from the inside, out); that being where the movement starts from the ground, up. With moving and/or circular head movements (see video), maintain your abdomen activated and remember that your neck should be an extension of your thoracic (chest). There should be no rotation (looking down), as this will create tension in your superior trapezius and could lead to injury.

**Leaders:** When leading the ladies head movement, DO NOT focus on her head, instead focus on leading her legs and torso. Use the hand closest to her body (in most cases, the right hand) to lead the movement, maintaining the centrifugal energy/force of the movement directed outwards, i.e., maintain – for as long as possible - her movement in the lateral position.

The focus of the photo below is the movement of the hair (head). This photo was taken with the intention to demonstrate the differences in the movement and aid understanding as to why the student had hair in her face and always felt tension in her trapezius.

*Photo 1 (before): Movement with pronation of the head (rotation towards the floor). The energy of the movement is internal. ✘*

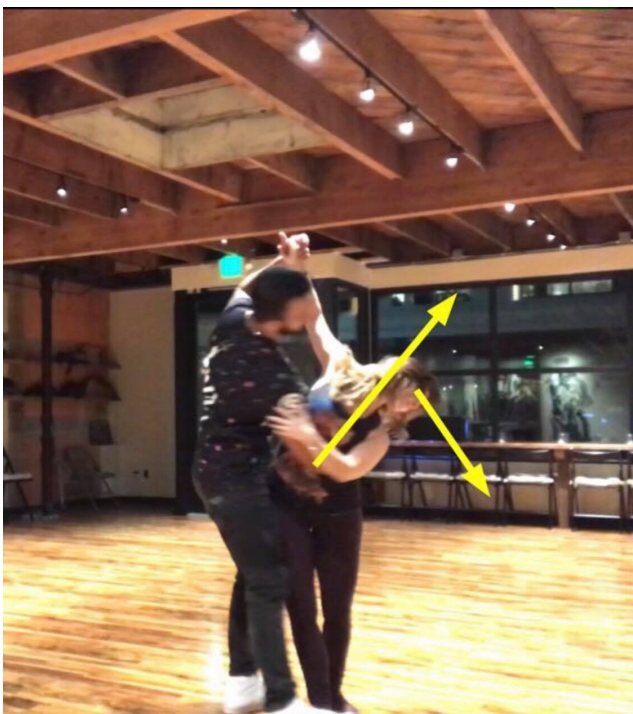
*Photo 2 (after): Movement is extended and relaxed (with correct muscles engaged). The energy of the movement is external. ✔*

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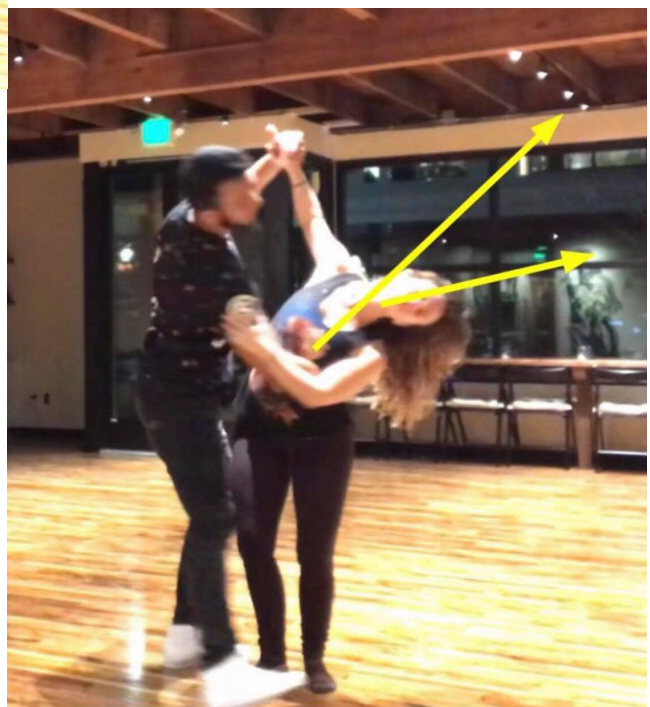
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## Photo 1

A lot of followers do the circular head movement like this, as styling, you must have a very high skill level to do it. This type of position is used mainly to start the movement known as rôtisserie.

## Photo 2





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## Tip 8:

### Douglas's question:

#### The breath at the moment of preparation for a movement

We use a breath to PREPARE for the execution of movement. For this reason, at the moment of embrace it is important to try and synchronise our breath with our partners'. Generally, when the movement is headed upwards – the preparation of the head, for example – you should inhale, and when the movement is descending (semi flexion of the knees), you should exhale. However, we need to learn how to breathe correctly, particularly when doing some form of physical activity – in our case, dancing.

✘ **Incorrect form:** When the breath happens through the ribcage – this being when we open our ribs and move our shoulders lightly. This is incorrect as it causes muscular tension, muscular fatigue, etc.

✔ **Correct form:** Ideally you should allow the breath to happen naturally without blocking it. However, it is important to make the most of the warm up stretches that happen before class to exercise and control the breath. Therefore, USE YOUR DIAPHRAGM: Breathing deeply through your diaphragm is a common practice used in therapy to reduce anxiety. If you suffer from nervousness, try to use these techniques before dancing.

