

# Clog Dancer's Beginner Handbook

A step by step guide to learning  
The basic steps of  
Appalachian Clog Dancing

- ◆ A brief history of Clog Dancing
- ◆ How to get started
- ◆ The Basic Steps of Clog Dancing

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# WHAT IS CLOGGING

The word "clog" is Gaelic for "time" (Gaelic is an ancient Irish and Scottish dialect). Clog dancing therefore is "time dancing" with the heel being the timekeeper.

Clogging is a true American folk dance whose roots are buried in the heart of the Appalachian Mountains which run through the Eastern States of Georgia, Tennessee, North Carolina, Kentucky and Virginia.

In the mid 1700's large numbers of Scottish, English, Irish and German immigrants settled in the Appalachians, bringing with them their traditional folk dances.

Clogging of old was done impromptu to foot-tapping blue grass music that also has its roots in the Appalachians. As clogging moved out of the mountains to the flatlands, special taps were added to give the dance it's distinctive sound.

**MUSIC:** Clogging is performed to a wide variety of music ranging from country through rock, pop and rap. Initially the music is fairly slow but as dancers become more proficient, it can become quite fast.

**CUES/CALLS:** Clogging is cued similar to square dancing or aerobics, therefore dancers learn "steps" not routines.

**SHOES:** Any comfortable shoes may be worn to class and as cloggers progress in their lessons taps are bought and added to shoes to produce the distinctive clogging sound.

**PARTNERS:** No partner is required for clogging which means you may learn at your own pace without affecting anyone else.

**People of any age can learn to clog, and no previous dance experience is necessary. Clogging is great exercise and fun for everyone.**

# How to Get Started

Appalachian clogging is a rhythmic dance that accompanies the downbeat, or bass beat, of the music. Take a moment to listen to a hoedown and tap your feet or clap your hands to the downbeat of the music.

Starting with your left foot, begin stepping in place to the downbeat of the music. Don't march, just relax and step comfortably to the music as if you are a part of it. As you step in place, step onto the full length of the foot in one movement. Place the entire foot flat on the floor producing a simultaneous click with the toe and heel, while flexing the knee. Now add a kick to your step. Keep stepping on the downbeat, but let your feet come out in front of you and kick forward before you step - like a tin soldier, but less rigid.

<b>KICK</b>	<b>STEP</b>	<b>KICK</b>	<b>STEP</b>	<b>KICK</b>	<b>STEP</b>	<b>KICK</b>	<b>STEP</b>
<b>L</b>	<b>L</b>	<b>R</b>	<b>R</b>	<b>L</b>	<b>L</b>	<b>R</b>	<b>R</b>
<b>&amp;</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>&amp;</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>&amp;</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>&amp;</b>	<b>4</b>

You're seeing this sequence as it would be written on a "Cue Sheet". A cue sheet is a diagram of the steps and timing of a step or dance. The words or abbreviations on the top line explain the foot movement, the L & R tell you on which foot you perform the movement, and the numbers along the bottom tell you on which beat of the music you will perform the step. We will learn more about cue sheets and movement notations as we go along. Cue sheets will become very important tools in remembering steps and learning new dances as you become more confident in your clogging.

Now kick forward with the left foot, then step in place three times, like the cue below describes:

<b>KICK</b>	<b>STEP</b>	<b>STEP</b>	<b>STEP</b>
<b>L</b>	<b>L</b>	<b>R</b>	<b>L</b>
<b>&amp;</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>&amp;</b>	<b>2</b>

It's easy, just think KICK 1, 2, 3. Kick and three steps. Remember that the first step will occur on the downbeat - or bass beat - of the music. Practice the step a few times to get the feel of it then try KICK 1, 2, 3 on starting with the right foot. Now alternate feet and practice with some slow music with a steady beat:

KICK 1, 2, 3... KICK 1, 2, 3... Relax and feel the music.

You've just learned the beginning of the BASIC STEP of clogging!

# The Basic Steps of Clog Dancing

## The Double-Toe

The Double-toe sound is what will really make you feel like you're clogging. People have explained the double-toe sound as "kicking a rock" or "getting the gum off of your shoe". We're going to take a little looser approach to the double-toe sound.

Let's go back to the KICK STEP that you already know. As you do this, your foot comes forward with the kick and then steps down. We're going to turn this kick into a double-toe.

Standing on your right foot, relax your left toe and bring your foot forward - letting your toe brush the floor as it goes forward and making a sound. Now let your toe brush the floor as it goes back, making a second sound – don't step on this foot yet. This is a DOUBLE-TOE. Brush forward and back = Double-Toe. Now that your foot has done a double-toe, step on the left foot and get your right foot free. Repeat the same action on your right foot. Brush the toe forward and back, then step. You've just done a DOUBLE-TOE STEP.

<b>DOUBLE-TOE</b>	<b>STEP</b>	<b>DOUBLE-TOE</b>	<b>STEP</b>
<b>L</b>	<b>L</b>	<b>R</b>	<b>R</b>
<b>&amp;a</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>&amp;a</b>	<b>2</b>

Now try it with the music. A good way to get started is to go back to the KICK STEP, KICK STEP. Keep going and establish the beat. Now as you kick out, relax your toe and let it brush the floor as you kick and brush it back. This will allow you to do the double-toe in place of the kick.

