

NINETEENTH CENTURY WALTZ VARIATIONS

These steps were popular in American and European ballrooms from the 1840s to the 1860s. Dance manuals offered a variety of descriptions of these variations, often differing in minor details. The following reconstructions are the most common versions of each step.

WALTZ HOLD

To take mid-century closed waltz position, he takes her R hand with his L hand, with both palms down (as if she is holding onto his thumb, with his fingers covering hers). Ideally, the held arms form a rounded arc from his L shoulder to her R shoulder.

His right arm encircles her waist, with his R hand at the center of her lower back. Her L hand rests lightly on his R shoulder, or casually in front of his shoulder.

The accepted waltz position changed around 1880, and again at the turn of the century.

THE WALTZ

Counts 1-2-3:

He faces away from the center of the hall. He steps around her with his L foot. Specifically, he starts turning his body clockwise then steps sideways with his L foot toward the outside wall, cutting closely in front of her. Since he is turning as he steps, when his L finally takes weight, it feels like he is stepping backwards L. On count 2, he continues to turn and crosses his R closely behind his L with weight (small step) and rises a little higher on both toes. On count 3, he drops weight onto the L foot, almost in place. Heels never touch the floor.

Meanwhile she turns to the right than steps forward R on count 1, toward line-of-direction (LOD), stepping between his feet. On count 2, she continues to turn and takes a very short step L to the left side, rising. On 3, she closes R to L with weight, lowering without heels actually touching the floor.

Counts 4-5-6:

He does the steps that she did on 1-2-3 and vice versa.

THE POLKA REDOWA

This is similar to the Redowa, or Pas de Basque, but is shifted one count ahead. For the skating Polka Redowa, let go of held hands to unfold into Promenade Position. His free L hand is akimbo (on his hip). Her R holds her dress down or is at her waist.

Counts 1-2-3:

He starts in a slight plie and glides (skates) strongly forward with his L. On 2, close R toe under the L heel. On 3, leap forward onto the L, landing very softly. She does the same steps with opposite feet, gliding forward R.

Counts 4-5-6:

Both continue forward on opposite (inside) feet.

The Polka Redowa may be turned by taking Waltz Position and turning halfway around, as a couple, on counts 2 and 3 (taking most of the turn on count 3).

THE POLKA MAZURKA

Counts 1-2-3, a Mazurka Step:

In Promenade Position, he glides forward L and cuts R under the L heel, as in the Polka Redowa. On count 3, he lifts his L foot one inch off the floor (as he hops on the supporting R foot), keeping his L ankle closed to his R ankle.

She steps forward with the opposite feet.

Counts 4-5-6, a Polka Redowa, exactly as described above.

Repeat all six counts forward on opposite feet.

The Polka Mazurka may be turned by taking hands in Waltz position, and turning halfway around at the end of the six counts. Repeat on opposite feet.