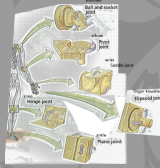


KnowledgeBase

Joint

We have discovered that almost all tango movements can be specified by describing the position and action of the joints.

Each joint in the body has different movement possibilities.



Hip

The free leg's hip is always in **external rotation**. This causes the stabilizing muscles to **contract** to support and protect the joints of the leg from the weight of the body. It also enables the muscles of the leg to work more smoothly. For tango purposes, contraction of the hip rotator/stabilizer muscles also ensures integration of the leg with the torso so that information and **power** is directly transmitted to the partner.

The **free leg** is almost always in external rotation. The exception is that as the free leg **crosses** the base leg between **steps**, while approaching the base leg. The hip relaxes very slightly into **internal rotation** to create a "natural" walking aesthetic.

The base leg's hip is always **flexed**. This base flexion is accomplished by moving the foot backwards 2-5cm (and by arching the back or hinging the torso forward). The result of correct flexion of the base leg's hip is a slight cont of the upper bodies toward the partner, which forms the essential structure of the **torso connection**.

Notice that athletes are using hip flexion of the time, because if more they are contracting the quadriceps, the strongest muscle in the body!



During **weight** of weight hip flexion changes in different ways for each step.

- In front steps, the back/leading leg's hip **flexes**, along with the knee and ankle to lower the body forward. However, the front/moving leg's hip **extends** flexion.
- In back steps, both legs' hips increase flexion.
- In side steps, the change in hip flexion is slight.

In **volés**, the hip joint moves before the knee joint.

- In back volés, the free leg's hip joint extends completely.
- In front volés, the free leg's hip joint adducts completely.
- In side volés (lead), the free leg's hip adducts and then flexes.

Knee

In tango, flexion of the base leg's knee joint controls the size of the step. (More flexion = longer step.)

There are no universal rules about the position of the base leg's knee at the start and end of the steps. This depends on the amount of power of the steps, and on personal aesthetics.

The free leg's knee should be fully extended during both **first** and **second preparation**.

When marking **crosses** and **volés**, the mark's back leg's knee should be extended.

In volés, the free leg's knee flexes, but it is the last joint to move during the action.

Ankle

When bearing weight, the ankle joint's flexion automatically covaries with the knee joint.

- In front and side steps, during the transfer of weight, the sending leg's ankle joint should be fully extended as part of the control system of the step.
- In back steps, during the transfer of weight, with the receiving leg's knee fully extended in **extension**, ankle flexion of the receiving leg (which will step the last into the last) will pull the receiving leg's hip into correct position and flexion. In addition, some dancers like to flex the sending leg's ankle so as to push off with the heel of the last moment. Other dancers prefer to lift the sending leg's heel so that the aesthetic of the deweighting leg is a pointed toe.

During protection and in the air, the free leg's ankle should always be fully extended, to create the aesthetic of a pointed toe. Occasionally we flex the free leg's ankle as an **action**.

When pointed the ankle should not be rotated. Internal rotation of the ankle is called "sickler" and external rotation is called "winger".



As the free leg approaches and passes the base leg during a step, with the hip relaxing into slight internal rotation, the ankle relaxes into flexion.

Shoulder

The shoulder joint is the most complex joint in the body, with the most possibility for motion.

You can spend a lot of money with teachers telling you to "flex" your shoulders. This instruction is ineffective, because as soon as we start to concentrate, we tend to tense and lift the shoulders. Rather than trying not to perform an automatic reaction, a more functional instruction is to make an action: externally rotate your shoulders by gently contracting the shoulder-encircling muscles of the **scapular girdle**.



We will use the term **'Shoulder flexion'** to refer to changes in the angle between the arm and the body. The shoulders can flex vertically, moving the elbow upward in front or behind the body (vertical shoulder flexion), and they can flex **horizontally**, moving the elbow from left to right (lateral shoulder flexion).

When we are moving in the same direction as our partner, neither shoulder flexion should change.

The shoulder flexions are used for two types of **change of embrace**:

- We use vertical shoulder flexion to **open** and close the **embraces**.
- We use lateral shoulder flexion for **crossing** and **gyro** movements (**ambobambos**, **contra rebolas**, **contra volés** and **ganchos**).

Elbow

If the shoulders are externally rotated, the elbows should be pointed toward the floor.

Elbow flexion and extension are used for a third type of change of embrace which is to give permission for the **weight** movements, and

The elbows accommodate shoulder flexion slightly to accommodate many of different positions of the embrace. We prevent excess elbow flexion and extension by gently contracting the **biceps** muscle at all times. This keeps the **embrace joint** the **ground** so that we have perfect **connection** for communication.



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Ankle



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