As an exercise, put your hand on your stomach, and, while breathing, watch to see if your abdomen is moving. If it is, you are correctly using your diaphragm. If it isn't, try and relax the muscles around your ribs. When you inhale, your ribs elevate, filling the diaphragm and lungs. When inhaling, think about your body "growing". Exhale completely: A common error is to completely inhale but only partially exhale – particularly common during quick and dynamic movements. Acquire the habit of completing the cycles of deep breathing. Again, practice this during the warm-up in class so that your body and mind can develop these phases naturally.

Breathe slowly: The slower you train yourself to breathe, the better your technique will be.

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**Continuing on the topic of breathing...**

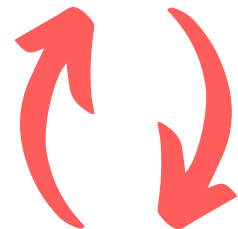
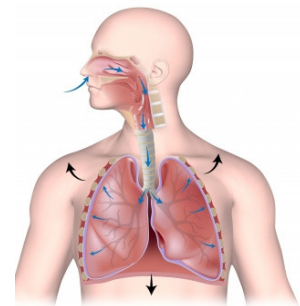
## **Stephanny's question: Breathing exercises**

As adults, we create many bad breathing habits due to every day stress, where we take short breaths and use only the top and smallest part of our lungs. As a result we are causing muscular tension/stress which gives the sensation of being fatigued at the end of a dance or two. One often thinks that this is a lack of cardiovascular fitness and stamina, however, how do you expect to improve your stamina if you are not adequately receiving oxygen?!

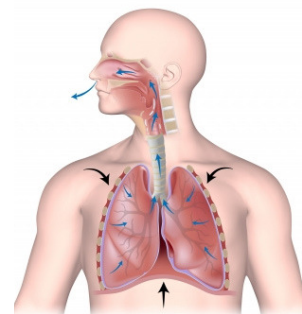
### **Lets understand a bit more about our breathing:**

- Our lungs are smaller at the top and increase in size towards the bottom (closer to the stomach);
- The diaphragm is a muscular membrane that divides the respiratory system from the digestive system;
- Therefore, when we talk about diaphragmatic breathing, we should feel our stomach expand – creating the false idea that “the air is going to our stomach” – as the diaphragm creates maximum space for the lower part of our lungs;
- We have nasal and oral breathing. For us as dancers, it is recommended to breathe in and out through our nose;
- Often, incorrect breathing is a result of incorrect posture, so firstly try and align your body;
- During the class warm-up, and even in your day to day life, experiment – before going to sleep and when waking, up for example – taking 5-10 minutes to breathe deeply. Try to take the same period of time to inhale and exhale;
- Yoga, Pilates, and Meditation are important practices that can help you learn to control your breathing.

Inspiration



Expiration





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## Tip 9:

### Fabricio's question: Tips for spinning on axis/on one leg

Spinning on axis is not just the leader or the follower's job, but requires correct technique and knowledge from both. Begin practicing on axis turns coming from the Lateral – drawing a long S on the floor:

- When completing this motion, remember the Relevé and Plié (extension and flexion of the knees) for the preparation;
  - The leader must indicate to the follower which leg will be the axis for the turn, as it is the leader's responsibility to create and maintain the energy for the movement – not the follower's. This energy is created from the preparatory movement prior to the turn. For example: if coming from the S, focus on the energy derived from the torsion in the upper body (in direction of the leader) and hips (in direction of travel for the follower), as well as from the leg that draws the S. The follower often adds power to the movement to help, however, this actually makes its execution more difficult;
  - The leader, when turning the follower, should think about remaining consistent in the drawing of the circumference, this should be around the head of the follower (approximately at forehead height slightly above, like a halo). Use your two middle fingers to turn her and keep your elbows relaxed, but keep your back and abdomen engaged;
  - The follower should keep their back engaged as opposed to their elbows. Keep knees semi-flexed (remembering that there are many types of turns, the follower should maintain the position from which the turn was prepared), the spine should remain aligned – with a slight arch; upholding the natural curvature of the lumbar spine (keeping the core engaged), and extending the thoracic region (chest up, without squeezing the shoulder blades). The head should focus on a fixed point (usually on the leader), being the last to leave and the first to arrive;
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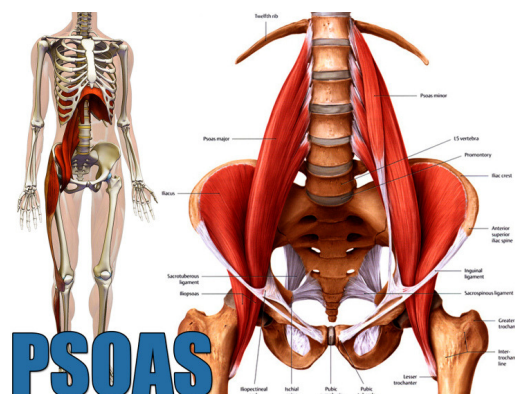
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- Followers: when drawing the S (usually with the right leg), think about creating maximum extension, as this is how you will create the momentum (torque) for the movement. Bring the feet together only in the last minute – just before you would "kick the leader". Of course there are many variations on how to draw the free leg, however, when beginning, we recommend you develop the *Passé* movement (ballet terminology), as this will ensure the follower activates the *iliopsoas*\* (the muscle group that helps to stabilise the body during dancing).

