



Rolling Count = Location! Location! Location!

Skippy Blair © 5-04, Rev. 8-04, 4-05, 6-07

Beat Count:		1		2	(Counting the Beats of the Music)
Straight Count:	&	1	&	2	(Marching, Straight Count)
Straight Count:	e & a	1	e & a	2	(Busier. Straight Count)
Rolling Count:	& a	1	& a	2	(Rhythmic, Rolling Count)

The most difficult concept about counting is the confusion over where the &-Count and the "a-Count" take place. Look at the *Count* comparisons above. Note that the &-Count and the "a-Count" are NOT located in the same place in *Straight Count*, as they are in *Rolling Count*. Frequently, people will call the *Straight Count* - leaving out the "e" and assume they are using *Rolling Count*. **Location - location - location! The difference is tremendous.** The practice of calling out "1 a2 - 3 a4" really produces "*Straight Count* dancing" from both the caller and the dancer. The mind does not distinguish between "1&2" and "1a2." The rhythmic call of "&a1 &a2 - &a3 &a4" allows the **Center Point of Balance to OWN that "&-Count."**

Practicing Rolling Count develops a habit that allows you to control the body, not only *prior* to the weight change, but actually before the *Receiving Foot* becomes the *Sending foot*. That action produces an upper level, rhythmic body flow. Leaving out the &-Count makes it more difficult to move the *CPB* before stepping. *Straight Count* usually produces movement that comes from the legs or the hips, rather than from the *Center*. The opposite extreme: *Counting* "e&a1 e&a2 - e&a3 e&a4" is a **busier form of Straight Count**, but is still *Straight Count*. It has a tendency to make the dancer look very busy, rushed and **slightly ahead of the music.**

This article was written to answer E-mails and personal discussions with dancers who are serious about moving to an upper level degree of timing - and from judges who are frustrated with watching a high level of "hitting the breaks" coupled with **a low level of timing.** My answers are based on a compilation of notes from Intensives and Judging Seminars over the past 5 years. **Results of Critiques show that the body flow of a dancer can be greatly improved simply by changing the way the dancer Counts.** The evidence is overwhelming. Swing dancing is continually reaching higher levels of performance. It is important to explore every possible technique that will teach newer dancers how to keep better time to music.

Musicians actually play Straight Count when it is called for. (After all, not all music is written for dancing.) However, musicians that make us **feel like dancing** are the ones who play with *feeling*. They are the ones who **make** you want to dance. They bring life to the Music and life to the Dancer! Musicians who are not **born** with that ability, actually **learn to feel the music**, simply by applying *Rolling Count*. to what they already play. The **feeling** behind great swing music is the musician's ability to read *Straight 4/4* time music, and actually **roll the count, or as musicians say "Swing it!"** The result is music that inspires us to dance.

Some dancers are born with that talent - an inborn feeling for timing, rhythmic expression. and what we refer to as "*Measured Movement*." They are only one in a thousand - but the other 999 of us can **learn** to feel those same things by dancing to a *Rolling Count* (which puts the magic in the music.) AND, even more important, the dancer can learn to supply that feeling, even when the music being played is not all that great. **Many dancers today, actually make you hear things in the music that you did not know were there.**

Try this experiment: This is a simple syncopation that most dancers use in West Coast Swing. The "Call" is: "Step Kick & Step Cross." (on "&a1 &a2.") Dance that syncopation using *Straight Count*: "& 1 & 2" or "e&a1 e&a2." Both are *Straight Count*. It only works well with *Rolling Count*.. Give it a try and let us know your results. **Rolling Count is a great way to add new dimension to the dance, and move your level of performance up a notch..**

Courtesy of Skippy Blair, WSDC Education Coordinator

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