

Example—Waltz Box: When teaching the Leader’s part of a straight box in Waltz you say, “Straight” while stepping forward with no sway. As you take step 2, swing the pelvis and lower ribs to the right and say, “Sway left.” When you close your feet on step 3, maintain your sway to the left and say, “And stay left.” Continue in the same manner for the second half of the box.

Teach Exceptions: When figures require sway that is an exception to the basic rules (e.g., in some underarm turns or on a forward step in continuity action), take time to explain this to students.

Contra Body Movement (CBM) Element



CBM: *The abbreviation for contra body movement, this is the action of moving the opposite side of the torso toward the moving leg, usually to initiate turn.*

CBM is a natural movement that happens in everyday walking. When a person steps forward with the left foot, the right arm swings forward (and the left arm swings back). And vice versa, when stepping forward on the right foot, the left arm swings forward (and the right arm swings back). Ballroom dancers use the natural movement of CBM to make turning easy and seamless, and add smoothness and grace to their dancing. Without CBM, your dancing would look robotic—that is, stiff and inflexible.

CBM is an important element in the Smooth and Standard dances, as well as in Paso Doble, Bolero and Argentine Tango. While not explicitly described in manuals for other dances, CBM is used by advanced dancers in all dances to facilitate natural movement (especially when turning) and for styling.

FOUR INSTANCES OF CBM

CBM occurs only on forward and backward steps and can therefore take only the following four shapes. CBM does *not* occur on side steps, closing steps or steps with sway.

★ **When the Left Foot Steps Forward:** The right side of the torso moves forward.

- ★ **When the Right Foot Steps Forward:** The left side of the torso moves forward.
- ★ **When the Left Foot Steps Back:** The right side of the torso moves back.
- ★ **When the Right Foot Steps Back:** The left side of the torso moves back.

The primary purpose of CBM is to initiate turn. In Closed Position, when the Leader steps forward and uses CBM, the Follower is stepping back, the Follower also uses CBM. For example, in a reverse turn in Waltz, the Leader uses CBM on step 1 when stepping forward on the left foot. As weight is taken on the left foot, the Leader's right hip moves forward. This brings the entire right side of the torso forward and allows turn to be made. The Follower mirrors this action, using CBM while stepping back on the right foot. As weight is taken onto the right foot, the Follower's left hip moves back, bringing the entire left side of the torso back.

In Promenade Position, when both partners step forward, both use CBM only when turning in *opposite* directions. For example, on step 2 of a promenade basic in American Foxtrot, the Leader turns right and the Follower turns left, so both use CBM. However, when both partners step forward in Promenade Position and turn in the *same* direction, only one partner uses CBM. For example, on step 2 of promenade pivots in Foxtrot, the Leader steps forward on the right foot and turns right—and therefore uses CBM. The Follower steps forward on the left foot and turns right—this unwinding action is *not* CBM.

SLIGHT CBM



Slight CBM: *The action of turning the opposite side of the torso toward the moving leg for purposes other than initiating turn. Slight CBM is commonly used as a wind-up, for progression and for styling.*

Slight CBM as a Wind-Up: A wind-up is a slight turning in one direction in preparation for a bigger turn in the opposite direction.

Example—Foxtrot Zig Zag: In a zig zag (quarter turn) in American Foxtrot, the Leader uses slight CBM as a wind up on step 1 in order to commence a turn to the right on step 2.

Slight CBM for Progression: Slight CBM aids the progression of some figures by creating natural walking movement. This is needed when there are two or more forward (or nearly forward) steps in a row.

Example—Waltz Change Steps: In Waltz change steps, slight CBM occurs on steps 1 and 4. This helps the Leader to take steps 2 and 5 *side and slightly forward*. It also keeps the feeling progressive, which helps the Follower realize that step 4 will continue backward.

Full or Slight CBM? Full CBM is used when making at least 1/8 turn between the initial forward (or back) step and the next side step. When you say “CBM” while teaching, use it to mean full CBM, and then qualify when you mean slight CBM.

