

## Update your dance moves this summer

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Contra Costa Times

Posted: 06/08/2009 01:00:00 AM PDT

Updated: 06/08/2009 06:53:09 AM PDT



It's that time of year. Time to get your dance on.

From proms to weddings, this is the season for stepping. Whether you think you can dance or not, everyone can afford to update their moves. That's where we come in.

We enlisted the help of two Oakland dance instructors to show us their must-moves. Bonnie

Sita, 58, is a classically trained ballet and jazz dancer who owns the East Bay Dance Center. Lee Pazmino is a 28-year-old hip-hop choreographer and instructor at New Style Motherlode.

Both instructors share the same advice about hitting the dance floors this summer: Have fun.

"Don't overthink it," says Pazmino, who danced in Justin Timberlake's 2000 Justified tour. "It's about having fun and being with people you care about."

Many people love hip hop and long to dance in the style, but they don't know how to move their bodies that way, Pazmino says. But it's not that hard. Body rolls, circular movements with the rib case, and isolation moves are simple and perfectly appropriate for weddings and other events, Pazmino says. So are head and shoulder movements.

"Don't be afraid to take it back old-school style with the snake or the Hammer," Pazmino says.

Sita, who specializes in ballet and jazz, recommends basic jazz and Latin staples that, when strung together, create a fluid dance arrangement for all kinds of music, from disco and rock to salsa.

Sita reminds amateur dancers to do something they often overlook when focusing on footwork: Listen to the music.

"The biggest thing that makes people stand out (at events) is that they're not even in rhythm with the music," she says. "A simple movement that's in tune with the music looks so much better than something frenetic and off-rhythm."

As for the modern form of freestyle dancing with a partner, Sita gives another piece of advice. Don't oversexualize it, she says.

"Dance is an ancient ritual that people have been doing since the beginning of time," she says. "It's more about the feeling of enjoying your body and less about trying to impress someone else."

Sita and Pazmino share basic to advanced moves that, when strung together, make solid dances that will boost your confidence at events this summer — with or without a partner. So turn up the music and follow our lead. You can also see a video of the dancers performing the moves at [ContraCostaTimes.com](http://ContraCostaTimes.com) or [InsideBayarea.com](http://InsideBayarea.com).

## The basics

**Opposition hips:** While stepping on right foot, bend right knee and shift hips to the left, straightening left leg. Repeat to the left, shifting weight from foot to foot and moving hips rhythmically. Remember, your booty is connected to the hips, so you want it to move, but not too much, she says. "Pop music has a lot of beats so if you try to move your booty to every beat, you're going to get pretty tired," Sita says. Instead, try moving your booty on every other beat, like, "boom, wait, boom, wait, boom."

**Paddle turn:** With weight centered on one foot, push with the opposite foot to make the body rotate around the standing foot. Keep eyes on one spot to avoid getting dizzy. Switch feet and repeat. Don't forget to engage your upper body. "If you slouch your upper body, it doesn't allow freedom in your lower body," Sita says. "So, lift up."

**Three-count step:** Begin with feet together. Step out to right and touch left foot next to right. Step out to left and touch right foot next to left. Step out right and step together with the left. Step out right and touch left foot next to right. Repeat to left. Don't be afraid to incorporate opposition hips. Wondering what to do with your arms? "Let them move in motion with the hips, whether it's back and forth or side to

side," Sita says. "Clapping is fine. Just don't let your arms climb higher than your chest. That's a no-no."

## Hip-hop for all

**Ticking:** This form of popping involves a movement or series of movements that are isolated and held for emphasis. For instance, start with your pointer fingers facing outward. Then, start tracing a medium-sized diamond shape in the air by hitting each point sharply and holding each for one second. Pop and lock by isolating and holding a ticking movement before going into another one, Pazmino says.

**Tutting:** Just as it sounds, this head and shoulder movement — where the arms are held at shoulder length in right angles — mimics the dance of the Egyptian pharaoh, but with the added sliding feet associated with a float walk. Don't forget to move your head from side to side. "It's OK to be silly," Pazmino says. "That's what dancing at events is all about. Do the Cabbage Patch or the Running Man to show that you have a playful personality."

**Break-dance salsa move:** A basic pivot step followed by a foot crossover. "Latin dancing is very popular right now. It's all about mixing it up. They still do the Electric Slide (at weddings) because it's funky, hip, and all about having fun."

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## Online

**Watch them groove: More of a visual learner?**

**Watch a video of Oakland dance instructors Bonnie Sita, Lee Pazmino and Lateef Swain show jazz, salsa and hip moves at [ContraCostaTimes.com](http://ContraCostaTimes.com) or [InsideBayArea.com](http://InsideBayArea.com).**