

Merengue & Fusion

Presented by [Nick and Melissa Enge](#)
at Texas Camp 2024

Merengue

Music: [Nick & Melissa's Merengue Playlist](#)

Merengue is a popular social dance from the Dominican Republic. While it first spread to the rest of the world in the 1950s, it's still a go-to party dance today due to its easy footwork and nearly infinite options for variations.

- **Basic:** In closed position, or holding open two hands, starting with Lead's L and Follow's R, take steps in place in time with the music (1, 2, 3, 4).
 - **Latin Hips:** Matching our movements to the style of the music, we move our hips as we step, while keeping the upper body quiet. There are multiple options for hips: 1) just loosen them up and let them do what they want to do, 2) as you take a step with your L, allow the left hip to pop out to the left ("natural motion"), and vice versa, or 3) as you take a step with your L, hold your left hip back to the right ("reverse motion"), and vice versa. All three options are equally correct: the only thing you want to avoid is doing nothing with your hips.
- **Outside Turns:** An underarm turn, under either arm, for either partner. An outside turn is defined as a turn that starts with the hands going out away from the center of the frame. With two arms, and two partners, there are four options. *Note:* For this and all other turns, you can take as many or as few steps as you want to finish the turn.
- **Inside Turns:** An underarm turn, under either arm, for either partner. An inside turn is defined as a turn that starts with the hands going through the center of the frame. With two arms, and two partners, there are four options.
- **Waist Slide:** A special kind of turn for the Lead in which he breaks through the connection of hands held low, while leading the Follow to travel behind his back. This is usually done breaking through the left-to-right hands, with the Lead turning CCW as he breaks through, and the Follow circling him CW. His right arm grazes over the connected hands to avoid knocking his partner's arm away. It's called a Waist Slide because the Follow's hand slides along (or near) the Lead's waist.

- **Free Spin:** A special kind of turn for the Follow in which the Lead sends the Follow's hand away from or through the frame at waist level, letting go, which invites her to do a solo spin before the partners retake hands.
- **Multiple Turns:** Rather than going under the arm once, the turning partner goes under the arm multiple times.
- **Matador:** Matador is an outside turn done from open two hands, with one hand high, which goes over the turning partner's head, and the other hand low, which wraps behind the turning partner's back. The name Matador comes from the final position, in which it looks like someone is the matador and someone is the matador's cape. With two arms, and two partners, there are four options. To get out of it, rewind the turn you used to get into it.
 - **Matador Wheel:** In Matador position, walk forward around each other to rotate on the spot as a couple.
- **Cradle:** Cradle is an inside turn done from open two hands, with one hand high, which goes over the turning partner's head, and the other hand low, which wraps behind the turning partner's back. The turning partner ends up with both of their arms crossed in front of them, while the other partner ends up with one arm behind the turning partner and one arm in front of the turning partner. With two arms, and two partners, there are four options, but cradling the turning partner onto the non-turning partner's right side is much more common. To get out of it, rewind the turn you used to get into it.
 - **Cradle Wheel:** In Cradle position, rotate on the spot as a couple by having one partner walk forward and the other walk backward.

Fusion

Music: [Nick & Melissa's Fusion Playlist](#) (or any other song you want to dance it to)

Originally evolving out of the Blues dance tradition (it started as Blues danced to non-Blues music), Fusion is now a free-form social dance that draws inspiration from all social dance traditions. For our purposes in this class, it can be thought of as a free-form version of Merengue where you don't need to step on every beat.

- **Basic:** In closed position, starting with Lead's L and Follow's R, step side toward the hands side of the frame (1), and touch without weight (2), then step side toward the elbows side of the frame (3), and touch without weight (4).
 - **Pulse and Sway:** Pulse downward on each count (both the step and the touch). Unlike Merengue, you're encouraged to use your upper body, in one of two ways: 1) lead with the leading hip, holding the leading shoulder back, or 2) lead with the leading shoulder, holding the leading hip back. Often, the Follow will take the lead on influencing the styling, while the Lead leads the shapes.

- **Variations:** Do any of the variations we learned in Merengue. However, unlike in Merengue, where you step on every beat, in Fusion, you can use any footwork that feels comfortable to you, mixing slow steps, quick steps, and pauses as you go through a move. The Lead and Follow don't need to match their footwork and timing: each dancer gets to interpret the music in their own way.
 - **Conversational Partnering:** In Fusion, the Lead invites the Follow into various shapes, and the Follow dances through them with whatever style feels right to her. In turn, when it feels like a shape has come to its natural conclusion, the Lead invites the Follow into another shape.