Newcastle Notation

A rational system for the notation of clog and step dances devised by

C. Hays, J. Jarman, A. Metherell, C. Metherell, A. Smith, E. Wilson

Second Edition revised by I. Craigs, C. Metherell

This electronic edition prepared 2011 by C. Metherell.

1 Introduction

Newcastle notation was first considered by the then members of the Instep Research Team (now Instep), Cath Hays, Julie Jarman, Alice and Chris Metherell, Alice Smith and Ed Wilson, in early 1981. The need for a standard notation system arose from both discussions within the team and from wider discussions at the Traditional Dance Conference, Alsager, in March of that year.

The first edition was published in 1981 (Hays et al., *Newcastle Notation*, Newcastle: Newcastle Series (1981)), followed by a second revised edition in 1995 (Craigs, I., and Metherell, C., *Newcastle Notation*, Newcastle: Newcastle Series (1995)). This electronic edition, prepared by Chris Metherell, contains only minor editorial changes from that published in 1995.

2. System Design Considerations

2.1 Existing Notation Systems

Before designing Newcastle Notation, the team considered various existing systems.

2.1.1 Existing Clog Notation Systems

Various different systems had, up to that time, been used both by those individuals publishing steps and also by members of the team and others in notating steps for their individual use. It was noted that an in depth consideration of all the systems used by notators who had published their works showed both a wide diversity of approaches to the problem of accuracy. In all cases it seemed that insufficient care had been taken when considering the basis upon which each notation system had been developed.

2.1.2 Existing Standard Systems

Both Laban Notation and Benesh Notation were also considered, although no examples of traditional step dance material notated in either of these systems were available to the team at that time.

Other possible step dance notation systems were also perused, in particular that used by the Scottish Official Board of Highland Dancing and, insofar as tap dancing was concerned, that used by the Imperial Society of Teachers of Dancing.

2.1.3 Other Historical Systems

The team also looked at the various step notation systems used by those publishing step material, mostly in the USA during the inter-war years.

2.2 System Design Aims

2.2.1 System Standardisation

There is a clear need for one system to be used by the maximum number of collectors, teachers and performers, so that notations, notes and recordings are easily comparable and more likely to be of a consistent standard.

2.2.2 System Accuracy

There is a clear need for an accurate system to be used by collectors to record steps as clearly and as accurately as possible. It follows that the system can be used by dancers to learn steps which they would otherwise be unable to dance.

The authors accept that today, it is possible to record steps by other means, such as video, cheaply and easily. However experience shows that learning steps from such a source can be extremely difficult, and that although video and film are very useful tools they are best used to compliment written notations rather than as a substitute for them.

2.2.3 System use

Any step notation system should be simple enough to be understood by the average dancer after a few hours study, and, in its simplest form to be used as an aide memoire. This is not to say that accuracy must always give way to simplicity.

Stress is placed on the fact that the system is bilateral. It must be capable of being read simply or being used with a high degree of accuracy when required.

2.2.4 System Publication

The system should be made available as widely as possible to the maximum number of dancers. In order to encourage its use, all steps published by the Newcastle Series have to date been published in Newcastle Notation and as a long term project, it is hoped to translate all other steps so far published, where possible, into Newcastle Notation.

Because of the style chosen for the Newcastle Series, the notation for any step should fit, as far as possible, onto a single sheet of A5 paper.

2.2.5 System Style

The system should be "user-friendly" in that it should be at least partially understandable without any study of the system beforehand. It is thus felt that the system should in part be loosely based on one of the common styles of step notation used at present.

To facilitate ease of learning and upward compatibility, the system should be built up logically in a rational and precisely defined way, using simple blocks to build up wider definitions.

2.2.6 System Compatibility

The notation system should be capable of use for any step dance.

2.3 Implementation of Design Aims

The system is designed in a logical, almost mathematical way. Before using the notation it is thus necessary to understand the basic concepts fully before a grasp of the more complex areas is achieved. It is therefore recommended that the new user should undertake several careful readings of the whole system before trying to use it. Failure to understand one section will almost certainly make nonsense of some later parts. Similarly, if you wish to make full use of the system it is necessary to use it as a whole. Each part is designed to interlock with others, and even a simple change or omission may be enough to demolish the hose of cards! If the system is to be used and understood by all, the temptation to tinker must be avoided.

3. Basic Concepts

The system is based upon a number of simple concepts that apply throughout the system and to which all other definitions are subordinate. An understanding of these concepts is thus essential and they should always be borne In mind when reading or writing any step. Apparent difficulties and ambiguities can often be solved by applying one or more of these basic rules.

3.1 The Positional Rule

The entire system is positional. It records each step by way of writing down the positions of the feet at discrete moments throughout the step. All movements are defined in terms of starting and finishing positions, and where appropriate, critical positioning during the progress of a movement.

3.2 The Natural Rule

The system is a natural one. All movements are presumed to be made in a natural and unforced manner. For any movement the leg is used as naturally as possible. In ground positions this will normally involve a slight flexion of the leg and in aerial positions may often result in the leg being bent or twisted. The foot is assumed throughout to be naturally slightly pointed towards the floor In aerial positions.

The system records deviations from the norm.

3.3 The Economy of Movement Rule

All movement between two defined positions is to take place as economically as possible bearing in mind the Natural Rule referred to in 3.2 above.

The system records deviations from this rule as well.

4. General System Concepts

4.1 System Format

The system is built up from three basic sections.

4.1.1 The Count Column

This provides the rhythm with which the step is performed. It consists of a verbalisation of the underlying musical notation, allowing a vocal count to be made. The count gives the exact moment, within the envelope of the step at which a movement (See below at section 4.1.2) ends. Normally this will be when contact with the ground occurs, although there are several exceptions to this generalisation as will be seen later.

4.1.2 The Movement Columns

Two columns are provided, one for the left foot and one for the right. In these columns words are used. all of which are carefully pre-defined within the system.
These form the core of the notation. In certain cases, when no ambiguity occurs and the system allows, certain movement keywords may be written across the centre of the two columns.

4.1.3 The Modifier Column

Modifiers are used to define, with a high degree of accuracy, the exact position or positions in which the movements are performed. It should be recalled that the movement, and thus the modifier giving the position, is written on the count at which the movement ends, and thus the modifier generally refers to the finishing position for any given movement. Where more than one modifier is given the last modifier always refers to the finishing position.

4.2 The Step Pattern

Immediately after the notation of the step a standardised pattern for the repetition of step units is given. It is unnecessarily cumbersome in most cases to notate a whole step as this would involve excessive duplication. A pattern of repeats is thus given to make up the whole step from the units which have been fully notated.

4.3 Notes

As appropriate, the step pattern is followed by any necessary notes, drawing the dancer's attention to points of particular interest or difficulty within the step. The notes are not intended to substitute for the notation, but to amplify it where necessary.

4.4 The Notational Skeleton

Each step is thus notated in four columns (reading from left to right) with the time count moving vertically down the page. This block of notation is followed by the step pattern and any notes. Thus:

Time Count	Left Foot Movement	Right Foot Movement	Modifiers

[Step pattern line appears here.]

[Notes appear here.]

5 The Time Count

This provides the metronome for the system. The count is a verbalisation of the underlying musical structure. This, for the non-musician, is one of the most difficult areas in any notation system. It does, however, provide the backbone upon which the rest of the notation is hung, and will repay many fold, the time spent in mastering this part of the system.

5.1 General Concepts

The counts, like musical notes, are of specific length.

The count varies with the time signature. Thus the time signature must be given at the beginning of every step or set of steps.

Normally the time count marks the strong beats of the step. Extra counts may be useful however even if no contact with the ground occurs.

The strong beats in each bar are always referred to by whole number counts.

These are ALWAYS given in full in the notations. Extra counts, splitting up the strong beats into a number of weak beats are only written into the notation where a movement occurs on that beat.

