

THE CAROLINA SHAG

The Carolina Shag basic step is counted "One-And-Two, Three-And-Four, Five-Six". Each word corresponds to a step movement (eight words = eight steps). These eight steps are taken during six beats of the music. To stay "on beat" with the music, the "One-And-Two" or the "Three-And-Four" portion of the basic should take you the same "time" to complete as the "Five-Six" portion takes. In other words, the "One-And-Two" steps are done during or between two beats of music, the "Three-And-Four" steps are done between two beats of the music, and the "Five-Six" between two beats of the music. Normally, we never move the same foot twice in a row. Each time you move or step, you do so with a different foot. Just like walking.

Before you try to learn the "basic" step, it will help you to do this drill. Stand in place and raise your heels approximately one-half inch off the floor so that all your weight is on the balls of your feet. You will probably have to lean forward just slightly to keep your balance. This is the correct stance for dancing the shag. The shag is done with approximately 2/3 of your weight on the balls of the feet, and 1/3 on the heels. To get accustomed to this, try to do this drill with your heels off the floor and all the weight on the balls of your feet. Now, men starting with your left foot, ladies with your right foot, simply raise and lower alternating feet as you say the basic step out loud ("One-And-Two, Three-And-Four, Five-Six") without actually trying to do any forward or backward movements. It is very important that each time you say a word, a foot is stepping to the floor, i.e., when you say "One" the left foot (men) steps to the floor, when you say "And" the right foot steps to the floor, when you say "Two" the left foot steps to the floor, etc. To ensure and to feel the weight change on each step, raise and lower each foot approximately two inches. It is very important that your body weight changes from one foot to the other foot on each step. This weight change on each step is essential to keep you from getting on the wrong foot/out of step.

Since this drill is not easy for everyone, have your partner watch to ensure that a foot is stepping to the floor each time you say a word. The most common mistake is saying "one-and-two" but only moving the feet twice. If that happens, you are then on the wrong foot and out of step. Start off by saying the words slowly. Ensure that the proper foot is touching the floor exactly at the time you say the word (remember "and" is a word and requires a step). Gradually speed up the count until you are comfortable at a rapid pace. Remember that taking three steps for "one-and-two" takes the same amount of time as taking two steps for "five-six."

After you get very comfortable with this (it might take longer than you think), go ahead and begin to learn where to actually put your feet as you move them by following the step diagram. On the two, three, and five steps, the front of the toe of the foot moving back should come to be even with the front of the heel of the other foot. In other words, on two, three, and five, never take the toe of one foot past the heel of the other foot. Start very slowly to ensure that you have the proper foot position. It is

important that you learn the proper foot positions for each move within the basics. Your dance movements will look much more fluid, balanced, and in rhythm if you take time to learn proper foot placements. When you are dancing, having your feet in the right spots during the "basic" will also make it easier for you to continue into your turns without having to first, correct your position.

There should be no bounce in your steps. The lower body (from the waist down) does most of the moving in the shag step. The upper body should remain generally erect without moving up and down and without swaying or turning from side to side, and with no appreciable hip movement. The body does not keep time with the music; only the feet keep time with the music. Except in special steps, one's waist is always the same distance from the floor. Do not let the upper body move up and down, trying to keep time with the music.

While learning, it is essential to pick up your feet in order to make and to feel the weight change on each step. After you have become proficient at the basic step and no longer have a problem changing weight on each step, your feet can be kept very close to the floor, which gives your dancing a nicer look.

Now that you have learned to dance primarily on the balls of your feet, there is one exception. On the five step, the weight lands on the ball of the foot and goes to the heel so that at least 50% of the weight is on the heel. At this point, the body will be erect as opposed to slightly leaning forward. The five-six move is also called the rock step, as the body rocks back (upright) on five and down on six, allowing a smooth move back to one.

















The man's left hand holds the woman's right hand. The knuckles of the lady's right hand are across the middle finger of the man's left hand. There should be some slight tension (sometimes referred to as "tone") to provide a firm hold and resistance when the male "leads". But the grip should never be tight. The forearms of the joined hands should always remain level with the floor, allowing the couple's motion toward and away from each other to be absorbed by the elbow and shoulder joints. During the basic step, it should appear as if their joined hands are sitting on top of a post. The arms and hands should not sway from side to side or move up and down.

Each person keeps their spare arm in a somewhat relaxed but slightly forward position. It should generally appear as if he or she had a drink in that hand that they did not want to spill. This gives a nice look as opposed to just letting that arm hang down by your side.

A word about shoes – if you have dance shoes with the special soles, that's great. If not, make every effort to wear shoes with leather soles. It makes dancing much easier. Please do not wear flip flops or shoes with no attachment at the heel.

Have fun learning the Carolina Shag!

THE BASIC SHAG STEP

MALE INSTRUCTION Men lead with their LEFT foot	COUNT	FEMALE INSTRUCTION Women lead with their RIGHT foot	COUNT		
On the ONE count, move the LEFT foot forward as shown.		ONE	On the ONE count, move the RIGHT foot forward as shown.		ONE
On the AND count, move the RIGHT foot forward to be even with the ONE foot.		AND	On the AND count, move the LEFT foot forward to be even with the ONE foot.		AND
On the TWO count, move the LEFT foot back as shown so that the toe of the left foot is even with the heel of the right foot.		TWO	On the TWO count, move the RIGHT foot back as shown so that the toe of the right foot is even with the heel of the left foot.		TWO
On the THREE count, move the RIGHT foot back so that the toe of the right foot is even with the heel of the left foot.		THREE	On the THREE count, move the LEFT foot back so that the toe of the left foot is even with the heel of the right foot.		THREE
This AND count is a weight shift to the LEFT foot or just a step in place with the left foot. Do not move it forward or backward, just pick it up and put it down.		AND	This AND count is a weight shift to the RIGHT foot or just a step in place with the right foot. Do not move it forward or backward, just pick it up and put it down.		AND
The FOUR count is a weight shift to the RIGHT foot. Again, do not move it forward or backward, just pick it up and put it down.		FOUR	The FOUR count is a weight shift to the LEFT foot. Again, do not move it forward or backward, just pick it up and put it down.		FOUR
The FIVE count is a step back with the LEFT foot so that the toe of the left foot is even with the heel of the right foot.		FIVE	The FIVE count is a step back with the RIGHT foot so that the toe of the right foot is even with the heel of the left foot.		FIVE
The SIX count is a step in place with the RIGHT foot. Just pick it up and put it down. You have completed the eight steps of the Basic. Start over by stepping forward with the LEFT foot to the ONE position.		SIX	The SIX count is a step in place with the LEFT foot. Just pick it up and put it down. You have completed the eight steps of the Basic. Start over by stepping forward with the RIGHT foot to the ONE position.		SIX