

Dips & Drops, Leans & Lunges, Lambadas & Seducers

Safety First!

Always warm up before any drops, especially your back and knees - you will be pulling, stressing and stretching vulnerable parts of your body. Never do any of these moves in the first dance of the night - except maybe a gentle seducer at the end.

Men

Check that your partner is ready and willing to start doing drops. Respect the fact that there are many ladies who do not wish to do drops, or who may only do them with partners with whom they are familiar. Just because you see her doing a drop or lift with someone else does NOT mean she wants to do them with you until she knows you better and trusts you.

With a stranger, either ask her if she is OK with drops, or make the first one a very simple one and do it in slow motion so that she has time to say "No". In fact - you should do checks with regular partners as well - since you last "dropped" her she may have damaged her back or become pregnant!

Check that your partner is happy to/able to bend her back before doing any moves where the lady bends backwards.

Don't do drops which require significant body contact until you have established a rapport which will allow you to get that close.

Always check for other dancers and for people walking across the dance floor before lowering the lady. You need to make sure her head is safe and her legs aren't tripping anyone. If the floor is very busy then keep the drop small and protect her head with your arm. The edge of the dance-floor is usually safer.

Don't assume your partner knows what you want her to do. Lead your partner gently into the drops - don't force her - keep it smooth. Let her control how far you go.

Make sure you position the lady well in relation to your body - if the position isn't right don't do the drop. In most drops her body should be at right-angles to yours (so that your bodies form a T-shape). She should be close to you so that as you lower her you aren't pulled forwards off balance. Lower her straight towards the ground. Make sure you are not twisting her body around yours.

Step out to the side so that you can squat into a powerful position with a straight back and take your partner's weight without any strain. Angle your feet so that your knees are in line with your toes and pointing slightly outwards. Avoid twisting, turning or leaning with your upper body.

In a supported drop, aim the small of her back at your thigh and bend your knees until your thighs are horizontal. You should both be able to let go, and she should be able to lie comfortably across your thigh.

There are no rules as to how many beats there are in a drop. Try taking her down more slowly for a different effect.

Help her back up again – not too slowly – her knees are working hard. Don't spin her until she is balanced again.

You don't need strength to do a good drop – you need good technique!

Drops (and all other aspects of dancing) work best when you are both relaxed and working together – aim for dancing, not wrestling! Build her trust and your drops will improve.

Empty your pockets before you start dancing - keys and other items can be painful

Talk to each other when you are practicing – ask her if she is comfortable – adjust your position if she is not.

The lady is very vulnerable - protect her.

Practise!

Ladies

If your partner starts a drop and you are not ready or don't want to do it then tell him.

Don't anticipate or assume you know what is happening - wait for him to start lowering you.

- he may not be ready/balanced properly
- he may have just noticed someone or something which would make the drop dangerous
- he may not be going to do what you think he is going to do

Practise the various drop positions by yourself so that you can go as low as possible while still keeping most of your weight yourself and staying balanced:

- standard drop - bend one knee, slide the other foot along the floor
- lunge - step forward bending the leading knee and taking all the weight on the leading foot
- lambada – go up on your toes, bend both knees forward and lean backwards, sinking downwards

Focus on sitting into the drop so that your centre of gravity stays above your feet. Avoid sliding forwards or lying backwards. In a basic drop you are supporting yourself on one leg – keep the other foot close to the floor, but with no weight on it. Don't let that spare leg bounce up into the air.

Keep your body weight close to the man so that you don't pull him off balance.

Don't throw yourself into a drop - go with the lead and make it smooth.

In a standard drop bend the knee that is nearer to the man so that the audience sees a straight leg, but if one knee is stronger than the other, then use that one.

Don't hold on tight to his neck, if you pull him down you may throw both of you off balance or hurt his back. Just let your hand slide onto his shoulder or upper arm – you can still get some support by applying slight pressure against him with that hand.

If you feel him losing balance bring both legs together under you straight away to take your own weight.

When he starts to lift you back up again bring your legs together under you so you can use both to stand up.

In a basic drop, aim for a straight line from the top of your head to the tip of your toe. Pull your abdominal muscles in to get a straight line on your stomach. Don't let your backside dip.

Keep control of your head and arms - add more style with them when you can do the basics well.

To add style:

- As you extend your leg let the ankle turn so that your foot makes a nice line along the floor
- Turn your head to look at your audience.
- Use your spare arm(s) to emphasise the drop.
- Raise the knee of the leg that isn't supporting you.
- In a lambada let your body ripple backwards as far as you are comfortable, letting your head fall back last, then ripple up – waist, chest, then finally your head. Using your head effectively can make a small lambada look much better.

Note: many of these change your balance – practice them to make sure you are not pulling the man off balance.

There are two types of lambada – a straight lay-back and a sweep. The lady should perform them almost identically – it is the man who decides whether it is a straight one or a sweep and it is the man who executes the sweep if there is one.

Once you trust him, try to relax and work with him so that you end up dancing instead of wrestling.

Talk to each other when you are practicing – ask him if he is comfortable – adjust your position if he is not.

The man is very vulnerable - protect him.

Practise!