

ALL-PURPOSE POLKA ^{American} (International)

The polka is truly an international dance step. Basically a "two-step," it changes style in each country, acquiring a variety

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of different characteristics. In Scotland it is called a "skip-change-step." The Polish people do it with very light hops

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and running steps. The Germans do it as a heavy two-step, the Slavs do it without any hops at all and the Norwegians don't even use a polka step of any kind in the dance they call *Norwegian Polka*. This music captures the quality of almost any polka style. Here are some of the dances that can be done to it:

SCANDINAVIAN OR NORWEGIAN POLKA: Couples start side by side, lady to right of man, holding inside hands. Man starting on left, lady on right foot, walk 3 steps forward and kick inside foot forward. Change hands, turn inwards and face opposite direction. Man now starts on right, lady on left (the foot that was just swung). Take 3 steps forward in other direction and kick the inside foot forward. Change hands, turn inwards and face original direction (counterclockwise). Walk forward 3 steps, man starting on left, lady on right, and **DO NOT KICK**. Instead, take the 4th step towards partner, assuming ballroom position, and finish the dance with a 4-step pivot. Repeat dance from beginning.

This is an easy version, often used as an intermission dance by American folk

dance groups. It is extremely popular and not as strenuous as other forms of the polka.

POLISH POLKA: Couples in ballroom position do a very light running step—1, 2, 3; 1, 2, 3—with relaxed knees and a slight pause on count 3. A hop may precede the running step, but it should be like a grace note in music—barely perceptible. Occasionally there may be a stamp at the end of the 8-measure phrase. Couples turn at will in any direction. The Poles do the dance only in ballroom position, but many younger-generation American Slavs and Poles do the dance with other figures, adding a side-by-side position, or a lady-twirling position.

AMERICAN HEEL-AND-TOE POLKA: Couples in Varsouvienne position, lady to right of man. Do a heel-and-toe, both starting on left foot while hopping on right. Take 3 steps, the lady moving over to the man's left in a sideways movement. Do a heel-and-toe with the right foot while hopping on left. Take 3 steps as lady moves back to original position. Both now move forward with 4 two-steps or a hop-polka step.