ADVANCED USE OF CBM

In Closed Position, advanced dancers adjust their CBM slightly depending on the direction of turn and whether they are stepping forward or back.

Direction of Turn: When stepping forward on the left foot and turning left in Closed Position, the Leader’s CBM happens *after* weight is taken onto the left foot. If the Leader starts using CBM too early (i.e., prior to stepping on the left foot), the Follower tends to slip out of proper offset, resulting in poor dance position and loss of connection. By initiating CBM after weight is on the left foot, the Leader ensures that the Follower stays properly offset.

When stepping forward on the right foot and turning right, the Leader starts CBM earlier—*slightly before* full weight being taken onto the right foot. When turning right, the dance position requires the Leader to step between the Follower’s feet. Therefore, the Leader initiates turn earlier to signal the Follower to start turning, thus making it easier to navigate through and around the Follower.

Stepping Forward or Back: The timing and amount of CBM also differs depending on whether the dancer is stepping forward or back in Closed Position. On back steps, CBM is initiated a bit earlier and is greater, which results in the step curving more than if it were a forward step. This is because the partner moving back is on inside of the turn and therefore needs to create space for his or her partner to travel the larger distance.

CBM IS NOT CBMP



CBMP: The abbreviation for *contra body movement position*, this is a foot position taken forward or backward in which the moving foot is placed on the same track or beyond (i.e., across) the track of the standing foot.

CBMP is frequently confused with CBM (contra body movement) because of the similarity of the names. CBMP may have gotten its name because this foot position looks similar to CBM. However, CBM is a *movement of the torso* whereas CBMP is a *position of the foot*.

CBM and CBMP on Same Step: Sometimes CBM and CBMP occur on the same step of a figure.

Example—Turning in Outside Position: On step 2 of a zig zag (quarter turn) in American Foxtrot, the Leader's right foot steps in CBMP due to being in Right Outside Position, and the Leader also uses CBM to initiate turn to the right.

Example—Tango Walks: In Tango, curving walks (left foot forward walks for Leader and right foot back walks for Follower) are danced in CBMP as that is the nature of Tango walks, and the dancers simultaneously use CBM to initiate leftward turn.

CBMP Without CBM: CBMP can also happen without CBM, whether or not there is turn. Just because turn is made on a step, it does not mean there is CBM. This is because turn is sometimes made in the opposite direction of CBM.

Example with Turn—Tango Promenade Turning Left: In a promenade turning left in American Tango, the Leader's step 2 is *right foot forward and across in CBMP*, however no CBM occurs because the Leader is unwinding to the left rather than initiating turn to the right (which would use CBM).

Example with Turn—Tango Promenade Turning Right: In a promenade turning right in American Tango, the Follower's step 2 is *left foot forward and across in CBMP*, however there is no CBM because the Follower is unwinding to the right rather than initiating turn to the left (which would use CBM).

Example without Turn—Tango Closed Promenade: In a closed promenade in International Tango, Leader's step 2 is *right foot forward and across in CBMP*. The step has CBMP but has no CBM and no turn.

CBM Without CBMP: It is also possible to use CBM without stepping in CBMP.

Example—Waltz Turns: In natural and reverse turns in International Waltz and left and right turning boxes in American Waltz, the first step of each measure has CBM but no CBMP.

Remedy for CBM-CBMP Confusion



A quick and easy way to eliminate students' confusion between these two dance terms when teaching is to rename CBMP as "same track." For example, in the outside partner zig zag (also called quarter turns) in American Foxtrot, the foot position for step 2 may be renamed *right foot forward in same track* for the Leader and *left foot back in same track* for the Follower.

Similarly, steps taken *across in CBMP* may be renamed as "across the track." For example, in a twinkle in American Waltz or Foxtrot, the foot position for step 2 may be renamed *right foot forward and across the track* for the Leader, and *left foot forward and across the track* for the Follower.

CBM IS THE OPPOSITE OF SIDE LEADING

Side leading (i.e., the action of taking the same side of the torso forward or back with the moving leg) occurs only on forward and back steps (and their variations). Because CBM and side leading are opposite movements, they cannot occur on the same step.

