

SYRTOS  
(Greek)

The Syrtos (sear-toe') dates back at least to the 16th century when Turkey conquered Greece. There is a legend that the Greek women danced over a cliff to avoid capture by the Turks. The Syrtos is still done in Greek clubs, cafes, and at weddings.

In older days men and women danced in separate lines and it was customary to hold a handkerchief between the leader and the second dancer. Today men and women dance in the same line and the handkerchief is still used. This dance was originally presented to the Research Committee of the Folk Dance Federation by Elaine Kockos, Amanda Antipa, and Themis Christo, and the original description appears in Volume II of Folk Dances from Near and Far. The following description is based on material supplied by Bettie Gall of Stockton who has been dancing with the Greek people in the Stockton area for many years.

MUSIC:       Records: Folkways LP FP-814, Side 1, Bands 1, 2, & 3; Side 2, Bands 1 & 3. Many good Syrtos are available on Liberty.  
Piano:       "Come All You Maidens to the Dance." Sheet #681, Apollo Music Co.

FORMATION: Open circle leader at R end. Hands joined at shoulder level, extended toward center of circle, elbows bent. Leader may extend R hand and snap fingers in rhythm with the music, or may place hand on R hip, fingers backward. Dancer on L end of line may do either of above also. Man or Woman may lead. Handkerchief held between leader and second dancer.

STYLING:     Knees slightly bent at all times. Upper part of body remains erect. Leader only may improvise on steps, second dancer maintains rhythm and step pattern, and gives leader support by holding R hand steady and firm. If leader dances with second dancer, the third dancer is responsible for maintaining rhythm and step pattern.

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MUSIC 7/8

PATTERN

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Measures

- 1       Facing ctr step to R on R (cts 1, 2, 3); cross L behind R (cts 4, 5; step to R on R (cts 6, 7).
- 2       Cross L slightly in front of R (cts 1, 2, 3); step to R on R (cts 4, 5); step L beside R (cts 6, 7).
- 3       Step on R, turning body slightly to L (cts 1, 2, 3); touch ball of L ft slightly fwd of R and twd ctr of circle, flexing R knee (cts 4, 5, 6, 7).
- 4       Step bwd on L (cts 1, 2, 3); touch ball of R ft behind L, flexing L knee (cts 4, 5, 6, 7).

Repeat dance from beginning.

NOTES: Leader may begin dance at any time he wishes. If he wants to relinquish lead he does so during the first 2 measures of the dance by joining the line on the L hand side of the dancer he chooses to be the next leader, pulling the intervening dancers along with him, and changing the handkerchief from his L to his R hand. It is not practical to pass the lead farther than 4 or 5 places down the line.