Try to break down the movement instead of trying to turn straight away. Practice drawing the S, and from there try some different variations such as: in the middle of the S, the leader walks around the follower, keeping her in the position of the S, and returning to the lateral. After, repeat the movement, but this time after walking around the follower, do one turn with both arms (keeping the leader's right arm in the line of the follower's waist, and the left arm lightly above the follower's head). This way, both the leader and follower will get used to the movement. After this, start doing one or two spins, and from there increase the amount. Don't think about the number of spins, but about the quality of them.

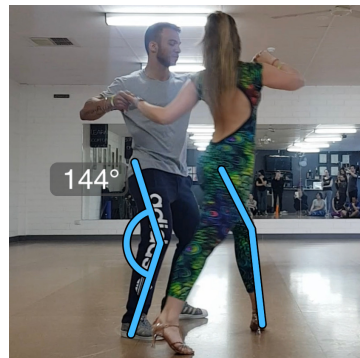
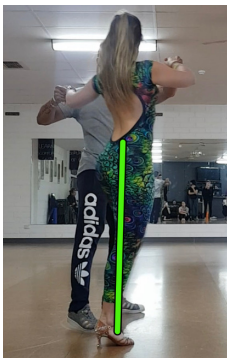
\*The *iliopsoas* is the only group of muscles that are connected to the spine, pelvis and femur. If this muscle is shortened, tense and weak, it will cause instability and pain in the lumbar spine. Therefore stretch and strengthen this muscle. Find a professional who can help you look after your body.





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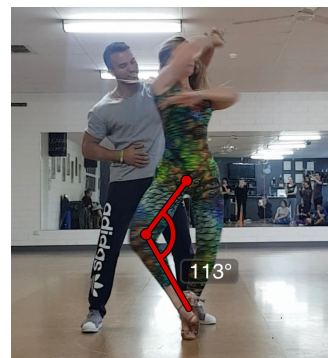
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1. Relevé (don't need to go onto demi-point) / Breathe

2. Plié and torsal torsion – Preparation

3. Extension of the S – the energy coming from the ground up



4. Synchronisation between the lead and the alignment of the followers' legs

5. Low passé



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## Tip 10:

**Mari's question:  
How to organise class content**

This is a very interesting topic. Layssa and I, together with the board of directors of the Brazilian Zouk Dance Council (<http://www.brazilianzoukcouncil.com>) and other professionals in the national and international field, are in constant conversation in order to organise the Brazilian Zouk scenario – the counting of music and names of the basics – so that it becomes something more universal. For example: In Brazil we used to count like 3..1, 2... As we used to count the step and not the music - but now is changing. Elsewhere, this doesn't work, as a result people count in their own way and create different names for the same things, which causes conflicts and confusion for students.

But now we all got to a consensus about the count where most places around the world adapted to it - **& 1 2 & 3 4 & 5 6 & 7 8 &...** or **Tum Tum Tic.**

The format of classes overseas (for example in Australia) is different to that in Brazil, where they run courses of 6 to 8 weeks, and at the end of each course, the cycle repeats with different variations and connections patterns. The way in which I run my classes at my school in Adelaide - Australia was as follows, 5 levels: *Beginners, Fundamentals 1, 2 and 3, and Intermediate.*

Beginners and Fundamentals 1 are part of the "Basic Kit"

➤ **Beginners:** Basic step on the spot, and forwards and backwards / Viradinha / Lateral / Simple exit back to basic, leader walking around the follower, follower's simple turn (from the lateral to come back to the basic). All of the students repeat the same course at least twice.

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- **Fundamentals 1 (Movements in line):** Viradinha changing direction (and variations) / Yoyo / Bonus from both sides / Elastic. Within these we practice many variations.
- **Fundamentals 2 (Body movements):** Body roll (snake), Figure 8 (hip movements), among others. The focus is only on movements executed in close hold.
- **Fundamentals 3 (Introduction to passive head movements):** Sideways head movements / Boneca / Whip / Cambré. Again with variations and the combination with previously learnt movements.
- **Intermediate:** The combination of all techniques learnt, along with the introduction to movements such as counterbalance, turns on axis, rotisseries, etc.

However, it depends greatly on the students present. Sometimes we push through content quickly, other times it takes a bit longer, but we always have a solid focus on our Basics.

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## Tip 11:

Patricia's question:

Whats the difference between Lambazouk and Lambada?

I had a long conversation about this with my friend and teacher Leo Bruno, a teacher in this area who has studied the history of lambada for many years since the beginning, and still does so today.

In short: **Lambada = Lambazouk**. What happened was that, due to the Lambada music having "died" in Brazil, they began to dance Lambada to Zouk music. I asked him: "Would you say that Lambazouk is a more academic form of Lambada? He replied, "Today we want to get rid of the name Lambazouk. But yes, Lambazouk is the more academic form nowadays". He continued, "Lambazouk is an evolution of lambada, where we still see its strong characteristics such as the Boneca, Peão with head movement, the whip, cambrés, swing, and its strongest point: the rhythmic conservation." Lambada professionals came to study zouk to understand its dynamics, concepts and structures and as a result have managed to cement the structure and names of movements.

As with everything, the historical, political and social aspects surrounding lambada means they are permitted to receive cultural incentives from the Brazilian government. Leo Bruno mentions how there are many benefits, and explains why the likes of Leo & Romina / Ricardo Ferrari / Familia Lira Braz / Didi and Pablo and Leticia have gone back to using the name Lambada.