# The Basic Step

Now that you have learned the Double-Toe Step, let's add two more steps to it:

<b>DOUBLE-TOE</b>	<b>STEP</b>	<b>STEP</b>	<b>STEP</b>
<b>L</b>	<b>L</b>	<b>R</b>	<b>L</b>
<b>&amp;a</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>&amp;</b>	<b>2</b>

A great way to work into this is to return to KICK 1, 2, 3 and slowly add the double-toe in place of the kick.

PRACTICE, PRACTICE, PRACTICE!

Now let's learn how to style the step. Step as before with your left foot, then on the ball of your right foot put your foot back just a little and put your weight back onto it, - this is a ROCK - then step on your left foot again.

<b>STEP</b>	<b>ROCK</b>	<b>STEP</b>
<b>L</b>	<b>R</b>	<b>L</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>&amp;</b>	<b>2</b>

The STEP ROCK STEP is the same as 1, 2, 3.

The big leap... put it all together:

<b>DOUBLE-TOE</b>	<b>STEP</b>	<b>ROCK</b>	<b>STEP</b>
<b>L</b>	<b>L</b>	<b>R</b>	<b>L</b>
<b>&amp;a</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>&amp;</b>	<b>2</b>

Try alternating feet. You're doing the BASIC STEP of clogging!

Remember, if you're having trouble, always go back to the simplest form and build on it. Start with a KICK 1, 2, 3 then add the DOUBLE-TOE in place of the kick, ROCK back on the 2nd step of 1, 2, 3 and you've got it!

# The 8 Basic Movements of Appalachian Clogging

Three movements occur on the downbeat (or base beat) of the music:

HEEL SLIDE STEP

Five movements occur on the upbeat of the music:

BRUSH DOUBLE TOE DRAG ROCK TOE

## ABBREVIATIONS OF STEP DESCRIPTIONS AND MOVEMENTS USED ON CUE SHEETS

Br BRUSH  
DS DOUBLE STEP  
(F) FRONT  
H HEEL  
L LEFT  
(OTS) OUT TO SIDE  
R RIGHT  
RS ROCK STEP  
S STEP  
(XIF) CROSS IN FRONT  
(XIB) CROSS IN BACK

## The TRIPLE, FANCY DOUBLE, CHAIN and CLOGOVER VINE

Now, using the abbreviations we've just learned, follow the cues for a BASIC, TRIPLE, FANCY DOUBLE, CHAIN and CLOGOVER VINE.

BASIC

DS RS

L RL

&a1 &2

TRIPLE

DS DS DS RS

L R L RL

&a1 &a2 &a3 &4

## FANCY DOUBLE

<u>DS</u>	<u>DS</u>	<u>RS</u>	<u>RS</u>
L	R	LR	LR
&a1	&a2	&3	&4

## CHAIN

<u>DS</u>	<u>RS</u>	<u>RS</u>	<u>RS</u>
L	RL	RL	RL
&a1	&2	&3	&4

## CLOGOVER VINE

(OTS)	(XIF)	(OTS)	(XIB)	(OTS)	(XIF)			
<u>DS</u>	<u>DS</u>	<u>DS</u>	<u>DS</u>	<u>DS</u>	<u>DS</u>	<u>DS</u>	<u>RS</u>	(This step moves to the left)
L	R	L	R	L	R	L	RL	
&a1	&a2	&a3	&a4	&a5	&a6	&a7	&8	

All the above steps have used 3 movements of the 8 basic movements:  
A Double Toe, Step and Rock.

# BRUSHES

A BRUSH in clogging is the brushing of the ball of the foot in any given direction.

Let's learn a BRUSH. Stand on your left foot. With your right knee straight, brush the ball of your right foot forward. Now bend your right knee and bring your right leg up - keeping the lower leg parallel to the left leg. As you bend the right knee, the weight is on the left foot, so lift the left heel up so the weight is on the left ball, then drop the heel to the floor with a tap sound. We are going to do a Double Step before the Brush. This is called a BRUSH UP.

## BRUSH UP

	(F)	
<u>DS</u>	<u>Br</u>	<u>H</u>
L	R	L
&a1	&	2

Many steps in clogging are built by putting the various movements together. A good example is a ROCKING CHAIR. Starting on the left foot, do a BRUSH UP, then on the right foot do a BASIC.

### ROCKING CHAIR

	(F)			
DS	Br	H	DS	RS
L	R	L	R	LR
&a1	&	2	&a3	&4

If you look at the movement of your body as you do this step, you will see why it is called a ROCKING CHAIR.

Another step to try is the TRIPLE BRUSH.

### TRIPLE BRUSH

			(F)	
DS	DS	DS	Br	H
L	R	L	R	L
&a1	&a2	&a3	&	4

All the above steps have used 5 movements of the 8 basic movements. A Double Toe, Step, Rock, Brush and Heel.