As it is not possible, in the space available, to undertake a full explanation of basic musical notation, the reader is assumed to be familiar with at least the simplest musical forms.

The count is intended to be a verbalisation of the rhythm of the step. Although each subdivision of the strong numbered beats in a bar is given a UNIQUE cue word, the vocalisations are often the same. Thus “and” and “&” are vocalised the same as are “e” and “a”. The distinction is a symbolic and not a vocal one.

5.2 An Important Basic Rule

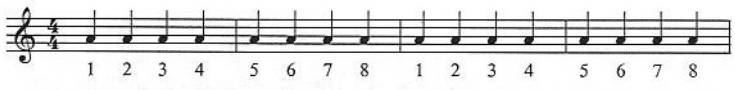
The time count patterns given below assume that the step is of a standard eight bar length, unless the step is in 3/4 time when the length is assumed to be 16 bars. If a situation arises where this causes a problem, an enhancement is available. (See section 10.5 below.)

5.3 The Time Count in 4/4 Time

This time signature covers by far the greatest percentage of clog steps and step dances. Hornpipes, (both even rhythm and dotted or, more correctly, in triple time), reels, schottisches, ragtime, polkas and strathspeys are all examples of the varied use of the 4/4 time signature.

5.3.1 Basic Four In a Bar

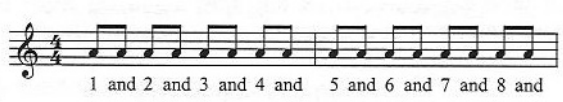
Each bar in 4/4 may be divided into four equal crochet beats, which are counted as follows:



It is convenient never to go above 8 as otherwise the count becomes unwieldy.
We recall that each strong beat, designated by a number count, is always written into the notations.

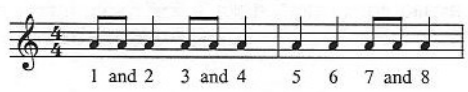
5.3.2 Subdividing in Duple Time

Each bar may be subdivided further by splitting each strong crochet beat into two, in musical terms into quavers. These are counted as follows:



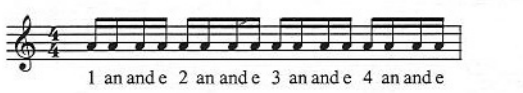
If each "and" beat was used within a particular step, this would result in a precisely even rhythm.

It should be remembered that it is not necessary to write all the weak “and” beats in any step notation unless a movement occurs on that beat. Thus two typical bars of a step might be counted as follows:



In these two bars eleven movements could occur as eleven counts are given. Of course, under the system rules we must write every numbered count even though some of these may in fact have no movements associated with them.

Each bar may be further subdivided by splitting each of the beats once again into two. In musical terms into semiquavers. These are counted thus:

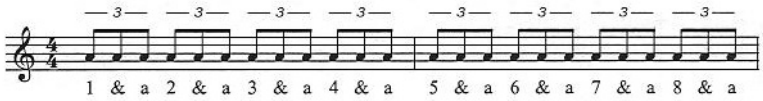


Once again, of course, some beats may not have a movement associated with them.
If so, they will not appear in the notation unless they are strong, numbered beats.

5.3.3 Subdividing in Triple Time

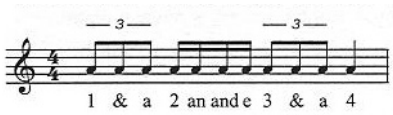
The other basic way of dividing up a 4/4 bar is to split each strong crochet beat into three, hence triple time.

In musical terms, each crochet is split into triplets. These are counted thus:

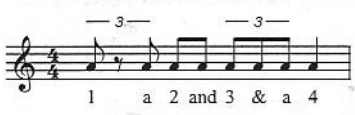


The rules regarding the missing beats upon which no movement occurs remain the same. (See 5.1 above.)

Note that the cue words for the subdivisions of the crochet beats are different in triple time from those used in duple time. This enables the dancer to see at a glance whether any particular beat is part of a duple-time or triple-time unit. For example here is a bar of mixed duple and triple time beats:

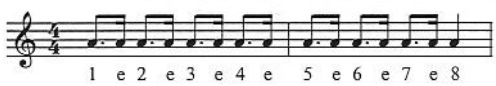


In the above example there is no possible ambiguity, but where more beats have no movement upon them, it would be impossible to note the rhythm accurately unless the differentiation of cue symbols were used. E.g.:



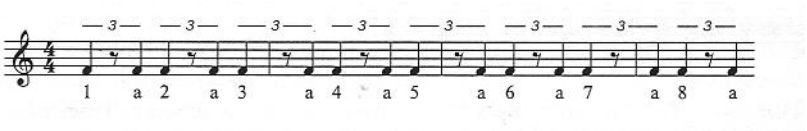
This brings us on to a particularly important point. Many clog steps have become known as dotted hornpipe steps. The music to which these steps are performed is normally written in a dotted duple rhythm.

If this were translated directly into notational terms we would have:



In fact, extensive work in this area has conclusively shown that both musicians and dancers do not usually play or dance a true "dotted" rhythm, and in fact a triple time rhythm is almost exclusively used.

This translates into notational terms as:

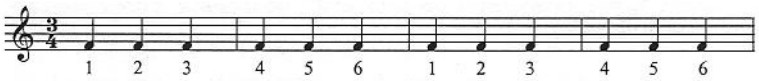


5.4 The Time Count in 3/4 Time

3/4 time is of course most commonly found in the waltz, but other dance forms also use this time signature. By way of example, the mazurka is a 3/4 dance, not that we've found any mazurka rhythm clog steps yet, but you never know!

5.4.1 Basic Three in a Bar

Each bar in 3/4 time may be divided into 3 equal crochet beats which are counted as follows:



It is convenient never to go above 6 as otherwise the count becomes unwieldy.

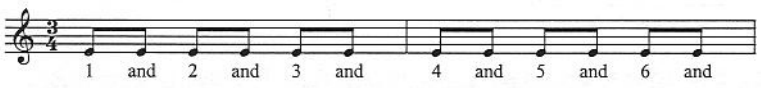
We recall that each strong beat, designated by a number count, is always written into the notations.

5.4.2 Subdividing the 3/4 Bar

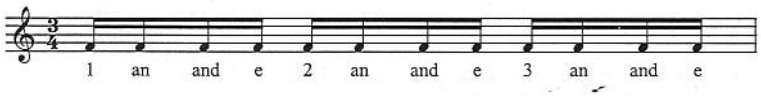
The basic three crochets may, as in 4/4 rhythm, be divided into either two, four or three, subdivisions.

The method of division and counting used is exactly the same as that used in 4/4 time, and the same rules for missing beats also applies. Here are three examples:

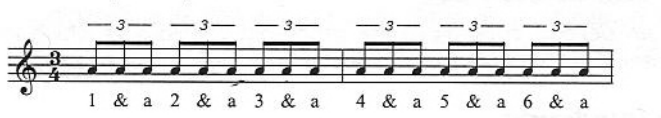
Firstly dividing the crochets into tow quavers:



Next into four semiquavers:

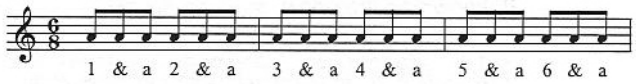


And finally into triplets:



5.5 The Time Count in 6/8 Time

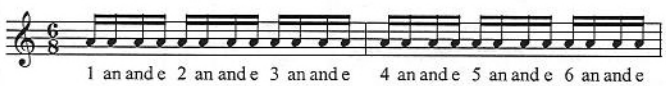
Here for the first time the strong beats do not represent crochets. The main count goes two in a bar, the full six quavers per bar being notated as follows:



It will be noted that this maintains the triplet pattern of counting as used in 4/4 and 3/4.

Once again the count should not exceed eight for ease of use and all numbered beats should always be written. Other redundant beats may be left out as in other time signatures.