"People still worry that they will lose students...or what happens also is that others want to start zouking without knowing a fucking single basic step," continues Leo.

In conclusion, Lambazouk is simply a name that has developed as a result of marketing, however, it is the same dance – just seen as a more dynamic and structured one.

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## Tip 12:

**Breno's question:**

**On axis turns with the suspension of the follower's leg**

Firstly you should be aware that the follower lifting their leg –or any other form of styling – during a spin, is something that in most cases isn't lead; however, it can be encouraged through the use of similar techniques taken from tango such as the 'take the leg' movement. In order for this to be successful, the follower must have sufficient strength, control and flexibility when working with these types of movements. Professional followers have trained for many years (and continue to train) in order to gain the body control they have, and for this reason they are able to perform these types of movements.

- It is important that you have strong zouk 'Basics' such as: the basic step, lateral, lunge, elastic, yoyo, and bonus, as these link to the preparatory movements for the on axis suspension.
  - In addition to this, an adequate physical condition is necessary to provide support/stability for the follower and the leader. With accurate muscular activation, you will be able to execute the movement more efficiently and without wasting too much energy.
  - In order to create the suspension, you should think about the energy of the movement coming from the ground up, this mean, the suspension for the follower comes from the force of their legs, with the arms maintaining a consistent 'lift'/support – ensuring the shoulders and back remain fixed and down, with the leaders palm of the hand and forearm facing upwards.
  - These types of movements would be a progression from doing counterbalances. The technique for walking around the follower is the same. Your toes should also point towards the direction of travel, i.e. in a circle.
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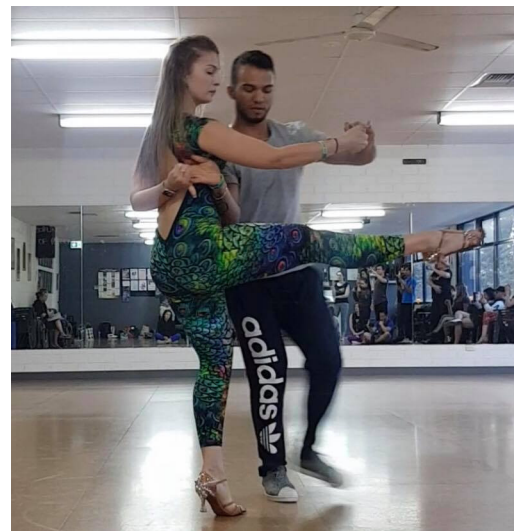
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➤ The easiest way to begin this movement would be from the yoyo, bonus or lunge, but this movement could come from many other positions also. One must remember to connect these types of movements to those which generate momentum and centrifugal energy.

**Recommendations: These types of movements should not be executed in crowded spaces.**

Don't concentrate/focus your Zouk around these types of movements; if your dance consists more of these types of movements than the foundational Zouk movements, then we believe you have lost the essence of the dance. Ensure you have sufficient Zouk experience before beginning to study these types of movements. Knowing a big bunch of moves does not determine your level of dance. Talk to your teacher and see what you are ready to train. Respect the limits of both you and you follower.

*See examples below:*





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## Tip 13:

**Ursula's question:**

**Tips in regards to a heavy lead**

*Special participation of Layssa Liebscher*

This is a delicate topic. You need to ensure that you keep yourself safe as it is your body (if the lead is rough and putting your body at risk of injury, talk to the leader – even if he doesn't like it), especially when it comes to your neck and spine, as these are easily susceptible to injury.

When the lead is strong, instead of "holding on tightly", I (Layssa) relax my grip through my fingers – of course while still maintaining the rest of my body engaged. This way the leader will lose tension and any point of elasticity with you, feel you are both no longer connected, and will reduce the speed or force of the lead. This usually works, but as always, there are exceptions. If this is already occurring in a close hold embrace to the point of hurting or being uncomfortable, we tell our students to slide their left arm to the front of the leaders shoulder, this way creating space between you both. If he is the crazy, 'flailing tube' type of leader who moves uncontrollably, abort mission and tell him: "Hello, I am sorry, but you are hurting me". If he doesn't like this, end the dance and leave him there with a simple, "thank you". Unfortunately in some cases – although harsh – this is necessary.

- What happens is that in many places people lead in a very archaic manner, where "up is up" and "down is down", simply executing the movements as opposed to dancing them together with their partner;
  - Many are determined to perform all the movements they know – disregarding whether or not their partner is able to complete these movements – instead of doing what they are both capable of doing together;
  - We tell our students that from the moment one asks another to dance and they accept, during those next few songs that follow, they are in a relationship. Not everything will be perfect, but both need to work together for it to work;
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➤ For this reason, the leader has to understand that it doesn't matter how much he knows or how good he is.

From the first moment of contact with the follower, he should be able to sense what they will be able to do together (this goes for the follower too, being able to 'read' the type of leader you are about to dance with). By this we mean that the same sequence of movements with every follower is not recommended (unless it is of the basic, foundational movements and its variations).

➤ When dancing together, the idea is for 100% efficiency: 50% from the leader and 50% from the follower. This way each will have 50% extra to be used as a form of compensation, for example: if the leader is giving 80%, give back 20%, and visa-versa, in order to find a balance together. This goes more in a matter of energy level, and is simple but not easy, requires a lot practice.

