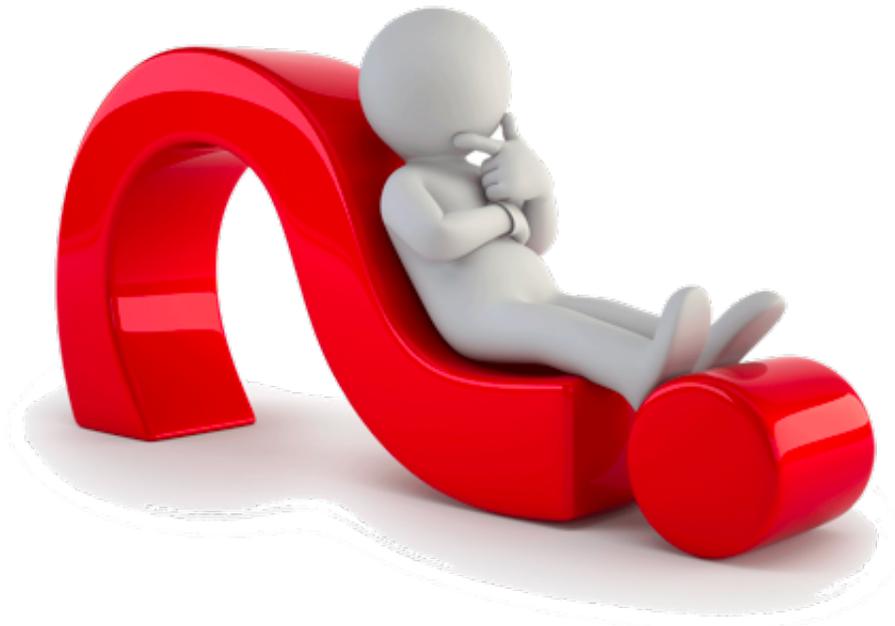


# Frequently Asked Questions



*\* Selection question to view answer.*

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## Getting Started

### What is a "swing club"?

A Swing Dance Club (like the **Ozark Swing Society**) is a non-profit organization that usually offers social dances on a weekly or monthly basis. It is not associated with any particular studio or school, and therefore tries to promote the dance itself, not the business of lessons. Some Swing Clubs invite local, regional, or international instructors in to guest teach workshops, and some even co-sponsor dances and dance conventions.

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### **Isn't all Swing done to Big Band music from the 1940's and 1950's?**

Big Band music and classic Rock & Roll is frequently associated with *Lindy Hop*, *Jive*, or *Jump* dancing, loosely called "*Swing*." When WCS was developed, it focussed more on Blues. As a much more versatile partner dance, WCS follows the popular music of each decade. Today, it is mostly danced to Blues, Top-40, and R&B.

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### **Why is it called "West Coast" Swing?**

Tradition says that the guy who started the style, **Dean Collins**, moved from New York to California to work in the film industry. In order to distinguish it from the Lindy Hop dancing that was being done in New York at the time, people called it "Western Swing." Later, the name was changed so it wouldn't be confused with Country-Western. (For more, see [The History of WCS](#)).

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### **I thought Swing was a Country Dance?**

Swing is a family of dances separate from Country dancing. The Country dance world adopted East Coast Swing and West Coast Swing into their competition lineup, and modified the dances to fit the Country music & movements. You can dance it to Country music, but it's not a Country dance.

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### **I thought Swing was a Ballroom dance?**

Swing is a family of dances separate from Ballroom. In the 1950's ballroom studios modified it to fit their syllabus and marketed their own version of Swing (called, "East Coast Swing") to draw in more customers. Today, Jive is one of the competitive Latin/Rhythm dances, but it is just one of many styles of Swing. Ballroom studios now offer West Coast Swing, but this version varies quite a bit from authentic WCS. If you see WCS being danced in a dress and high heels, it is likely Ballroom style, not authentic WCS.

