

Basic movements and terms for salsa

Roly teaches the terms in Spanish with the names used in Havana. The idea is that it will then be easier for people to take part in a salsa class, even in Cuba - or Sweden, or anywhere.

Here, however, the terms are explained in English because we have been asked to:

Dance position: Keep your face close to your partner's face, the feet may be farther. The heads of the couple are always closer to each other than the center of gravity of the feet. That is, lean forward just slightly, the arms are never stretched straight (no elastic band like in many other dances), a small bend in the hips, knees and ankles = as if you were going to sit down. Here are a few pictures about the salsa position:



1. Roly's forward leaning position is clearly visible in the mirror. 2. Even when turning, your face stays close to your partner's. 3. When dancing you stay down, as if you were going to sit down. 4. Even in pausa, the position is a slightly bent forward

The man always starts with the left foot, the woman always with the right, one step on every beat except beats 4 and 8, they are pauses (one-two-three-pause-five-six-seven-pause).

Dile que no (say no to her) = **open the pair** i.e. the man leads the woman past himself on the left side, then he turns 180 degrees and lets go of her left hand. Dile que no is used at the end of EVERY turn.

Dance Papi explains it pretty thoroughly in the video below.

After that (and always when the couple is in an open dance position) the man's left foot goes backwards on one and the right foot forward on five = backward-forward (i.e. the opposite directions compared to when the pair is in a closed position. Help for remembering: when the woman's left hand is on the man's shoulder he goes forward with the left foot and backward with the right).

In the open position, the pair thus creates a mirror pattern = both step back one by one and forward by five (the man dodges slightly by stepping with his right foot forward but outside the woman's foot so as not to trample on the woman's toes). On five you do "give me five". This pattern is called **pausa** by some and **guapea** by others. It has many names. Roly only says **forward and back** (in a closed position, he says back and forth, so he always indicates the direction of the leader's steps).

Remember that only in pausado the back steps go straight back, otherwise the back step will turn a little so that the hind leg goes a little behind the other foot (feet as if an upside down letter T).

The steps should be kept short, otherwise you will not have time when the music is faster.

Anyway: The faster the music,

- the shorter the steps,
- the more you should lean forward and
- the more you should bend (bent knees and ankles).

After the dile que no can come either

a) **Pausa**

b) **Dile que si** (say yes to her) = woman under the hand, she turns around and the couple gets back into closed position. The woman steps backwards on 1, goes back on 2-3, then on 5-6-7 she turns right under the arm, and after that the pair is in a closed position.

For a man dile que si = step backwards on 1, get back on 2-3, raise your left arm and guide the woman around (= "stir"!). Man's feet 5-backwards, 6-7 get back. After 7, take your couple into a closed position. Start the next beat one with your left forward (forward-backward). Dile que si is used for going from open to closed position.

or

c) **enchufla** (change of place)

Here (as always in salsa) it is important to keep the weight in front, i.e. even if your foot steps backwards (that happens always on beats 1 and 5), the upper body stays in front, close to the pair (otherwise it drops out of pace).

Woman: No 1 backward with your right, 2 forward and turn left 90 degrees (Roly says towards the bar). Number 3 step with your right foot down to the side about 30 cm away (i.e. legs should not be together), number 5 step backwards with your left foot and steps 6-7 forward, close to the pair so that you finish facing each other and you move on to a closed position. Now the couple will have switched places.

Man: 1 backward with your left, 2 forward with your right + at the same time, turn 90 degrees (Roly said towards the window), 3 put your left foot down on the side about 30 cm away, that is, keep your feet slightly apart. The man raises his left arm up and directs the woman to pass under the arm in front of him (the woman's back is towards the man), step 5 with the left foot steps to the back and 6-7 forward close to the partner, facing each other and then you move back to a closed position.

Immediately after the enchufla, a dile que no is always made, i.e. you open the couple again. This is necessary because all patterns start from the open position.

Caminala (means "Make her walk")

The same as Dile que no but do not open the position at the end, but stay in a closed position. This is often done twice, so the man turns a total of 180 + 180 degrees and the woman walks half a turn + half a turn around the man and thus the couple ends up in the same place where they started.

Here are some videos you can check out:

Dile que no:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jexcy9LGKjo>

Guapea = Pausa = back and forth:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YwxB1MSytYA>

Dile que no and dile que si:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pUAeshPna68>

No need to open so much that you go completely side by side, can very well stay almost opposite. It's a matter of style. In the US, couples open so much that they go side by side, in Cuba often less.

In Dile que si also the couple does not usually change places. You will later learn that Cuban salsa rotates, meaning both move clockwise all the time. This video is an example of that.

Enchufla:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3tUcawE0Bhs>

In this video, the dance position (a slight forward leaning like Matti Nykänen, arms never fully straightened) is well visible. Admittedly, the dancers make a tap step with 4 and 8. You can then do it later by first learning the basics.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4Q_fnhxsQL4

You can find slow rehearsal music on YouTube, for example, if you search for “Slow salsa”.