➤ We are dancers; all of the energy for our movements should come from the ground (from our feet, up). Use the energy created by your legs and core to both lead and follow. This way, once the energy arrives at the arms/hands, she is already balanced.

To conclude this topic, unfortunately the majority of people who do private lessons are followers. However, it is not just the followers that are at risk of injury on the dance floor – it can be the leaders also. When the follower dances alone or with their arms extremely tense/locked – pushing and pulling – and especially when dancing with a teacher or other professional, they throw themselves! They put too much focus on styling and their own movement that they do not connect with the leader. I (Arthur) can say from personal experience, and that of other professionals, that our backs and shoulders are often hurt by the above types of followers.

For this reason, it is important that both the leader and follower know how to control their own body and protect themselves in uncomfortable situations.

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## Tip 14:

### Monique's question: Different styles of Brazilian Zouk

As previously mentioned, Brazilian Zouk, unfortunately, is one of the most unorganised of all styles in regards to its methodologies (styles), names of movements, music, etc. However, it is in the process of changing.

- > As time has passed, many 'styles' were created around the world, with names for movements that are almost impossible to believe. There are all sorts!
- > This has happened due to the lack of information, rules, and professionals from other styles who have begun to work with Zouk for financial gain (and due its current popularity), despite not having any true knowledge of the basics of Brazilian Zouk.
- > The difference between the styles is in the methodologies of teaching, music, basic movements.

**You could say that we have the follow methodologies/styles:**

- 1. Traditional Zouk:** The style danced by the majority of professionals. Where movements consist more of body and head movements, pauses, movements in line, an accentuation of the "boom" in the music [1 & 5] as well as a play between the melody and lyrics within the dynamic of the music.
  - 2. LambaZouk (Lambada):** As previously mentioned, LambaZouk is practically Lambada in a more structured format. It is danced to faster and more energetic songs (quick, quick slow/ 123 567) with 'Wi-Fi' movements - a more visual and energetic lead (no hands) – and many spins.
  - 3. Modern Zouk:** Has the additional implementation of urban dances. Within this category, professionals that have come from the Traditional Zouk have created other ramifications, such as:
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- Urban Zouk (by Veronezi): Hip Hope Style which uses syncopations with footwork;
- Neo Zouk (by Mafie Zouker): Counterbalances and continual movements with tilted and twisted turns with no pauses;
- Soul Zouk (by China): Known for the body movements and manipulations;
- Zouk Flow (by Arkanjo): Continuation (flow) of the body and head.

Lastly, in Spain, a Brazilian Capoeira artist and dancer –Jefferson Da Costa – known as Master Gegê, has created a style called Mzouk, which uses the fundamentals of contact and improvisation from styles such as contemporary and hip hop. This style is known today thanks to the works of siblings Daniel and Leticia, and is a style in which all of the movements are worked in a clockwise and anticlockwise manner.

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## Tip 15:

**Cloves question:**

### **Positioning of the leaders and followers hands during turning patterns**

Remember that when dancing Brazilian Zouk, we need to maintain an elastic tension where both the leader and follower must keep their shoulders relaxed and back engaged, and the forearm (and fingers) activated. Avoid keeping your hands open (flat palm and fingers).

- > What often happens with the leader is that they think about having a “light” lead which ends up feeling like a ‘ghost lead’, meaning the lead ends up being more intuitive than directional. A true ‘light’ lead is when the leader has a clear/clean lead, and provides support and security for the follower.
- > Yes, it is correct to say that we use the middle and ring finger to lead the majority of movements, and I still connect my pointer finger to the hand of the follower during the lateral for increased support (see below). However, you must take care to ensure you do not use solely your fingertips, but instead your whole finger. The leader therefore will use more of the ‘half cup’. To arrive in this position, always think about the energy coming from the centre of your palm.
- > For the followers, you must be careful to not activate your elbows and shoulders, or leave your hands open (flat palmed). What was said above applies to the followers also, except that their ‘cup’ should be more ‘relaxed’, allowing the thumb to move, and hand to shift between ‘half-cup’ and ‘cup’, depending on the movement.

Look at the example below: observe the difference in hand positioning. While turning, yes it is recommended that the follower forms the cup, but be careful not to squeeze the leaders’ fingers.

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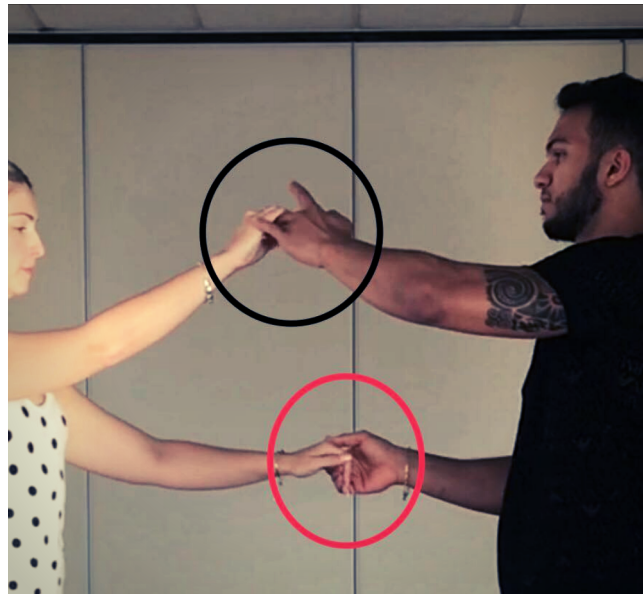


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Middle and ring finger for the leader /  
follower's cup/



Half cup (red) / cup (black)



Leaders, avoid holding the follower's hand by  
the fingertips. Try to maintain the most  
contact with their hands but without  
squeezing them.



