

# The Merengue Side Basic

One step on every beat · side, close, side, close · change direction on 1 and 5

**Remember:** every count gets one step, with no pauses and no taps. Warm up by marching in place (leaders start left, followers start right). Keep your knees soft and your shoulders steady; the hip motion comes from bending and straightening your knees, not from twisting.

## Leader

| Count | Step  | Foot and direction                             |
|-------|-------|------------------------------------------------|
| Start | –     | Feet together, facing partner, weight on right |
| 1     | Side  | Left foot steps to the left                    |
| 2     | Close | Right closes beside left                       |
| 3     | Side  | Left foot steps to the left                    |
| 4     | Close | Right closes beside left                       |
| 5     | Side  | Right foot steps to the right                  |
| 6     | Close | Left closes beside right                       |
| 7     | Side  | Right foot steps to the right                  |
| 8     | Close | Left closes beside right                       |

## Follower

| Count | Step  | Foot and direction                            |
|-------|-------|-----------------------------------------------|
| Start | –     | Feet together, facing partner, weight on left |
| 1     | Side  | Right foot steps to the right                 |
| 2     | Close | Left closes beside right                      |
| 3     | Side  | Right foot steps to the right                 |
| 4     | Close | Left closes beside right                      |
| 5     | Side  | Left foot steps to the left                   |
| 6     | Close | Right closes beside left                      |
| 7     | Side  | Left foot steps to the left                   |
| 8     | Close | Right closes beside left                      |

## Your five-minute practice

- Minute 1:** play the slow practice track (90 beats per minute) and march in place, counting to eight out loud.
- Minutes 2-3:** dance your part of the side basic alone, no music. Say “side, close, side, close.”
- Minute 4:** dance along with the count-along video.
- Minute 5:** try the social-tempo track (116 beats per minute): two basics, eight counts of marching, two more basics.

## Check yourself

- Did I take one step on every count, with none skipped?
- Did I change direction on 1 and 5?
- Were my steps small, with no stomping or bouncing?
- Did my knees do the work instead of my hips?

## When it feels easy

- Try it with a partner in a light hold, eight basics in a row.
- Practice with a song from the guide’s list, like “Suavemente.”
- Ask Amy about turning as a couple and the underarm turn.