

How to Dance the "Toddle"



This Position Reveals the Secret of Successful Pivoting. Always Keep Your Right Foot in Front and the Left Foot Far Behind and You Can Do with Ease the Most Difficult Step of the Ballroom.



This Is the Position of the Feet on the First Step of the Turn. Take the Feet Only Slightly Off the Floor.

"Delightfully Easy and Restful," Declares Arthur Murray in Explaining the New Steps Which Are Supplanting Jazz and the "Shimmie" as a Diversion for Society.

SHALL we "toddle" or not? A social club of young people who wanted to be fashionable but who were also anxious to remain within the confines of good taste, sent a committee to ask Arthur Murray, the famous dancing master, this question. "Our members," the spokesman declared, "seem to want to 'toddle,' but we are not quite sure whether or not it is perfectly all right." "Personally," spoke up another member of the committee, "I think the 'Toddle' is a sure sign that we are getting back to second childhood. I don't know anything about the new dance or whether the dancers are doing it right or not, but from the looks of it, some act as though they have become quite intimate with the seven-day itch. Others act as if they thought St. Vitus's dance was really meant for ballroom use. The majority, however, shake themselves up and down as though they did not have good sense. What's the idea? What is the 'Toddle' anyway?" On this page today Mr. Murray has undertaken to answer that question and also to explain how the "Toddle" should be danced. The photographs were posed by Mr. Murray and Miss Faith Dorsey of Georgia.

By ARTHUR MURRAY

TO begin with, the "Toddle" was misnamed. Some dancing teacher in New York originated a dance called the "Toddle" in 1917, but it died young. The name, however, remained for others to make fun of whenever they wanted to ridicule the foolish dances we have lived through.

When people started doing the present new dance, the name "Toddle" somehow came back to life again. I am sure that the word "toddle" was not brought back to usage because it aptly describes the dance. The dictionary says: "To toddle is to walk with short and unsteady steps, like a child."

If Mr. Webster is right, then we are not "toddling," because, while the steps are unsteady enough, they are not short. On the contrary, the dancers have to be extremely long-legged to be first-class "toddlers."

There is a common impression that the "Toddle" is a jigging walk and that in order to be in style you simply walk around the room and jiggle up and down as you exercise your partner. Fortunately, this is not so!

It Smacks of the Jazz

What is known as the "Toddle" today, is simply an outgrowth of the Jazz. It has a suggestion of the "shimmie," minus the vicious shaking of the shoulders.

Those who can dance the "Toddle" know that it is lots of fun. The new dance has the delightful abandon so characteristic of everything American, and that is one of the reasons it is so popular. It has the swing, or rather the rhythm, of the Jazz, and this adds the zest to what might otherwise be an extremely foolish way of spending the evening.

The "Toddle"—we will call it that—like all other innovations, arrived in a very crude state. Naturally, until the rough edges were knocked off, it was subjected to considerable criticism. Until it emerged from under the polishing process, it was condemned by the dancing teachers and by all others who have the best interests of dancing at heart. Personally, I refused to teach it until a short time ago.

But the "Toddle," when properly danced, is nothing to be ashamed of. Those who can dance it will tell you that it is more fun than any dance we have had in a number of years. It requires very little exertion and it is so easy to do that it gives one an opportunity to talk while dancing, a feat not always possible when doing other dances.

Aside from the many interesting variations which came with the "Toddle," perhaps the principal reason for the unusual dance craze caused by this innovation is due to the fact that the "Toddle" is so delightfully easy and restful.

When we stop to consider that our dancing, as well as our social life, is always regulated by our business conditions, it is not surprising that at this time the "Toddle" should meet with such universal favor. Today our business people must work harder than ever to cope with industrial

problems. The man who makes a success today is not the one who simply goes to his work and takes things easy. He must work as never before! The worker of today, whether employer, clerk or farm hand, must throw his entire energy into his task. The result is a desire for recreation in which a minimum amount of exercise will be expended.

All things being equal, the dance which requires the least effort will be the most popular. This is probably the reason why the One-Step, a dance which was most in favor a few years ago, is hardly ever played today. In the ultra-modern ballrooms the One-Step is very rarely danced because it is tiresome and very strenuous compared with the "Toddle." The waltz, too, has lost favor for the same reason. Because of a certain kind of laziness on the part of the dancers, we may not have many new dances this year. This also means that the general tone of the dancing will be much better and that dancing will reach a higher plane. If we do not have many new dance variations there will probably be less criticism. For the hammer does not pound on established dances, but rather on innovations when they come to us in a crude form. Like wine, a dance improves with age. Time will polish over the crudest of dances.

But getting back to the original question: "Shall we 'toddle' or not?" That depends upon the individual. The "Toddle" can be made as re-



The Old Rule of "Keep Your Feet on the Floor" Is Now Passed. In the Toddle the Girl Is Permitted to Raise Her Foot High Off the Floor if She Can Do It Gracefully. This Pose Shows the Position of the Feet in the Rocking Step.