Occasionally it may be necessary to split each bar into eight rather than six equal beats:



5.6 More Complex Time Signatures

It will not be necessary to dwell upon these to any great extent, however for the sake of completeness it is of course possible to adapt the above time counts to suit other time signatures. For example in 9/8 (e.g. slip jig) time the 6/8 time count could be adapted by adding an extra triplet. If you happen to come across a step in 7/8 or 5/8 then we leave the adaptation problem up to you PROVIDED THAT YOU ARE CONSISTENT WITHIN YOUR NOTATION AND THE TIME COUNT IS EXPLAINED FULLY IN A SUITABLE NOTE.

6. The Positions of the Feet

All movements are defined in terms of the exact foot positions in which the movement ends and it is thus necessary to define these with some accuracy.

6.1 The Four Quadrants

The floor area round the body is split into four sections or quadrants:

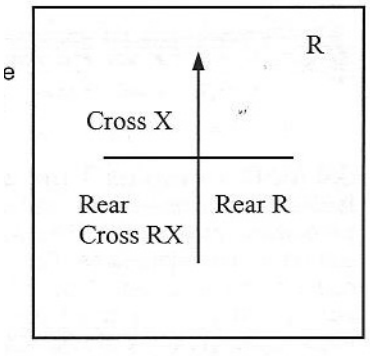
It should be noted that the intersection of the lines (termed the axes) defining the quadrants is positioned next to the insteps of the feet, equidistant between them. This intersection is known as the origin.

The dancer is assumed to face front throughout, that is in the direction of the arrow at the top of the vertical axis.

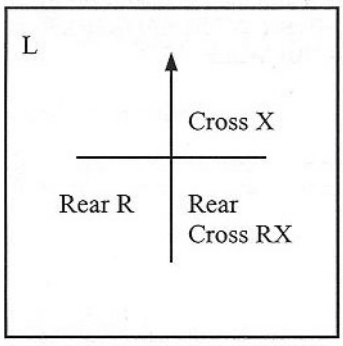
6.2 Naming the Quadrants

Each foot has a separate set of quadrants which relate to that foot.

Firstly dealing with the right foot, the quadrants are named as shown on the right:



Where the left foot is concerned, the quadrants are as shown on the left:



It will be noted that the names are exactly reversed when left and right feet are compared, and that in each case there is an unnamed quadrant. Thus the names of the quadrants in each case are relative to the foot being referred to, as well as to the origin.

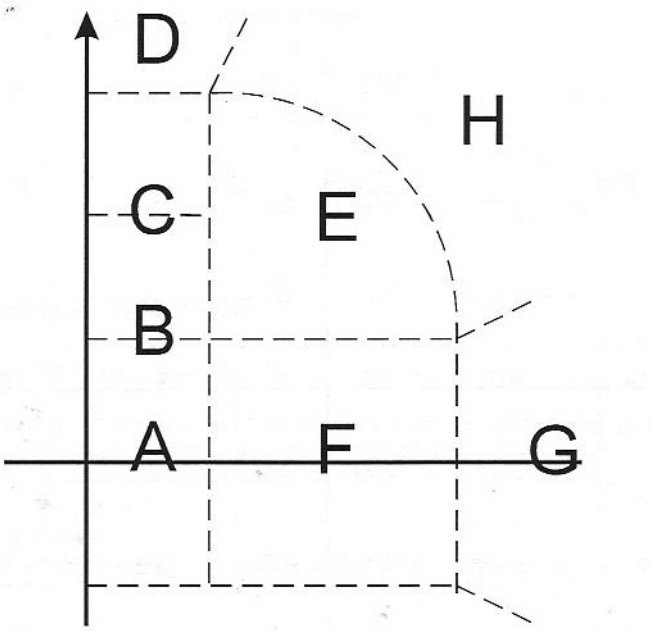
All movements are presumed to take place in the unnamed quadrant unless stated otherwise.

The quadrant names are abbreviated as follows:

CROSS	-	X
REAR	-	R
REAR CROSS	-	RX

6.3 Subdividing the Quadrants

For further accuracy each quadrant is subdivided as follows - note that the axes are given as heavy lines - we use the unnamed quadrant as an example:

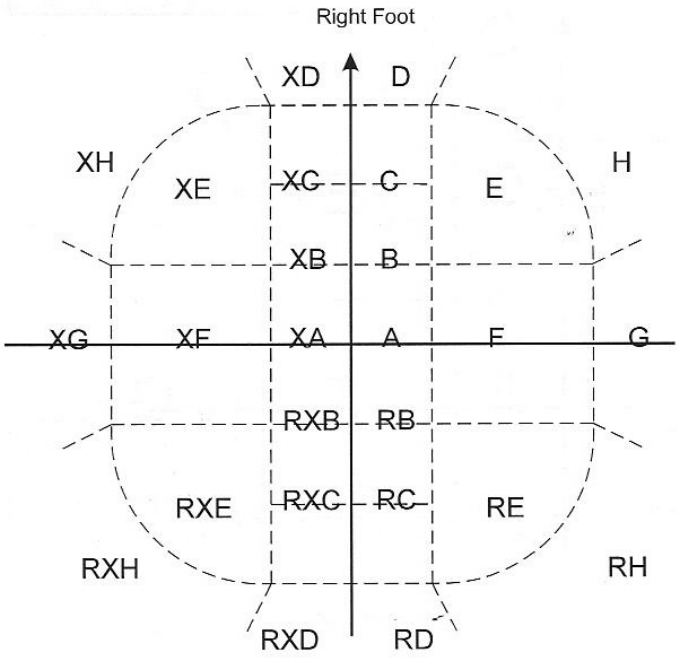


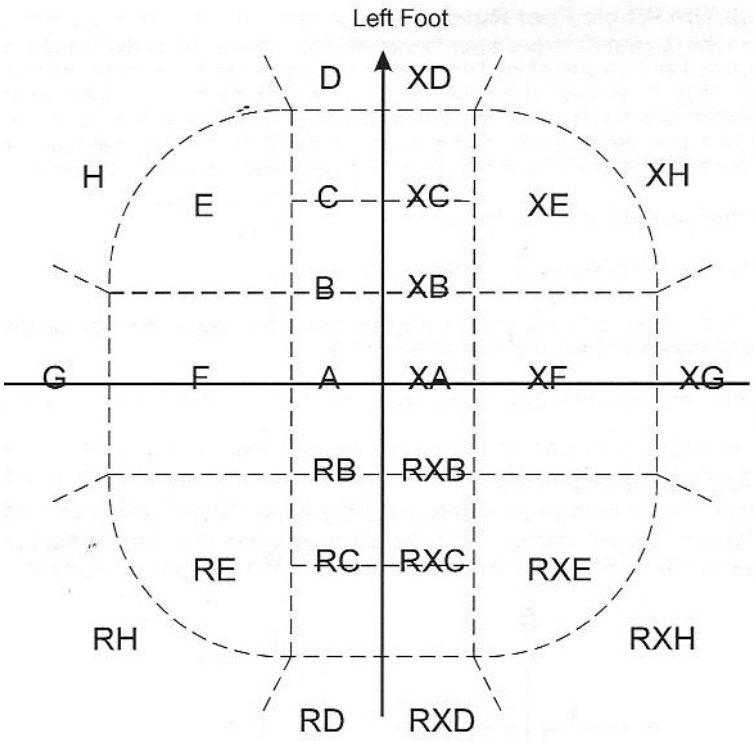
right foot

It will be noted that boxes A, B and C overlap. To make this completely clear we give two further diagrams to show the position of these three boxes only:

6.4 Complete Position Maps for Both Feet

We now give complete maps for both the right and left feet:





6.5 Notating Foot Positions

Foot positions are notated in the modifier column. The left and right foot positions are separated by a colon (:)

The foot position maps are used in order precisely to define the position, or positions, of the feet in which particular movements are performed. These movements are fully defined in section 7.

