



Cha-Cha Evolution, Breaking on "2" & "6"

Skippy Blair © 1-92, Rev. 4-96, 4-98, 1-99, 12-02, 5/03, 12-06, 4-07, 3-11, 8-13

I've been teaching **CHA-CHA** over **55 years**. Like most teachers who were trained that long ago, I was taught Cha-Cha - Counting "**2-3 4&1**." **Even then, I knew something was not right about that Count.** Being a tap dancer, I knew for sure that there were 8 Beats of music in a Basic Step Pattern in Cha-Cha. **I soon started Counting: "2-3 - 4&5 - 6-7 - 8&1."**

I was **very proud** of my teaching capabilities and my students all **broke on "2" & "6" during class.** However, at the **Saturday Night Dances**, many of the dancers did their *Breaks* on *Count-1* or *Count-3*, as they dutifully counted (sometimes out loud) "2-3 4&1." I shared my experience with other teachers, many of whom felt that some people just can't ever learn to **BREAK ON 2** - except in class. **I have always believed that correct training produces correct dancing.** Even today, a very small percentage of Cha-Cha dancers actually break on "2" and "6" and many of those who do, seldom stay on the correct beat for the entire dance.

The "**Break-through**" came in **1989** with the GSDTA discovery of *Real Musical Count* – PLUS the *Dancers Count* – (*Rolling Count*). We launched an experimental class at **Sequoia Athletic Club in Buena Park, CA.** **Great News! Startling news! After only 6 classes**, (one hour, one night a week) **everyone** in that class could not only "**Break on "2" & "6"** but could observe when other dancers were off time. I was a bit embarrassed when beginner students pointed at dancers on the floor who were not breaking on the correct count. Our Staff spent that evening grabbing pointing fingers, saying "Please don't point - Just tell us what you see." They saw teachers and students alike - breaking on a variety of beats that were NOT the desired "2" or "6."

Rules of Music & Timing and Rules of Movement form the criteria for determining Authentic Musical Count in ANY dance. The *Real Count* for Cha-Cha is: "&a1 2 - 3 4 - &a5 6 - 7 8". That may sound strange if it is new to you, but believe me – it is for REAL – and it WORKS! The Man's Left foot **should almost always Break on Count "2"** and his Right foot should Break on *Count "6"*. The Lady Breaks on her Right foot on *Count "2"* and her Left foot on *Count "6"*.

All Cha-Cha music is 4/4 time. Cha-Cha is danced in four *2-Beat Rhythms*. Although Cha-Cha **BREAKS** on "**2" & "6"**, it is important **NOT** to accent the Breaks. The pulse (accent) in Cha-Cha is on "**1" & "5"**. *The difference in FEELING is day and night.*

Prediction Gone Wrong!!!

In 1989, Skippy predicted that **by the year 2000**, EVERY Dance Teacher in the world would have discovered *Real Count* - simply because it is the **ONLY** method that **works 100% of the time, with EVERYONE!**

2014 Note: Well - She was wrong! She should have paid attention to statistics. Statistics show that it takes 15 to 20 YEARS for any **serious discovery** to become accepted as standard! In 1995 GSDTA started a campaign – hoping that EVERYONE would start using authentic Count! I guess we have a few years yet to go.

Musical Count: (&)"a1", Break on "2" - Step on "3" – Step on "4"-
(&)"a5", Break on "6" - Step on "7" – Step on "8".

Weight changes occur on EACH of the following counts: "a1 2 - 3 4 - a5 6 - 7 8"

When **CALLING** the count out-loud - always **SAY the "&"counts, because those "&" counts fill a time space.** Without saying the "&" count, your performance (or teaching session) will be slightly rushed and slightly off time. .

Starter Steps for Cha-Cha: Several ways are acceptable

#1. 4-BEAT STARTER STEP: "Side-Left & Back-Right" for the Leader on *Counts* "5 6" - then simply finish the pattern with **Forward Left** on "7" and **Side Right** on "8" of the Music. The "5 6 - 7 8" in the Music has now become a **4-Beat Starter Step**. Each new pattern now starts on "&a1" of each Set of 8. The man's **Left Break** will always be on **Count "2"** and his **Right Break** on **Count "6"**. This **8-Beat** pattern of the dance matches the **8-Beat Mini-phrase** in the music. It is incredible! Once you see this written out on the *Social Dance Chart*, the whole process becomes evident - and EASY.

#2. GSDTA RECOMMENDS (For professional's performance): From closed dance position, the Leader does a gentle "**Side Left Check - in Place, Break Forward**" - on **Counts &"a1 2"** - **Leading the Follower to do a Side check on the "a" count on her Right foot and break back on her Right foot on "2", to start the first pattern.** This puts the man forward on his *Left Foot* on *Count "2"*. This is a more professional entry, but the Starter Step is also very easy and technically correct.

#3. ACCEPTABLE START: Many advanced dancers prefer lifting the **CPB** of the body up while pressing the right foot down on **Count "1"**, allowing the left foot to break forward on **Count "2"**. That works, but is not as professional looking as #2.

By isolating any step pattern - in any dance - and separating each pattern into separate "**2-Beat Dance Rhythms**" - you will learn more about that dance than you ever dreamed possible. It's exciting! Counting out the **8 Beats of music in Cha-Cha** allows the dancer to hear the complete *Mini-phrase*. *Count-2* and *Count-6* fall within each "**8-Beat Mini-phrase**". **Dancing on time - ALL of the time - is certainly preferable to simply being able to START on time.**

Listen to the music. Count: "1 2 - 3 4 - 5 6 - 7 8". Those 8 Beats will fall in the same place EVERY time you play the music. Cha-Cha dance patterns are danced in **8-Beat** patterns. (A Routine is multiples of 8). It is important for the music and the dance to match the 8 Beats in the music. When even ONE couple on the floor is dancing on the correct beat of the music, the other dancers frequently look off time - and **certainly will always look off phrase**.

NOTE: If I call out a Rolling Count for an "8-Beat" pattern in Cha-Cha - the Verbal "Call" must include the "&-Count" - even when there is no weight change- Full "Rolling Count" - "&a1 &a2 - &a3 &a4 - &a5 &a6 - &a7 &a8"

Verbal "Call" for the LEAD - Side Basic:

&Together Side &Break Forward - &a Back &a Side - &Together Side &Break Back - &a Forward &a Side.

Reminder: HE breaks on his left foot on "2" - Right foot on "6"

SHE: breaks on her Right foot on "2" and Left foot on "6"

Count:	&a1	2	3	4	&a5	6	7	8
Rhythm Pattern:	●●	●	-	●	●	-	●●	●
Leader Direction:	TS	F	B	S	TS	B	F	S
Foot:	LR	L	R	L	RL	R	L	R