The Toddle Is Responsible for the Many Fancy Variations Which Brought About the Renewed Interest in Dancing. Fancy Steps May Be More or Less Conspicuous, but They Made Us Forget to Check. This Position Illustrates an Extreme Way of Whirling.

finer as the Minuet, or by poor dancers it can be degraded to rank with the Bunny-hug.

The manner of walking distinguishes the "Toddle" from the ordinary Fox Trot. The walk is a resilient movement, very much akin to a bouncing step. In "toddling," you take the regular Fox Trot step, then rise up and come down at the finish of each step. The bouncing movement comes after the step is taken.

Besides the "toddling" walk, there are a number of steps in this new dance. They are all done in this "boppy" way. It is the buoyant,

care-free manner, a nonchalant air of abandon, which makes the "Toddle" popular.

Here is how to do it:

The Rocking Step—First part, for man: Beginning with the left foot, walk four slow, bouncing steps forward, springing slightly on each step, 1, 2, 3, 4. Two-step diagonally forward, to left, 1 and 2. Rock backward by throwing weight back to right foot, then rock forward by shifting weight forward to left foot.

Second part: Begin with right foot, walk forward four slow steps. Two-step diagonally forward to right with right foot, 1 and 2. Rock back to left foot, then

weight back to his left foot, 5. Swing again to the right on the right foot, 6. Shift the weight back to the left, 7, swing (turn) to the right on the right foot, 8.

Note that the right foot remains in the centre while the left foot is swung around. The pivoting is done on the right foot, which is forward, and remains in the same spot during the turning. Keep the left foot far behind the right foot.

To make the left "Toddle" turn, keep the left foot in the centre and pivot to the left on the left foot. The right foot then remains behind and is swung around like the rim of the wheel.

The Shuffle Step—This step consists of three sliding steps forward, and one slow walking step forward, but the manner in which it is done, the bouncing movement and the heel-to-toe step, makes it appear different from the ordinary Fox Trot variations.

The man takes three long slides directly forward, starting with his left foot. When taking the slide with the left foot, the man's left heel first touches the floor and the weight is then quickly shifted to the toes of the left foot.

The Dancing Master's Instructions

The count is: Slide left foot forward, 1; draw right foot up to left, count "and"; slide left foot forward, 2; draw right foot to left, count "and"; slide left foot forward, 3. After completing the three slides with left foot, take one slow walking-step forward with right foot, count 4.

The complete count is: Slide, 1 and 2 and 3, walk, 4.

Note again that the "Toddle" is characterized by a bouncing movement. You take a step, then rise up and down on the same foot before the next step is taken. The action, in rising, must be in the ball of the foot and not in the upper part of the body.

The lady should also learn the above step as this will be her part in the following step. It is advisable for the lady to learn the man's steps in all the dances. It gives her a better appreciation of what is expected of her when following in these steps.

The Backward Shuffle—In this step the man goes backward and advances in the line of direction. (Whether you go forward or backward, always advance around the room in the same direction.)

Begin with the left foot and take one slow walking step backward, 1. With right foot, take three long, slow, sliding steps directly backward.

The complete count is: Walk back with left foot, 1, then three slide steps backward counting, 2 and 3 and 4 (1 and 2 and 3 and 4).

Note—The dances of today are not done in any definite sequence.

The steps described above may be done at any place in the Fox Trot.

The "Toddle" Pivot—This variation is one of the most popular turns and is most effective if repeated two or three times in succession. It consists of a two-step and one slow pivot.

Begin with the left foot and take a two-step directly to the left (count 1 and 2). The two-step, as you know, consists of two slides. On the second slide (on left foot) turn a quarter to the right. Then place the right foot down (close to left foot) and with weight (on right foot) turn to right, making a half turn.

The count is: One-and-turn-turn. Or, you may say, step-draw-pivot-pivot (to right).

Remember that, when doing the above step, you must turn to right on the second slide of the two-step, then finish up by turning to the right on the right foot.

This variation may be done two or three times in succession before changing to another step. To change to another movement, simply start walking with the left foot. This rule applies in all other steps in the One-Step and Fox Trot.

If the above directions are carefully followed and each step mastered, the result will be a series of movements that, while free and easy, so to speak, will in no way shock those keepers of the public morals who raise their hands aloft at almost every innovation in the terpsichorean art. The "Toddle" is quite innocent and particularly picturesque, and it has proved popular in many sections of the country where the devotees of the dance have executed the steps properly. It is typically American, responsive to the demand of lovers of the smooth floor and ecstatic music, and its universal approval will be only a matter of time. I believe that it has come to stay longer after other dances have gone the way of those crazes which hold the public for a time and then fade.