6.5.1 Box Size

The boxes are best regarded as envelopes, based upon the size of your foot, and thus a certain amount of flexibility should be allowed for.

In general terms however, boxes A. B and C are one and a half foot widths wide and one foot length long. Box F is two foot widths wide and a foot length long.

6.5.2 The Whole Foot Rule

When interpreting foot positions the whole foot should be placed in the box concerned and the part of the foot which is not required to be in contact should be lifted. Thus for example if a movement is made with the toe in A followed by a movement with the heel in A the foot never moves out of the A box. On the other hand if a movement is made with the toe in A and then the heel in B this implies that the point of contact with the floor is identical in both cases since A and B overlap. The best method to use is as follows:

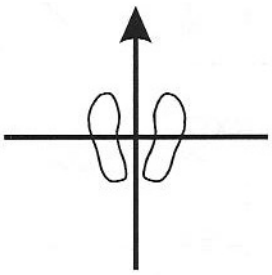
a) Turn the foot to the correct angle.

b) With reference to the position diagram, place the foot in the box indicated, maintaining any rotation applied as a result of a).

c) Raise any part of the foot not required by the movement to be in contact with the floor.

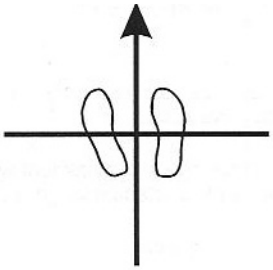
6.6 Angles of the Foot

The foot is presumed to be slightly naturally turned out, as when standing or walking in a relaxed manner. Thus for example, when standing on the balls of the feet in position A:A, it is assumed that both feet are slightly turned out:



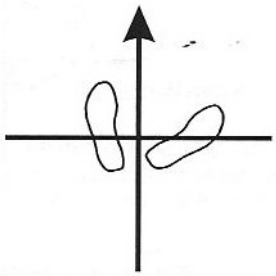
A:A

If a foot is straightened, that is rotated towards the vertical axis, a vertical bar is placed above the modifier. Thus if the right foot were straightened:



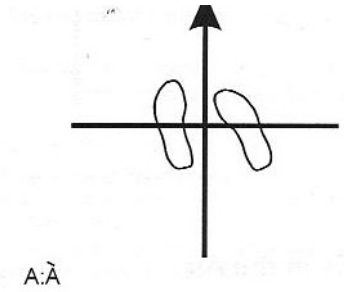
A:Ȧ

If a foot is turned out more than normal an accent reflecting this is placed over the modifier label. Thus if the right foot is turned out more than normal:



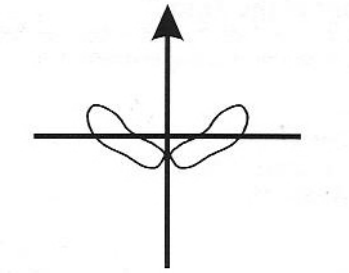
A:Á

If a foot is turned in more than normal, past the straight position described above then an accent reflecting this is once again placed above the modifier label. Thus if the right foot is turned in:

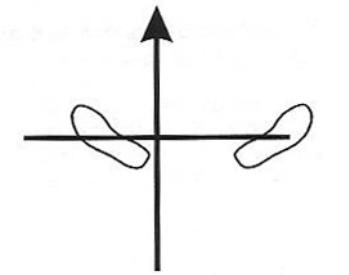


NOTE. The accents give a visual clue to the angle of the foot and are thus reversed for the left and right feet. This is best illustrated by giving a series of examples.

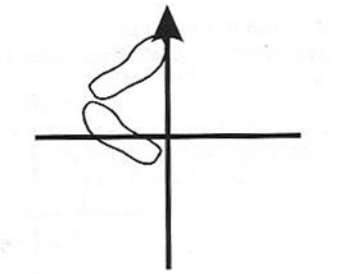
6.6.1 **Examples of Position Writing**



First position. Written as $\grave{A} : \acute{A}$

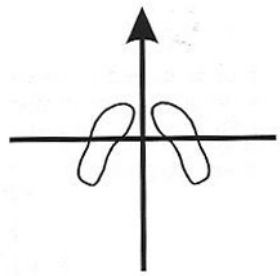


Second position. Written as $\grave{A} : \acute{F}$



Fifth Position. Written as $\grave{A} : X\acute{C}$

Fourth Position. Written as $\grave{A} : \acute{C}$



"Pigeon Toed". Written as $\acute{A} : \grave{A}$

6.7 Positions When the Foot is in the Air

These are termed aerial positions.

To define these, the position maps given at 6.3 and 6.4 are extended vertically upwards. Any aerial position which the foot takes up can thus be defined using the same technique as used for ground positions, with the addition of an extra label in the modifier column to indicate the height of the foot off the ground.

6.7.1 The Height of the Foot

The exact height of the foot from the floor is somewhat difficult define in quantitative terms. Three heights are arbitrarily defined as:

Within an envelope:

Below 12"	-	low aerial
12" to 18" above the floor	-	aerial
Above 18"	-	high aerial

It is intended that there should be a certain amount of flexibility in this area, reflecting both the difficulty involved in judging height when noting steps and an equal difficulty when reproducing the dance.

The three labels are abbreviated thus:

low aerial	-	)
aerial	-	_
high aerial	-	+

6.7.2 Turning the Foot in the Air

The presumption of the slight natural turn out of the foot applies to aerial positions as it does to ground positions, as do the foot turning symbols. See section 6.6.

It should be borne in mind that the knee will inevitably be rotated when a rotation is applied to the foot and this is of particular importance where aerial positions are concerned.

6.7.3 Writing Procedure

This is essentially the same as the procedure used for ground positions. See 6.5.2 above. It is worth repeating again however, to show how the aerial component is best dealt with. In order to interpret any aerial position written use the following procedure:

a) Turn the foot to the required rotation.

b) Maintaining any rotation, place the foot, touching the ground, in the required position box. (Remember the whole foot rule).

c) Maintaining any rotation, raise the foot vertically to the height required.

It will be noted that almost always a bend of the knee is required to place the foot in any particular aerial position. As the system relies on foot positions any bending of the knee which is required is thus implicit in the position writing, save in exceptional circumstances. (See section 10.2)

If there is no keyword in the movement column to which to relate an aerial modifier label, an arrow) is placed in the appropriate movement column to cue this.

7. Movements

As we have seen at section 4.2 above, movements of the left and right feet are given in the two movement columns of the notation. These two columns form the core of the Newcastle Notation system.

7.1 Definitions

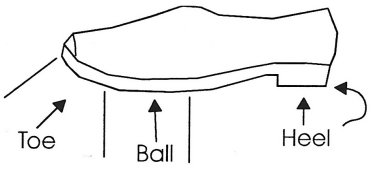
7.1.1 Parts of the Foot

All movements are assumed to be made with the ball of the foot unless otherwise defined.

7.1.1.1 The Sole of the Foot Subdivided

Where the whole of the sole of the foot as referred to the word "flat” is used.

The sole is subdivided as follows:



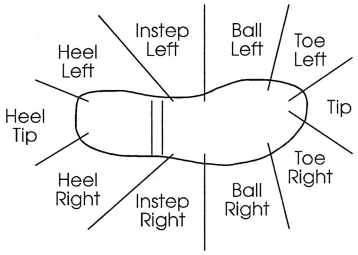
The keyword "heel" is in practice used in two ways.

Firstly, when the toe or ball of the foot is already in contact with the ground (not necessarily bearing the weight) the keyword "heel" will refer to the whole of the heel.

Secondly, when no other part of the foot is in contact with the ground, the keyword "heel" refers to the rear edge of the heel.

