

Lessons Learned from Tango

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During a recent stay in Buenos Aires, I tried my hands at learning tango with modest success. Nevertheless, I was reminded of a teaching method I had used years back as a basketball coach, but which somehow in recent years had slipped my mind. In tango, while moving from A to B on the dance floor it is essential to use the right number of steps in order to secure harmony.

The aspect of counting steps has earlier proved fruitful in teaching footwork in basketball the idea being to number each part of a given movement. Say you want to teach shooting off the dribble you might proceed as follows (the player has to stop turning left):

1. Left heel touches the floor
2. Right toe touches the floor
3. Jump

By having players count out you're sure they will not forget parts. Further, it is also a great way to gradually increase the speed of a movement simply by increasing the pace of counting. Finally, special emphasis can be put on certain parts of the movement. For example, girls in my experience often have troubles really getting off the floor on a jump shot and you can have

them count "1-2-jump" or "1-2-explosion." A way of planting seeds...

Numbers can be replaced by words in the middle of a movement, too. For instance with a spin move you might wish to count "1-2-ball-4-5," with "ball" signifying the players should make sure to protect the ball by not putting it too far forward. Useful teaching any movement, it proves more fruitful as the movements become increasingly complex.

It also helps the gym rat wishing to work on his or her footwork outside of practice by remembering all the parts of a movement: "Geez, how was it again. Five parts but which...?"