

Dance Tip #7
Courtesy of jmnelson.com

Float or Flap?

Though related to wings, the dancer's arms should "float" rather than flap or flail, moving very little from the extended position. Think flexibly firm, as in airplane wings rather than bird wings. When the dancer's extended arm, like the bird's wing, "flaps" forward and backward across the shoulder line, or flaps up and down like a pump handle, both the aesthetics or functionality of the dance are destroyed, and the partner is frustrated, even if they, too, are "flapping."

In closed position, good dancers keep their upper arm almost horizontal and rather firmly in position, with the elbow slightly in front of the shoulder line. The forearm is a bit more flexible, and the hand is a bit further forward of the shoulder line. Maintaining this orientation enables easy lead and follow; violating this orientation leads to frustration, especially for the leader, and both are precluded from easily returning to either closed or open position. In addition, the delay in regaining symmetry often precludes extending the variation, and, thus, the enjoyment of the dance.

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