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## Tip 16:

### Patricia's question: Tips for Cambrés

Firstly let's discuss the important aspects that make up the movement: Cambré (means arched). Make sure your back, abdomen, legs and neck are in good condition to ensure this movement is safe and effective.

Naturally, we have greater ease to curve forwards than backwards. However, some people naturally have a high level of mobility in their spine which enhances their ability to arch/cambré. With training and use of the correct muscles, we can improve the amplitude and performance of this movement.

- Vertebral column: Our spine is made up of four regions: Cervical (neck), Thoracic, Lumbar and the Sacrum. In accordance with the natural curve of the spine, we notice that the cervical and lumbar region have the same level of curvature (arched), while the lumbar and sacrum have a concave curve (inwards – see photo). It is important that we have the correct posture, with our spine in a neutral position, in order to better execute the movements. To maintain our spine neutral is to maintain its natural curvature.

In short, let's learn the principal muscles involved in maintaining a healthy spine when performing such movements:

- Abdominal rectum: has the primary function of protecting the trunk flexor (between the thoracic and hips), with the additional internal and external oblique muscles also adding support.
  - Transversal abdominal: one of the most important muscles for a healthy and strong posture. This muscle is responsible for the stabilisation of the lumbar region, and should be active during all physical activity – in our case, during every dance.
  - Pelvic floor: inner muscles responsible for creating a strong base of support for the lumbar and pelvic (sacrum) region.
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- Erector spinae: is a set of muscle groups; Iliocostalis, Longissimus and Spinalis, whose job is to maintain the spine erect. The strengthening of these muscles creates greater stability of the spine.

Now that you know about the muscles, let's see how to apply this knowledge for a healthy execution of the cambré:

- Leaders, learn the anatomical points of performance in order for you to lead and support the follower in the correct way. Followers, learn the correct formation of the movement so that you are not dependent upon the leader and can protect yourselves. The Cambré is a passive movement of the head (thoracic and neck), but requires the activation of the CORE (abdomen, gluteus and legs).
1. Extension of the spine (preparation – breath): Align your spine, maintaining the natural curve of the cervical and lumbar region. Using the rectus and transversal abdominal muscles, as well as the erector spinae, expand the thoracic region (think about lifting your chest to the ceiling).
  2. Contraction of the spine (2nd preparation): The movement should begin from the bottom, knees semiflexed and the gluteus and abdominal muscles contracted (think about bringing your pelvis towards the ceiling). The thoracic and your head are passive (only moving due to the force generated by the core). Keep your chin gently close to your chest.
  3. Unroll (extension of the spine with a light projection forwards from the hips): Maintain the contraction of the hips/pelvis upward at all times during the movement in order to protect the lumbar spine, and unroll, vertebrae by vertebrae from the bottom to the top (as if you were rolling back to lie on the floor from a seated position). The pelvis should 'create space', meaning there should be a compensation between the pelvis and the head. Project the pelvis lightly forward to aid in the unrolling of the spine. Maintain a solid base in both legs, with the back leg providing the centre base (where you should feel your weight), and the front leg pushing into the floor in a demi-point position, preventing your weight from transferring completely forward.
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## How to avoid injuries and protect yourself:

- Always maintain your CORE engaged!
- Followers, learn to compensate in your movements (such as when the leader puts his weight on you or pulls you off axis), by using your hips and legs, and not your dorsal.
- If the leader does know prepare the proper extension and leads (pushes) you directly backwards, still contract your abdominal and gluteus muscles and send your hips forwards, compensating for the bad lead.

Train this movement slowly alone, activating the correct muscles, and then with a quicker contraction. See below the correct final position (photo 1), and the wrong positions (photo 2 and 3):



✓ Gluteus and legs activated.  
Thoracic region extended and  
cervical region relaxed

Photo: Layssa Liebscher



✗ Weight in the front leg



✗ Gluteus relaxed





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## Tip 17:

**Yasmin's question:**

**How can the leader develop a sensitivity to distinguish between a natural or forced lead?**

What tends to be the problem is that there is a lack of study and knowledge surrounding the anatomy. Unfortunately, dance is focused on 'movements' and many people do not understand that there are ways to efficiently and safely perform these movements without the use of extra force.

- Therefore, the sensitivity of the leader will be improved if it is coupled with knowledge on how to prepare, lead and support the movement with correct positioning of the legs, core and hands.
- We must remember to create elastic tension during movements in this way
  1. At the moment of preparation (extension) of the movement, have your weight opposite to that of the followers', creating that elasticity. Your hands should be positioned on the scapula of the follower, with the supination of your palms (facing upwards), creating support and thoracic extension in the follower. Keep your shoulders and elbows relaxed and your abdominals and back activated.
  2. At the moment of contraction, do not think about pushing her upper body towards the floor. Make the follower activate her core, projecting your fingers/palm upwards and causing your forearm to position itself towards the follower's abdominal region.
  3. Think about leading the followers' hips forwards, as opposed to her upper body backwards (but without changing your hand position). Imagine the formation of the letter 'C', where your intention is to follow the concave positioning of her spine downwards.
  4. Keep your knees semi-flexed and your weight in the middle to ensure stability at the final moment of extension – cambré. Again, help the follower to keep her thoracic open by keeping the palm of your hand towards the ceiling. When finalising the movement, bring the lady up starting with your legs.