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### **I did Swing in school - isn't WCS the same thing?**

Probably not. Schools usually bring in instructors to teach Lindy Hop or East Coast Swing and label it "Swing" or "Jive." (See [Samples of West Coast Swing Videos](#) for visual examples of the dance).

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### **Is learning West Coast Swing expensive?**

With good instruction, West Coast is a dance you can learn and use immediately in a club scene for a very nominal cost. In Northwest Arkansas, Jerry Kendrick has group classes on Thursday evenings for beginners (see [Dance and Swing website](#)). If you are closer to Tulsa, Terry Roseborough has beginning classes on Tuesday evenings (see his [T-Town Swing site](#) for information). Group and Private lessons are also available from various other instructors.

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### **Do I need a partner?**

You don't need a partner to take classes (in fact, a large percentage of dancers are single). Classes rotate partners - you'll meet lots of fun people there! But feel free to learn with a friend or significant other.

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**What about dress requirements?**

Casual to dressy-casual (jeans or dress pants and a nice top) will do just fine. Make sure the clothes will allow you to move.

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**Personal Concerns**

**I've got two left feet...**

No problem! That's what lessons are for! Of all the partner dances, West Coast is a very non-strict dance where creativity and freedom are encouraged! A sports, martial arts, or music background are assets, but not necessary.

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**My boyfriend doesn't dance.**

He is probably concerned that he is going to feel self conscious about not being good at it right away. Settle his concerns by mentioning that everyone has to start somewhere, and that all the dancers in the class are newbies too. You can challenge him by asking, "How do you know you're not going to like it until you've tried it?" Additionally, it might help to suggest that you take private lessons together first before going out in public, or even to the group class.

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**Guys will ridicule me.**

Your guy friends can't handle the idea of you learning to make women swoon and line up for a 3 minute chance to be in your arms...Is this a problem? Really?

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**I just want to learn with my significant other.**

If you want to learn with your partner for "couple time" or to prepare for a special occasion, we suggest that you sign up for private lessons! Here's why: West Coast Swing is a social dance, intended to be improvised with a variety of partners, like mingling at a party. Most group classes are designed to support this, so rotating partners is encouraged and sometimes required. Dancing with the same partner all class long actually makes you progress slower -- much slower -- because you learn to compensate for the other person's errors, then you both never learn to do anything properly, but rather just fake it together. Rotating partners allows you to learn the DANCE -- not the fake it.

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**I've heard that West Coast Swing is hard to learn.**

WCS techniques are different from other partner dances, but not harder. It is true that the steps of the leader may differ from the steps of the follower, but all of the techniques are based in sound bio-mechanical principles, so the dance is meant to feel natural and ergonomic. Frankly, if it's too much of a struggle for you, switch instructors.

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**I took a beginners class, so I know the basics of the dance -- isn't that enough?**

After one snowboarding or skiing lesson, did you feel ready to ride every run on the mountain? You can't just click download and expect your body to perform the dance at a reasonable level. Your one class served as an introduction to the basics, not the complete basics. Like any physical skill, it takes a continuous cycle of lesson-practice-feedback in order to improve -- and that process is best done with a trained coach or instructor. Neglecting to learn your foundation skills, like on the mountain, is likely to result in injury and disappointment.

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**I have danced other styles. Can I use moves I've learned there?**

Frankly, we believe WCS is the most flexible partner dance on the planet. It welcomes the introduction of ideas from other dance styles. They can't always be used verbatim, but there are lots of ways to convert your favorite moves.

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**What about competition? Do I have to be REALLY good to compete?**

West Coast Swing competitions are structured to be available for every level of dancer - *newcomer* to *pro*. You only have to know your basics, which means you could compete after 6 weeks of training or 6 years! And some competitions are set up with a "Newcomer" division, just for those who are starting out. The good news: you are only ever competing against people of your same level. For information on upcoming competitive events, see [Swing Dance Events](#) on this website.

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