7.1.1.2 The Sides of the Foot Subdivided

The sides of the foot, or more correctly. the sides of the sole of the clog or shoe are named as follows:



Where the whole of the side of the foot is referred to the keyword "side left" or "side right" are used. These are abbreviated as follows:

Name	Abbreviation
side left/right	side(L) and side(R)
instep left/right	instp(L) and instp(R)
ball left/right	ball(L) and ball(R)
toe left/right	toe(L) and toe(R)
heel left/right	heel(L) and heel(R)
tip	tip
heel tip	heel(T)

Note that we can of course tell at any stage which foot is being referred to because the keywords will be in the movement column for that foot.

7.1.2 Movement Timing

With one exception (See 7.6.3 below) all movements are written next to the time count upon which the movement ends. Where no movement occurs on a strong beat a dash (-) is placed between the two movement columns.

If contact with the ground occurs the movements are always written next to the time count upon which contact occurs. Likewise, if the two feet come into contact, that movement is always written next to the time count upon which contact occurs.

Contact with the ground and the other foot may occur simultaneously.

7.1.3 Timing Movements when Both Feet are off the Ground

Although all movements (with the exception mentioned above) are written on the time count on which contact with the ground occurs, it is dearly possible for extra movement to take place whilst both feet are in the air.

Although we have not yet dealt with specific movement definitions, we shall use the keyword "hop" as an example well known to most dancers. (For a full definition of this movement see section 7.3.3)

Thus, in a simple sequence using a hop:

1	hop		A:
2		--	
3	hop		A:

The hop is presumed to begin, that is take off occurs, just prior to landing, in this case between count 2 and count 3.

If this is not what is required, we can cue the fact that the foot is in the air by placing a straight arrow next to the centre line in the appropriate movement column. The arrow commences at the count when the foot leaves the ground and the tip points to the landing count Thus:

Here the take off occurs on count 2 and the landing is as before on count 3. In this example the aerial phase is longer than in the original version above.

The use of arrows in this way is particularly helpful when dealing with some of the more complex movements :such as clicks or pick-ups. (See sections 7.7 and 10.10)

7.2 Weight Transfer

Any movement where weight is taken either singly or equally with the other foot is underlined. This facilitates easy recognition of weight movement throughout the step. E.g.

“step”, “hop” or “spring”.

7.2.1 Equalising the Weight

Where weight is transferred to one foot it is assumed that the other foot leaves the ground and is in the air at the end of the movement.

Frequently, as a result of a particular movement, the weight ends up approximately equally distributed between the feet. In this case the weight bearing foot from which the movement is commenced does not leave the ground.

Equalisation of weight is cued by adding "=" to the movement keyword in the appropriate movement column. For example "step=". (See 7.3.1 for a definition of this movement.)

Note that although we say that the weight is equalised it is not in fact the case that the weight must be equally distributed between the feet. Newcastle Notation takes no account of the position of the centre of gravity.

7.2.2 Sliding the Foot

Where the foot moves and does not leave the ground the movement key word is qualified by prefixing it with the keyword "slide". Where this occurs, an extra label is given in the modifier column to show the starting position for the slide.

7.3 Movements which Always Transfer Weight

7.3.1 Step

This is a transfer of weight onto the ball of the foot unless otherwise notated. This movement may be qualified using any of the parts of the foot.

"'heel step" "toe step" "slide toe step"

7.3.1.1 Step Modifiers

The label in the modifier column gives the foot position into which the step takes place.

1	step		A:

We recall that where the keyword “step” is qualified with "slide" an extra initial label is given to show the starting position for the slide, and thus the second label gives the finishing position when full weight is taken.

1		slide step	:C,D

7.3.2 Spring

The weight is transferred from one foot to the other with an upward propulsion. The weight bearing foot leaves the ground before the transfer of weight is made.

We recall that movements are noted next to the count upon which the movement ends. In the case of “spring" this is the count when the landing foot makes contact with the floor. (See section 7.1.3 as to how to deal with timing movements where both feet are off the ground.)

The movement is written in the movement column of the landing foot.

The height of the spring is always unspecified.

7.3.2.1 Spring Modifiers

The label in the modifier column gives the foot position in which the spring takes place.

1	heel spring		A:

7.3.3 Hop

The hop is a spring made onto the weight-bearing foot. The height of the “hop”, is, like the "spring" above (7.3.2), always unspecified.

We recall that the "hop" will be written on the landing beat and not the take-off beat.
(See section 7.1.3)

7.3.3.1 Hop Modifiers

The label in the modifier column gives the foot position into which the hop takes place.

1	toe hop		A:

7.3.4 Shunt

This is a special form of the “slide step”, but with the weight remaining on the same foot throughout. The movement begins with the weight on the toe, ball or flat of the supporting foot. The foot slides to its new position and the heel is dropped firmly to the floor. Where the “shunt” commences on the flat foot the heel will need to be raised during the course of the movement. The movement ends with the foot flat on the floor.

We recall that in accordance with the general principals given above, (7.1.2), the “shunt” is written next to the beat upon which the heel contacts the floor at the end of the movement.

7.3.4.1 Shunt Modifiers

In accordance with the rules for slides (See section 7.2.2), this movement always has two labels in the modifier column. The first gives the position at which the foot first contacts the floor, the second the position at which the heel is dropped.

1	shunt		B,C:

7.3.5 Jump=

Where a spring occurs resulting in the weight being distributed on both feet, this is notated as “jump=”

The height of the "jump=" is always unspecified.

The keyword “jump=” is always written across the centre line between the two movement columns thus:

1	jump=		C̀:C̄

Note particularly that the weight may not be distributed exactly equally between the two feet. Newcastle Notation takes no account of the position of the centre of gravity of the body, and

accordingly no differentiation is made to cover the situation where the weight is unequally distributed.

7.3.5.1 Jump= Modifiers

A single label is given in the modifier column for each foot, separated of course by a semicolon(:).

1	jump=	B̥:Ē	

Note that the foot positions given in the modifier column need not be identical.

7.4 Movement which Sometimes Transfers Weight

7.4.1 Drop

This movement begins with a specified part of the foot touching the ground, although not necessarily bearing weight and ends with the flat foot on the ground. The part of the foot specified in the movement column is lowered to the ground so that the foot ends up flat.

Note that in this movement, the underlining associated with the weight bearing is of especial importance, in that if no weight is taken the “drop” is not underlined; if weight is taken, underlining cues this.

Note that if the keyword is unqualified it is of course the ball of the foot which performs the "drop".

7.4.1.1 Drop Modifiers

The label in the modifier column gives the position in which the drop takes place.

1	heel drop		B:

7.5 Movements Which Never Transfer Weight

7.5.1 Tap

In this movement, the foot contacts the floor and immediately rises into the air. It should be noted that the economy of movement rule and the natural rule come into play particularly where the tap is concerned. There is no assumption that the aerial position (See 6.7 above) in which the foot begins the movement, nor the aerial position in which the foot finishes after the tap is completed are either identical or immediately above the position in which the tap takes place.

7.5.1.1 Tap Modifiers

A single label is given in the modifier column to denote the position in which contact with the ground is made.

1	tip tap		C̥:

7.5.2 Touch

This is intermediate between "tap" and “step”. In this movement the foot contacts the ground and then remains in contact with the ground but without taking weight. The choice of whether to use "tap" or "touch" is of course one of degree.

7.5.2.1 Touch Modifiers

A single position label is given in the modifier column to denote the position in which the "touch" is performed.

1	touch		A:

7.6 Combination Movements

These are used where a combination of movements is particular1y common and to write the movements out in full each time they occur would be both unduly time consuming and render the notations difficult to understand.

Great efforts have been made to keep these combination movements to a minimum.

7 .6 .1 Catch Out

This is simply a special case of the "tap".

The “catch out” is defined as a "tap" where the foot performing the movement begins in an aerial position to the rear of the position in which the "tap" is made. The foot is then moved forwards to make the tap, and on leaving the floor takes up another aerial position. Normally, but not exclusively, this is forward of the position in which the “tap” takes place.

