



SCOTSON THEROCKS

scottish country dancing in the heart of sydney

SCDemystified

A few tips for newcomers to Scottish Country Dancing

It's Social

You will leave more friends behind than you arrived with. Don't be afraid to dance with a stranger - SCD is not "couples" dancing.

Jeels & Rigs?

Dances come in two main varieties - quick time or slow. Quick time dances are the jigs, reels and hornpipes - usually phrased in eight bar groups. Strathspeys are the slow dances, danced with a flowing, bobbing step. The rhythm of the strathspey is not always easy to pick up, so newer dancers usually learn reels and jigs first.

Skipping, Slipping or Setting?

In quick time dance we have three types of step:

Skipping. The skip change of step is used for both short steps and full flight. An ordinary, playground style of skipping is a good substitute if you're a newcomer.

Slipping steps are sideways movements, usually danced in circles and, usually, starting by moving to the left (clockwise). If you're circling around and back (clockwise for four bars of music, then back to where you started) don't forget to bring your feet together in the middle - to get your balance back.

Setting is using your feet to beat time on the spot. If you can't turn your feet and point your toes like a "pro", step

right-left-right foot
left-right-left foot

in time with the music. A full setting step will use two bars of music.

Joining the Dance

When you are asked to "form a set" please take a partner and come toward the end of the hall nearest to the musicians or player. "Sets" of dancers always form from this "top" end. Lines of men and women usually face each other across the dance to form a longwise "set". The positions are numbered, with the first couple at the top and 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th (as needed) following in a line down the hall. A "set" can also be a triangular group of three couples or a square set of four couples.

Man or Lady?

It's not often that there is a neat, 50-50 mix of men and women. Be prepared to dance either part - it's good exercise for the brain.

I'm getting dizzy!

If the circles and turns are disorienting you, look into the eyes of your partner or the person opposite you. Eye contact is an important part of social dancing - and can help keep you from feeling dizzy.

Figures

The basic steps of Scottish country dance build into figures - a pattern of steps lasting anything from two to eight bars of music. The figures, each with their own name, are the parts that make up a complete dance.

Hands Around

Take hands to form a ring, usually to circle around and back to place. If you're taking the hand of a person on the other side of the set, there's no hurry - you can link up after a bar or two of music. It usually takes eight bars of music to circle around and back.

Hands Across

Take hands in the centre of a group of three or four people, like the spokes of a wheel (usually done in four bars of music, often with four bars to wheel back, again, with the other hand).

Turn

Offer a hand to the person you are turning with and move, with the music, to turn. Turning may be once around (back to where you started) or wherever you are told to turn to during the walkthrough. Turns can be done in four bars or two.

Down & Back

This is one figure where long legs can be an advantage. Take hands with your partner and dance down the middle of the set, then turn and come back. This is usually danced as four bars down and four bars back to place.

Cross

Two people cross over to the other side of the set - often to each other's places (usually two bars of music)

Cast

Turn your back on your partner and either dance up or dance down to a new place (usually two bars of music).

Rights & Lefts

This formation is danced in a square pattern, with two bars of music for each part. Change places across the set (usually with your partner), then on the sides, across again, then back to where you started.

Back to Back

Square dancers know this as the do-si-do. Dance around your partner, but stay facing the same direction as you back into place. This will take four bars of music.

Figures of 8

As the name says, dance in the pattern of an "8" around two of your fellow dancers. Use eight bars of music or, for a half figure, stop half way.

Reels

Easier to dance than to explain - think of three people dancing a figure of 8 through each other's places or four people dancing an ABC logo.