Leaders, remember that when you ask a follower to dance, you should take a moment to embrace her and read the types of movements and limitations she may possess. Don't think that she should be able to do every movement you know; respect and understand what you both can do together.

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## Tip 18:

**Clare's question:  
Tips on how to plan your first choreography.**

It is important to note that there are various ramifications within the dance: Dancer, Teacher, Choreographer, Performer. Being skilled in one does not mean you are skilled in all. For this reason it is important to focus on and study each individually. Everyone has their own way to create choreography. Some may take a week, others, a few days, some, months.

However, here is an example based on how we create ours. When creating your first choreography, don't rush. Don't put pressure on yourself, be patient, and believe in the process:

1. Firstly you should know what type of choreography you wish to create: Competitive or for entertainment (noncompetitive). When creating for competition it is necessary to follow the specific requirements stated by the competition. Non-competitive choreographies allow for more creative license.
  2. Find the song. Remember that this can be one of the most difficult parts, as it needs to match with the message of your piece and the story and emotion you want to portray (sexiness, happiness, sadness, loss, birth, death, sickness, victory, etc). The songs can be remixed by Zouk DJs/Producers such as Kakah, Allan Z, Mafie Zouker among others. Nowadays the recommended length for a routine is between 2.30 – max 3 minutes.
  3. Once you have chosen your music, work in counts of 8 to dissect the introduction, chorus, musical phrases, etc. Use a book and illustrate the structure of the music; when does it grow? When does it soften? Etc.
  4. In the beginning, work with movements that your body is already used to and create variations from these. Of course it is always good to be innovative, but remember, 'fancy' moves are not always the most difficult. Often the greatest challenge is creating a movement that fits within the music.
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5. Use the whole floor. Get yourself a piece of paper and indicate the lines of movement on stage as a way of visualising how much of the space you are using. Try not to create choreography that stays in the same spot or only moves in a line.
  6. Lines. If you don't have a ballet background, take some lessons to improve your arm and leg lines. Alternatively, when your choreography is finished, ask a ballet teacher to come watch and advise you on how and where you could improve your lines.
  7. Visualise. Listen to the song multiple times and visualise the choreography in your head.
    - Your body needs to be physically ready for the level of difficulty you have set. The better your physical condition, the cleaner and more efficient your choreography will be.
    - It is better (when starting out) that your choreography is simple, musical, and clean, than choreography of greater difficulty, that ends up messy and desperate.
    - Seek the opinions of professionals with experience, once the choreography is completed. Integrate elements from other dance styles also (and find professionals in those areas).
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## Tip 19:

**Paulo's question:**

**How do we count Brazilian Zouk outside of Brazil?**

- > This topic is currently being discussed amongst the professionals and the Brazilian Zouk Council, in order to reach a universal mode of counting. However, given the variety of music to which you can dance Brazilian Zouk, it is proving to be a challenge.
- > We know already that the basic step is syncopated, and the syncopation happens on both the even and odd numbers: **and 1-2 and 3-4 and 5-6 and 7-8 and**
- > If we dance to R&B/POP music for example, we can dance differently and thus syncopate the numbers odd to even: **1 and 2, 3 and 4, 5 and 6, 7 and 8.**

Remember that the above counting is the counting of steps. In response to the question: Internationally, we (Layssa and I) use different forms of counting:

1. In 8 (syncopated counting);
2. Tum Tum Tic

- > When we dance, we always try and follow the musical phrase that begins on the 1 (the right leg for the leader). With some movements, however, we invert this rule by 'breaking time', but always with the intention of returning to the musical phrase on 1.
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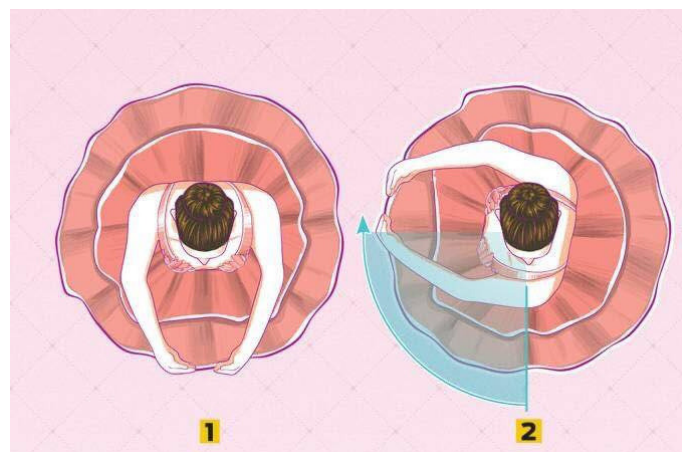
## Tip 20:

**Joyce's question:  
How to reduce the level of dizziness in turns**

Studies show that years of training cause changes to the brains of ballerinas, which assists them in maintaining balance when doing pirouettes. This means that with correct practice of turns, your body will eventually become familiar with the motion. So it is a matter of PRACTICE. In addition to this, adequate hydration and breathing patterns will also make a difference.