7.6.1.1 Catch Out Modifiers

Three position labels are always given to show:

1. The aerial position in which the foot begins;
2. The position in which the "tap" (i.e. contact with the floor) takes place;
3. The aerial position in which the foot ends.

7.6.1.2 A Catch Out Example

Consider the following step segments, notated using aerial positions and taps.

This movement is written on the time count where the tap takes place. It is assumed that the aerial positions occur immediately before and after the “tap”, as in the following example:

1	step		A:
2		catch out	:RC↑,B,D↑
3	hop		A:
4		step	:D

Exceptionally if the timing of either aerial phase of the movement coincides with another movement it must be written in full as in the following example:

1	step	)	A:RC↑
2		tap	:B
3	hop	)	A:D↑
4		step	:D

7.6.2 Catch In

We need not dwell at any length upon this movement, which is in effect the precise reverse of the catch out. That is, the foot must begin in front of the position in which the tap is made.

7.6.3 Shuffle

Two discrete contacts between foot and floor made with either a forward and back or a rotational movement of the foot.

Exceptionally this movement is written not on the time count when the movement ends, but on the time count line for the first of the two halves of the shuffle.

The movement always produces two distinct contacts and thus takes up two counts of the notation. Brackets are used to denote the counts taken up.

7.6.3.1 Shuffle Modifiers

Two position labels are always given, denoting the positions in which each of the two contacts lakes place. Note that the rotation accents take on particular significance in this movement thus:

7.6.3.2 Shuffle Examples

1	step			A:
a		)	shuffle	:B̄,Ḃ
2		)		
a		)	shuffle	:C̄,C̄
3		)		
a			step	:XC
4	step			A:

Note particularly that it is quite possible to notate a shuffle with for example a reverse rotation:

1	step			A:
&		)	shuffle	:C̄,Ċ
a		)		
2	hop			A:
&		)	shuffle	:Ċ,C̄
a		)		

7.6.4 Lazy Shuffle

This is a specialised version of a “tap” followed by a “step” or “spring”. The foot is moved forwards from a low rear aerial position and a “tap” and “step” or “spring” made.

As with the "shuffle" above (7.6.3), this combination of movements always produces two contacts and takes up two counts in the notation.

Effectively the keyword "lazy" is simply an extra term in the movement column.

Note that the "tap" section of the lazy shuffle is ALWAYS made with the ball of the foot.

7.6.4.1 Lazy Shuffle Modifiers

The "tap" and "step" movements have their usual labels in the modifier column.

Because of the definition of the lazy shuffle, it is not necessary to notate the preceding aerial starting position unless it does not conform with the standard definition.

7.6.4.2 Lazy Shuffle Examples

The following is an example of a typical "Lakeland" shuffle-off utilising lazy shuffles.

1		step			A:
and				tap) lazy	:A
2				step)	:A
and		tap) lazy			A:
3		step)			A:
and			)	shuffle	:C̄,Ć
4			)		
and		hop			A:
5				step	:RXC̄
6		step			A:
7				step	:A
8					

7.6.5 Flop

The "flop" is a specialised version of the lazy Shuffle.

Here, the movement begins in the same way as a standard lazy shuffle, but the working foot is moved slightly forwards after the "step" has been made, and is then snatched back into an extended position (See section 10.2.1) for the "step" or "spring".

7.6.5.1 Flop Modifiers

The same strictures apply as with the lazy shuffle (7.6.4) but the "step" or "spring" must always have an extended modifier". (For a full explanation of extended modifiers see section 10.2)

7.6.5.2 Flop Example

1	step			A:
a			tap) flop	:B
2			step)	:Bex
a	tap) flop			A:
3	step)			Aex:
4			touch	:C

7.6.6 Swivel

This is a special modification of the “step”, “tap” or “touch” in which the foot makes a turning movement whilst the “step”, “tap” or “touch” is performed. We recall that all movements are assumed to be made with the ball of the foot unless otherwise stated. Where we are dealing with a weight bearing movement the keyword is of course underlined but the keyword "step" is omitted as being superfluous thus:

“step swivel” becomes “swivel”

Where however no weight is taken the “tap” or "touch" keyword is always included in order to avoid any ambiguity thus:

"tap swivel" or "touch swivel"

The movement can, and in fact most commonly is, subject to modification depending upon the part of the foot being used thus:

"heel swivel" or "toe swivel"

If it is imagined that the foot is pinned to the floor through the requisite part of the foot, which is then rotated about that pin the correct impression will be created.

“Swivel”, exceptionally of all movement keywords is used to cover two situations. Firstly where the foot makes one distinct rotation and then stops. This is the simplest form of the “swivel”. The second and more complex form occurs where the foot makes a rotation and then counter rotates back towards its original position. There is however never any ambiguity as to which form is meant as an inspection of the modifier column will show.

7.6.6.1 Swivel Modifiers

For the simple form of the "swivel", two labels are given, the first showing the starting position and the second the finishing position for the swivelling foot thus:

1	step		A:
2		swivel	:C̀,Ć
3	hop	touch	A:XC
4		step=	:A

In the second, more complex case, three modifiers are given, the third modifier giving the position to which the swivelling foot returns thus:

1	step		A:
2		swivel	:Ć,C̀,Ć
3	hop		A:
4		step=	:A

7.7 Hitting One Foot Against The Other

Movements which involve hitting one foot against the other are particularly difficult to deal with.

In all cases the keywords “click” and “rev.click” (reverse click) are used to denote the striking of one foot against the other.

It is ALWAYS assumed that where the left foot is making a “click”, it is the right side of the foot which comes into contact with the left side of the right foot. Where the right foot makes a click it is assumed that the left side of the foot comes into contact with the right side of the left foot.

It follows that the reverse of the above situation will very often be required. In this circumstance the keyword “rev.click” is used. This is verbalised as “reverse click”.

Summarising, we may say that a click involves hitting the insides of the feet together and a reverse click ("rev.click") involves hitting the outsides together. It follows that the feet must be crossed before a “rev. click” can be made!

The “click” is notated at the appropriate time count in the notation when contact between the feet occur.

7.7.1 Where only One Foot Moves

Where one foot moves the word "click" or "rev.click" is placed in the appropriate foot column for the foot which moves to hit the other. In this case the moving foot will bear no weight, although it is not necessary for the moving foot to leave the floor. In the latter case the keyword modifier "slide" is appended to the keyword "click" as with other similar movements.

The "click" instruction is always followed by firstly the part of the moving foot which performs the “click” and then by the part of the non-moving foot which is struck. For example "click toe, heel”.

Where the striking and struck parts of the feet are the same this may be abbreviated:

“click heels” instead of “click heel, heel”.

7.7.1.1 Click Modifier

A single label is given in the modifier column to show the position of the moving foot at the time a “click” is made.

It may often be the case that a “click” occurs with the moving foot in the air. The situation where both feet are in the air is dealt with later. (See 7.7.2.3)

7.7.1.2 Click and Rev.Click Examples

1	step		A:
a		click toe,heel	:RB↑
2	hop		A:
a		click toe,heel	:RB↑
3	hop		A:
a		click toe,heel	:RB↑
4	hop		A:

1	step		A:
and		click toe,heel	:RB↑
2		step	:RXE/F
and	step		A:

3 and 4	 hop 	rev.click toe,heel step=	:RXE/F↑ A: :A
1 2 3 4 5 6	spring click heels hop)	) spring click heels hop	A:F/G↑ XF↑: A: F/G↑:A :XF↑ :A

7.7.2 Clicks Where Both Feet Move

These are of three basic types, depending upon whether one, both or neither feet are on the ground.

Without exception, since both feet are moving, labels must be given in the modifier column for both feet

7.7.2.1 Where One Foot is on the Ground

This example demonstrates that one of the positions will always be an aerial one thus:

1	step		Á:
a	swivel click heel	click toe	Á,À:RB↑
2	heel drop		A:
a		step	:RXĈ
3	step		A:
4	hop		A :
&		) shuffle	:Ĉ,Ċ
a		)	

Since both feet are moving the movement key word for the weight bearing foot must be prefixed with an additional key word such as “swivel” or “slide”.

