

10 Basic Concepts for Better Basics

By Michael Kiehm

(www.starlightdance.com)



[Michael Kiehm](#) Alright, here we go. 10 basic concepts for better Basics!

[Michael Kiehm](#) 1. Initiate any movement with the body before moving the feet or before leading a pattern. Leaders, move the body weight slightly into the pattern first. Followers, let the lead connect to you by slightly delaying your first step.

[Michael Kiehm](#) 2. Followers, keep first step small to give you a chance to visually see what the leader is leading as well as to feel the lead. Leaders, be clear when you lead, and try to indicate your intention on the first beat of the variation.

[Michael Kiehm](#) 3. "Fill the Beat" Don't step too quickly. Roll foot into floor and use entire beat on whole counts. on 1/2 or 1/4 counts use pressure steps instead of always taking full weight (only on stationary triples) If you are traveling, like the first triple of a pass, you will need to complete the weight change, but keep the body flight moving so you don't bounce!

[Michael Kiehm](#) 4. "Stay in the Lead" Followers, keep your left shoulder blade consistently in the leader's right hand...the pressure should be light, but steady. Don't let your body leave that hand unless he releases it from your back. Leaders, keep the right arm relaxed, but keep your right hand lightly toned against the follower's shoulder blade. Don't hold her too low on the back, for this will inhibit her hip action.

[Michael Kiehm](#) 5. "Move Yourself" Followers, it is much easier for the leader to direct a pattern or change its direction when you are in motion, however, stay within the lead. Don't allow the arms to become completely loose. Move through the pattern until the lead tells you to hold position or change direction. You don't want to feel pulled or pushed...this is when you become very heavy. Leaders, if you have to over lead a variation, move towards the lead slightly so you don't have to use so much energy attempting to move the partner....Yeah, this means you might actually have to move your feet!

[Michael Kiehm](#) 6. "Invite vs. Force" Leaders, try to give as much pre-lead as possible...for example, on an under arm pass, open your right shoulder or turn your head slightly to the right as if to look to see if the end of the track is clear for the follower. I would do

this at the very end of the beat on the previous pattern. Followers, if you keep your focus on the center of the man's chest, just below his throat, you will see his body initiate direction; this does not mean to never make eye contact!

[Michael Kiehm](#) 7. "Foot placement for effect and connection" Followers, on a sugar push, try placing the right foot about three inches in front of the left foot on count three...this helps connect when you press slightly into the partner on count three. If it's a sugar tuck, leave the right foot where it was when you stepped on count One, then slightly pick up and replace it on count 3 or if the tuck is accelerated it would be on & 3. Don't forget to rotate the upper body to the left to create your connection through the right hand into the man's raised left hand on 3)

[Michael Kiehm](#) 8. "Let her turn vs. making her turn" Leaders, on the basic under arm turn as well as most patterns, raise your left (her right) hand on to her right ear level...let her take her own hand over her head as she passes by. Your hand goes over her head in a relaxed open hold (no grip), your arm should not go over her head....that is way too much lead, and causes the leader to look stressed through his left side.

[Michael Kiehm](#) 9. "Use your Head" Followers, on the under arm pass, turn your head to the left between the 2nd and 3rd count to start your turn. Your shoulders should start turning on the 3rd count and you should be facing the leader by the 4th count....This gives you a visual advantage for future embellishments... you can see what the leader is going to do with the last triple, so you can complement or copy.

[Michael Kiehm](#) 10, "Understand your Tone Zone" When the hands are at a level between the height of the height of the breast bone and the hips they are in protection mode....slightly resistant. When the arms are being taken above or below those points, they should be relaxed (not limp, still should have connection, just lighter and moving with lead instead of against).

[Michael Kiehm](#) ENJOY! HOPE THIS HELPS! MK

Reprinted with permission from Michael Kiehm of Starlight Dance Studio, San Diego, CA. If you are ever in the San Diego area, please visit their studio. They also have a very nice selection of instructional DVD's available for purchase from their website, www.starlightdance.com.