When I (Layssa) am executing head movements and turning I tend to close my eyes, as I have a strong knowledge of what my footwork is, so I don't need to see to complete the movement. Of course if I am dancing with a leader who I do not completely trust, or do not feel supported, I keep my eyes open. Each follower is different, some always keep their eyes open, and others always keep them shut to reduce dizziness.

The best way to train alone is by practicing the footwork first, and later adding the head movement. What also helps to reduce dizziness, is to not interrupt the flow of the dance. If it is a turn on the spot – on one leg for example – you can 'spot', focusing on one place (usually on the leader). Your head should be the last part to leave and the first to arrive. This is the ballet technique for turns.





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## Tip 21:

### Tips for the Bonus as well know as Boomerang

Depending on the region of Brazil, or on the country, this move has many different names: Patinha, Boomerang, Three Corner, Bonus, among others. However, regardless of the name, the movement is the same and remains one of the principal Brazilian Zouk movements. We have to be careful to not confuse variations/styles with the technique.

#### What is the Bonus?

- The bonus is a turn whereby the follower leaves point A, heads to point B, and then returns to point A. Along this trajectory, at the beginning of the movement, the follower travels in the opposite direction to the leader, and shortly after the leader joins her. If the leader travels in the same direction as the follow from the beginning, we cannot call it a bonus – that instead is a moving turn.
- In this turn, the follower moves with her legs passing through a parallel position (shoulder width apart), and always on axis. This turn happens in 4 steps. After this, both the leader and the follower complete the final part of the bonus in two beats. There are many variations to the ending of a bonus, where the leader can choose and direct, or otherwise open space to allow the follower to complete the variation as she wishes.
- The rule is that where the end of a turn occurs on even counts: 2, 4, 6, 8...you should complete it with bonus footwork/movement.
- We can say that the bonus is a technique as well as a movement, whereby its technique can be used for many other movements.
- The bonus can occur from both sides. The most traditional is where the follower begins on the left leg – ending the movement with a simple turn. When executing from the opposite side, end the movement returning -usually - directly to lateral or basic step, but exist others variations.

#### For the followers:

- Remember to always look and direct yourself – using your legs – in the direction you are headed. Maintain your line of travel.
  - Keep your arms in the lateral line of your body with you elbows lightly below the line of your shoulders.
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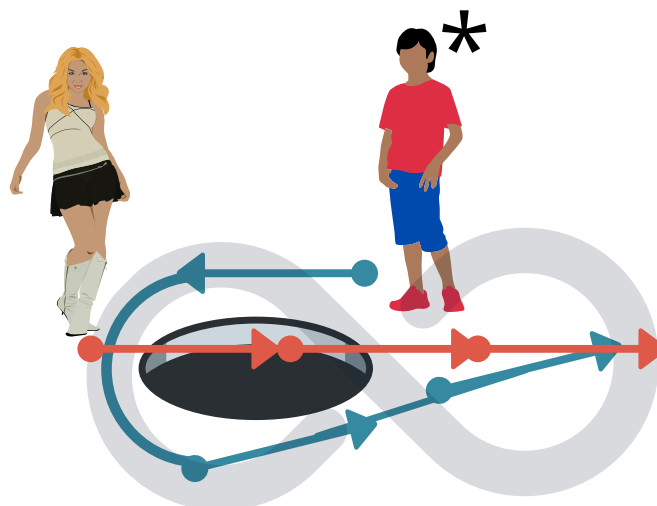
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> At the end of the turn (fourth step), soften and slow down the movement through your legs. The difference between turning with your legs together or apart is indicated by the leader, as they either maintain your arm in the lateral line of your body (legs apart), or in the front line of your body (legs together).

## **For the leaders:**

- > Imagine a hole in the floor, and you need to walk around this hole\*. Similarly, imagine the infinity symbol on the floor, and with 8 steps, complete the drawing. The initial part of the bonus consists of half of the symbol, this being 4 steps. Next you will have two beats to complete the second half of the bonus (whichever style/variation that may be).
- > Create the energy for the movement in your legs, not in your arms. The role of your arms is to maintain tension and direct the follower.
- > Maintain the arm of the follower in line with her shoulder during the entire turn, this way ensuring she turns with her legs apart.

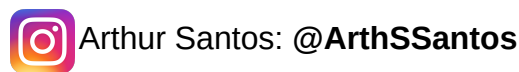
*Notice the many ways in which the bonus technique is used for variations of other movements in line.*





# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to thank everyone for the support, trust and love throughout all those years around the world and in social media. Keep following us in social media to be the first to know about our demos, tips, travel, online classes and much more.



Now you can learn from us from anywhere, anytime with our **Online Courses** by **VDance Club with 50 euros OFF** and if you want more personalised content to improve your dance level, I offer **Online Coaching** - no partner needed - with a *45 minutes video call + Detail Analysis Videos* an amazing tool that have helped many Zouker around the world to improve their dance. Send me an email to **bookingarthursantos@hotmail.com**

The tips in this material were shared throughout my Whatsapp group of tips from Brazil. Slight modifications were made to the responses in order to improve understanding and explanations. Keep in mind that the tips given is knowledge and studies that I have apply and discovered throughout my own dance journey, and each day I'm still learning more and more.

Brazilian Zouk is constantly being upgraded and developed by many professionals, so stay open to new pathways, but be careful to not get lost within the fountain of information and lose the essence of the dance. We hope you have all found this information useful. Happy studying!!!