7.7.2.2 Where Both Feet are on the Ground

Logically, a "click" or "rev.click" made with both feet on the ground must involve either a "slide" or a "swivel". Note: the click on beat 2 is made with the weight on both feet. The click on beat 4 however has the weight on the right foot only but both feet are still on the ground.

1	step		Ĉ:
a		heel step=	:Á
2	swivel click heel	heel swivel click toe=	Ĉ,Ċ:Á,À
3		step	:À
a	touch		F:
4	slide click toe	swivel click heel	F,RB:À,A

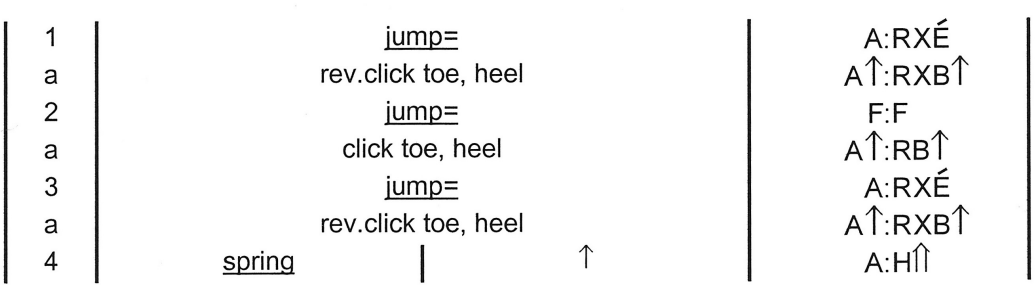
Where the movements for the left and right feet are identical the keywords may be written across the centre line of the movement column thus:

1	heel step		Ċ:
a		heel step=	:Ć
2	heel swivel click toes=		Ċ,Ć:Ć,Ċ
a	step		A:
3		step=	:A
a	swivel click heels=		Á,A,Á:À,A,À
4	swivel click heels=		Á,A:À,A

7.7.2.3 Where Neither Foot is on the Ground

The situation here is fairly simple and is a logical extension of the basic system outlined at 7.7 above.

The movement will always involve a “click” or “rev.click” which can be written across both columns without ambiguity. Any apparent ambiguity can be resolved by referring to the modifier column.



Note that the following landing need not course be on both feet.

8 Writing Step Formats

We recall that at the conclusion of each step, a code is given showing the repeat pattern for the step. See 4.2 above.

It is convenient to split a step up into sections which are to be repeated one or more times. These are conventionally labelled "A", "B", "C" etc. The label is given at the left of the count column at the first count of the appropriate section. Sections are, where possible, separated by a blank line or lines.

There are no set rules concerning the way in which a step should be split up, and the most convenient and unambiguous method should be sought for each step. It has been found advantageous however to make the sections as large as possible to increase readability. Thus for example where a step consists of a single unit repeated sixteen times, it is perhaps better to write a section consisting of perhaps four complete units and then give a repeat pattern for that section of four rather than to have a small section repeated sixteen times.

Where a step concludes with a recognised finish this is given a separate label, and, by convention, finishes are grouped together at the end of a series of steps.

At the end of the step unit notations, a repeat pattern is given, which shows both the order of repetition and the feet off which the repetitions are performed.

Note the use of the word "off". This word is ALWAYS used to denote the foot upon which weight is taken on the first strong beat of the step unit. Normally this will be count one.

8.1 Examples of Repeat Patterns

Repeat patterns are perhaps best demonstrated by way of example. There follows a series of typical repeat patterns. Note the standard phraseology used:
Six times through off alternate feet and Finish

|
L

AB three times off the same foot and Finish

|
L

AB AB B B and Finish
| | | | | |
L L L L L

8.2 Repeating Whole Steps

Frequently a whole step, for which a step pattern has been given as outlined in sections 8 and 8.1 above, is repeated either off the same, or more commonly off the opposite foot. No mention of this is made in the notations themselves, but clearly every set of steps should be accompanied by explanatory notes detailing the source etc. and information regarding style of performance, including any repetition of steps should be given at that stage.

8.3 Dealing with the Anacrusis

Frequently movements occur on the upbeat, i.e. before the first strong count of the first bar. These movements, made on the anacrusis as the upbeat is called, are normally of a preparatory nature. Where the same movement is repeated during the course of the step, it is normally possible to incorporate the anacrusis into the step sectioning without any difficulty.

Sometimes however the movement on the anacrusis occurs only at the commencement of the step.

In these cases the special movements made at the commencement of the step are placed in curly brackets { } at the beginning of the step section.

{ 4			hop	:B }
{ &	)	shuffle		C,C: }
{ a	)			}
1		step		B:

Frequently only the position labels in the modifier column change in which case these alone are placed in brackets thus:

4			hop	:B{A}
&	)	shuffle		C,C:
a	)			
1		step		B:

Note that the movements on the anacrusis do not affect the notational basis upon which the step patterning is based and the step section is said to be performed off the foot which takes the weight on the first strong count of the section, normally count one.

9 Dynamics

No dynamics are given within the notation as a rule.

In some specific instances it may be particularly appropriate to record that a movement is performed loudly or softly in comparison with the other movements in that step.

The following musical notations are used:

(pp) - very soft
(p) - soft
(f) - loud
(ff) - very loud

These should be looked on as interpretative only and used very sparingly.

The above symbols are always placed after the movement keyword in the appropriate movement column.

1	flat step (ff) [stamp]		A:

Note particularly the use of the round brackets ( ).

10 Complex Enhancements

Occasions occur, sometimes frequently, in which slightly more complex than normal steps must be notated. This section is intended to cope with those situations. An understanding of this section is not crucial for the great majority of steps.

10.1 Toe and Heel Movements

Toe and heel movements, such as those used extensively in the East Lancashire steps taught by Pat Tracey, but found to a greater or lesser extent in steps from Dartmoor to Fife, were particularly awkward to write in Newcastle Notation as originally conceived. In particular it was found that although the Notation could be used accurately to represent a step using movement combinations, reading it could be difficult as the Notation provided no specific visual cue to the movement.

To overcome this difficulty, extra keywords have been added in the manner of lazy shuffles (see section 7.6.4) or flops (see section 7.6.5), thus:

toe tap) TH
heel touch)

Any appropriate combination of T (toe) and H (heel) may be used (even though the full keywords given in the movement column may in fact relate to the ball or other part of the foot) The following are the most common:

TH - toe,heel
HT - heel, toe
THT - toe,heel,toe
HTH - heel, toe,heel

The use of these extra keywords implies a rocking motion of the foot from toe (or ball etc.) to heel, or vice versa. As with other extra keywords of this type, care must be taken to refer to the full keyword description for an exact definition of the movement, whether weight is taken and so forth.

10.1 .1 Toe and Heel Examples

1	toe tap)		C:
&	heel tap) THT		C:
a	drop)		C:
2	flat step		D:

Contrast the above with the following subtly different combination, which nevertheless may still utilise the THT keyword:

1	tap)		B:
&	heel tap) THT		B:
a	tap)		B:
2	flat step		B:

10.2 Bending the Leg and Foot

It will be recalled that the system is defined as a natural one. Thus, for any movement, the leg is used as naturally as possible. In ground positions this will normally involve a slight flexion of the leg and in aerial positions may often result in the leg being bent or twisted. The foot is assumed throughout to be naturally slightly pointed towards the floor in aerial positions.

It is occasionally required however to depart from these natural positions.