Only Four Side Leading Movements

- ★ Left foot forward (and forward variations), left side leading.
- ★ Right foot forward (and forward variations), right side leading.
- ★ Left foot back (and back variations), left side leading.
- ★ Right foot back (and back variations), right side leading.

Used to Prepare for Outside Position: Side leading is primarily used to prepare for Right or Left Outside Positions when in Closed Position.

Examples: In a grapevine in American Waltz, the Leader's step 1 is *left foot diagonally forward, left side leading*. And in a feather step in International Foxtrot, the Leader's step 2 is *left foot forward, left side leading*. In both figures, the next step is in Right Outside Position.

Used Throughout Tango: Side leading is also used on Tango walks due to the curving nature of that dance.

Example: The Leader's right foot forward walks have right side leading, and the Follower's left foot back walks have left side leading.

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CBM versus Side Leading Game



1. **Set Context:** Explain to students that there are only three ways to step forward or back:
 - ⊙ Straight (i.e., both shoulders travel forward or back equally)
 - ⊙ With CBM
 - ⊙ With side leading
2. **Practice Three Ways:** Lead students in practicing these three ways. First have them practice walking forward and back keeping the shoulders parallel to the mirror or wall that they are facing. Then have them practice stepping forward and back (alternating the feet) using CBM. Finally, have students practice stepping forward and back (alternating the feet) using side leading.
3. **Call Out Steps:** After students are comfortable with the three ways to step, begin calling out various steps. For example, you say, “Okay everyone, left foot forward with left side leading,” and students take the step. Then you say, “Right foot forward with CBM,” and students take that step. Continue in the same manner, mixing up the 12 possible ways of stepping forward and back in this game.
 - ⊙ Left foot forward
 - ⊙ Left foot forward with left side leading
 - ⊙ Left foot forward with CBM
 - ⊙ Right foot forward
 - ⊙ Right foot forward with right side leading
 - ⊙ Right foot forward with CBM
 - ⊙ Left foot back
 - ⊙ Left foot back with left side leading
 - ⊙ Left foot back with CBM
 - ⊙ Right foot back
 - ⊙ Right foot back with right side leading
 - ⊙ Right foot back with CBM

TEACHING CBM

Demonstrate CBM: Dance a simple figure, first without turn and then with turn. For example, dance the straight box in American Waltz, and then dance a left turning box. Direct students' attention to the CBM happening in your body on each forward and back step.

Explain How CBM Helps Dancers Turn: Explain that CBM makes graceful turning possible when dancing on one's own and helps Leaders initiate turn when dancing with a partner

Turning on One's Own: To illustrate the usefulness of CBM in turning on one's own, have students step left foot forward and turn to the left, bringing the right side of torso forward. Then have them repeat this *without* moving the right side of the torso forward. They should find it difficult, if not impossible, to turn. If you wish, repeat the exercise with the right foot.

Turning with a Partner: Leaders sometimes think they are using CBM but are merely turning the feet (without the torso) or are only rotating the arms (without the rest of the torso). To teach Leaders how to create good CBM, use the analogy of a cup and saucer. When a cup sits on a saucer and you turn the saucer, the cup also turns. It is the same with CBM. The upper torso (shoulders and rib cage) is like a cup sitting on the saucer of the pelvis. The Leader initiates movement in the pelvis (saucer) and the upper torso (cup) comes with it—that is, the entire spine turns with the pelvis. This enables the Follower to feel and respond to the lead.

Summary Element



Summary: *The synopsis of a figure, either measure by measure or in a group of steps.*

Summary is a great tool for quickly recalling a figure when studying or preparing to teach. Summaries also give you vocabulary to easily refer to figure components once students are familiar with them. For example, instead of needing to state the individual foot position for steps 1-3 of a box, a teacher can summarize by saying, “Dance the first half of a box.” While not an “official” dance element listed in all manuals, a summary column is an excellent aid for teaching and is included in some manuals (i.e., most DVIDA® manuals).