10.2.1 Bending and Extending the Leg

If it becomes necessary to bend the knee rather more than normal the extra label “bt” added to the modifier. This is verbalised as “bent”. This might for example be used to denote a lowering of the body in a ground position or extra bending of the leg in an aerial position.
If the knee is straighter than usual the extra label “ex” is added to the modifier. This is verbalised as "extended". This, in a ground position normally means that the knee is locked back against the joint and is most commonly found in the flop. See section 7.6.5 above. These labels are added after the modifier itself thus:

Bex:

:Cbt

10.2.2 Pointing and Bending the Foot

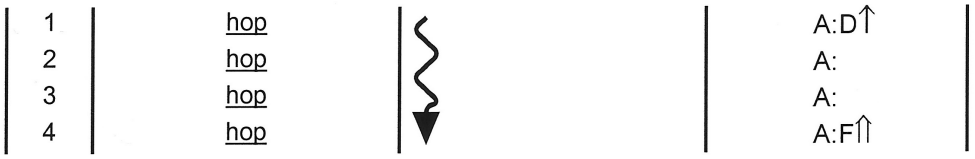
Where the foot is concerned however, pointing (or extending) the foot is much more common. This is denoted by adding the extra label “pt” to the modifier. This is verbalised as "point": This is particularly common in classical highland dancing. Where the toe is raised the extra label “tup” is added to the modifier. This is verbalised as "toe up". These labels are added after the modifier itself thus:

:Bpt

Etup:

10.3 Continuous Movement

A movement may, on occasion, take up more than one musical count. If this causes any ambiguity in notation the movement may be written, for example thus:



Here the right leg is swung round from D to F. Note that only the starting and finishing positions are given.

10.4 Complex Time Counts

It is rare, although by no means unknown to have one foot beating in a different rhythm from the other. For example the left foot may be in triple time and the right foot in duple time. We have noted this occurring in Appalachian Flat Footing. Where this occurs the following system is used:

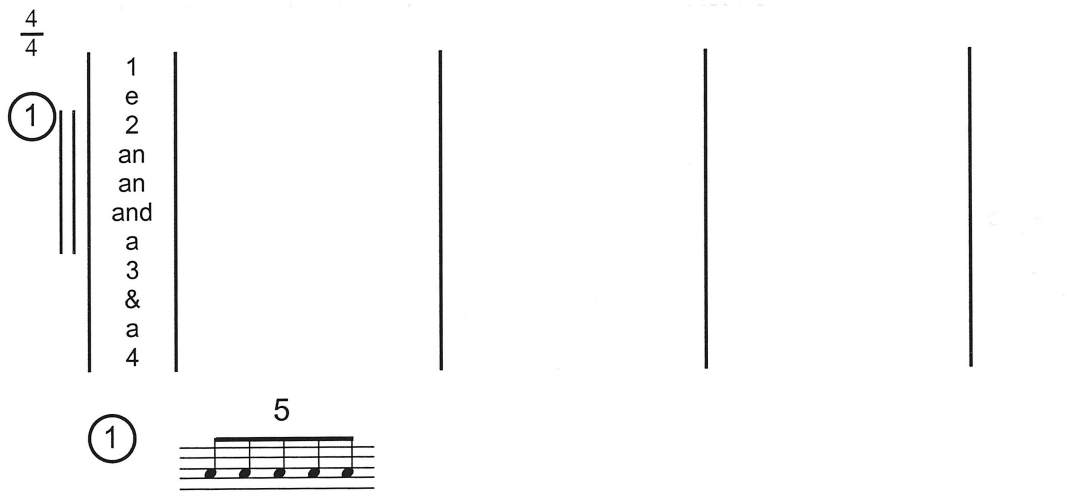
Maintain the main count and insert the secondary count in brackets to the right or left of the main count, depending upon whether the secondary count refers to the right or left movement columns. It is not necessary to attempt to line up the counts in a logical fashion.

10.5 Extending or Curtailing the Time Count

We recall the general rule given at 4.1.3 above. If a step does not correspond to the standard eight bar (or in 3/4 time sixteen bar) pattern the time count may be extended or curtailed to accommodate this. For example, it is not unknown for a two or more count pause to occur between step sections. In order to accommodate a two count pause it becomes necessary to extend the maximum count form eight to ten to deal with this exceptional problem. Similarly, where a step is, for example nine bars long instead of eight it will be necessary to end the step on a count of four, whereas normally a step always ends on beat eight.

10.6 Complex Beat Splitting

We have only dealt with splitting strong beats into a maximum of four subdivisions. Occasionally more complex subdivisions occur. In these, albeit rare, cases a time count may be invented and the precise musical notation given as a footnote. The count should be marked with two vertical lines to cue this and numbered to correspond with the footnote. For example:



10.7 Using Undefined Words

It will very occasionally be necessary to resort to using words which are undefined insofar as the system vocabulary is concerned. An example might be where the hand slaps the foot. Any words required should be closely defined by the notator prior to notating the step.

Where it becomes apparent that a particular set of movements is so common in a particular style that writing the movements out in full is not only time wasting but unnecessarily confusing, the combination of movements may be defined at the beginning of the set of steps being notated.

Any predefined words used in either of the above cases should be notated within the movement column when it occurs in BLOCK CAPITALS to draw attention to it's extra-system definition.

The use of all extra words should be avoided unless absolutely necessary and then kept to an absolute minimum.

10.8 Using Traditional Cue Words

Often, a traditional dancer from whom a step or steps have been collected has particular words for movements. For example a "flat step" (ff) might frequently be called a stamp.

If it is felt to be appropriate, these extra words of description may be added IN ADDITION to the systematic keywords in square brackets. For example:

1	flat step (ff) [stamp]		A:

Note that the full notation should ALWAYS be given. The extra word is an addition not a substitute.

10.9 Moving Across the Floor

The system assumes that every step is performed more or less on the spot, facing front. Frequently steps move about the dancing area. This can be dealt with in one of two ways.

10.9.1 Longhand Notes

It is frequently simplest to notate a step as though it is performed facing front, on the spot, and then to give details of any movement about the dancing area in a note after the step. A step might, for example, "turn through 360 degrees" or be "performed moving gradually to the left".

10.9.2 Movements Facing Front

If a more precise method is required than a simple descriptive note. movement across the dancing area may be described by noting the various positions that the point of origin of the position map takes up as the step progresses. For a full description of the significance of the point of origin see section 6.1.

It will be recalled that the point of origin lies at the intersection of the axes of the foot position map, at a point level with the insteps of the feet and equidistant from them when the feet are in position A:A.

Where it is required to move the point of origin an asterisk (*) is added after the label in the modifier column relating to the movement before the change of point of origin occurs. That is the last line to which the original point of origin relates. The origin will then move next to the last moved foot or feet.

Thus, fore example, to move sideways one would "step" in :F* causing the origin to move next to the instep of that foot, which is thus now in position :A, ready for the next movement.

Note that the angle of the foot is maintained.

Effectively, moving the origin moves the entire foot position map across the floor, following the feet.

10.9.3 Turning Movements

Following logically from the above, if turning movements are required, the axes are rotated about the point of origin.

This is denoted by placing two asterisks (**) after the label In the modifier column relating to the movement before the turn occurs.

The angle at which the turning foot comes to rest is always the normal "natural" position (see section 6.6), whatever the starting angle may be.

This determines both the direction and amount of turn.

For example, to step to the right and turn clockwise simultaneously the foot steps into position :F**. The origin moves next to that foot and the axes rotate so that the foot is at the natural angle, the foot now being in position :A. Because the angle of the foot is not maintained, the body rotates.

A special case arises when, for example, :A** becomes :A, this being used to denote a tom on the spot with no travel across the floor.

10.10 Pick-Ups, Wings, and other Tap Dance Tricks

A little ingenuity is required when ' notating some of the more complex movements found in tap and indeed clog dances. However, if the movements are analysed carefully, and broken down into their constituent parts, the system copes well with even the most arcane movements.

Perhaps one example will suffice, that of the pick-up, which might typically be danced as: