

How to Read a Dance Pattern

By Marisa Kahn

December 2021

What is a pattern?

A “pattern” is often referred to in two ways.

You’ll likely hear both at practice:

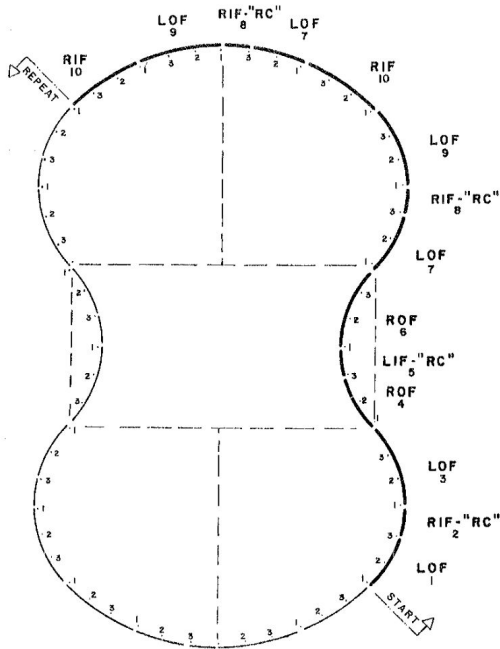
1) Don’t know your dance? Go look at the pattern.

- This refers to the dance diagram + reference sheet
- In this case, **pattern = diagram**, which is what we’re analysing in this slideshow

2) Your steps are in the wrong place. Make your pattern larger/smaller.

- This refers to the amount of space you are taking on the floor; i.e. the size of your dance
- In this case, **pattern = size**

GLIDE WALTZ



9-1-89

**G
L
I
D
E
W
A
L
T
Z**

These look a bit overwhelming at first glance, don't they?

Not to worry! Let's break down the pattern, little by little. We will do an example for Glide Waltz, a dance that most (if not all) beginners learn.

We will start with Glide Waltz. See the informational sheet and pattern below:

GLIDE WALTZ

GLIDEWALTZ

Music: Waltz 3/4; Counting 1-2-3
 Tempo: 108 beats per minute
 Position: Side "B" or Solo
 Pattern: Set
 Axis: 45-90 degrees

OPENING
 The dance starts on count 1 of a measure of music. The first step must be either step 1, or step 7 of the first corner sequence (if more than one corner sequence is used). The opening steps must be either 12 or 24 beats of music in duration.

DANCE NOTES
 Steps #1 through #6 make up a barrier lobe and center lobe for one straightaway sequence of this dance. The rockover between steps #3 and #4 occurs at the baseline as does the rockover between steps #6 and #7.
 Steps #7 through #10 make up one corner sequence of this dance.
 On some skating surfaces skaters may be able to use only one corner sequence, while on larger surfaces it may be advisable to use two or more corner sequences.
 The take-off for step #10 is made in the "parallel and" position. It should conform to the general curve of the corner.
 Every step must take the floor in the "parallel and" position.
 The Raised Chassé must:

- 1) be placed in the "parallel and" position
- 2) change feet
- 3) the free foot is then raised vertically from the floor
- 4) the free foot then takes the floor in the "parallel and" position and proceeds in the direction of travel

The baseline of this dance applies to the center lobe edges. Step #6 begins at the top of the center lobe. When two corner sequences are used, step #9 of the second corner sequence begins at the top of the continuous barrier lobe.

94

GLIDE WALTZ

95

Music: Waltz 3/4; Counting 1-2-3
 Tempo: 108 beats per minute
 Position: Side "B" or Solo
 Pattern: Set
 Axis: 45-90 degrees

Print out these pages, you'll need them at practice!

We will look at the top of the informational sheet first.

Music:	Waltz 3/4; Counting 1-2-3
Tempo:	108 beats per minute
Position:	Side "B" or Solo
Pattern:	Set
Axis:	45-90 degrees

This tells us important information regarding the dance. Make a note of the "Music" and "Tempo."

As the title of the dance itself says, The Glide Waltz is considered a "Waltz" in $\frac{3}{4}$ time. The music has a count of 3, with each downbeat (heaviest beat) being beat 1.

The tempo tells us how many beats are in a minute (108 for Glide Waltz). More beats in a minute means each individual beat is quicker, while fewer beats in a minute means each individual beat is held out for longer.

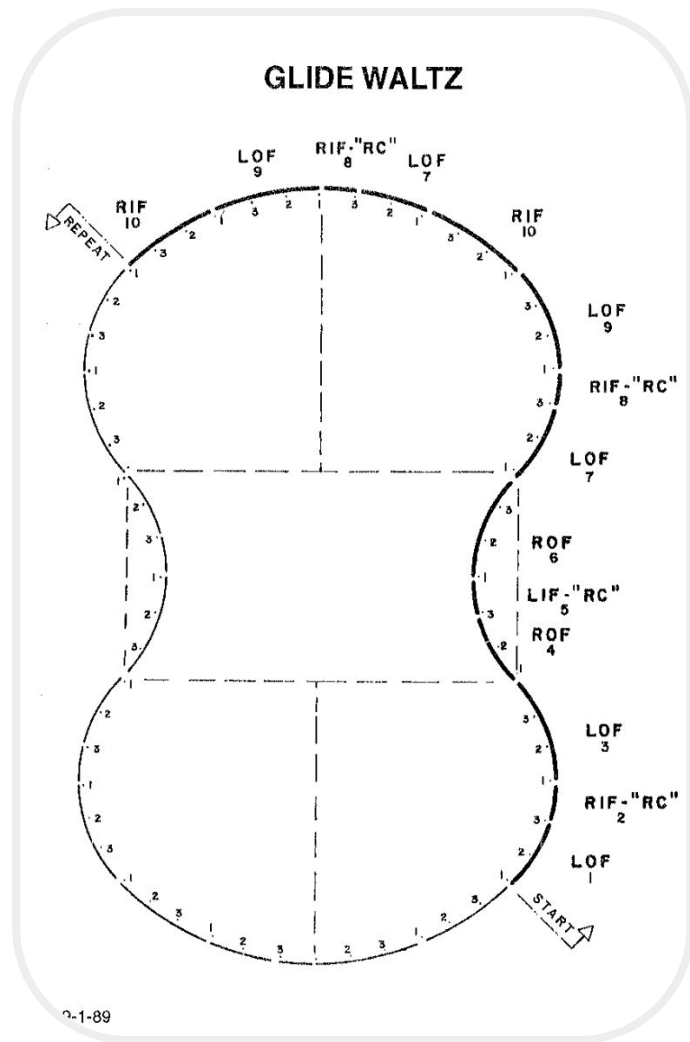
**At this point, listen to the
Glide Waltz music. Can you
identify the downbeats
(beat 1)? Try counting out
loud “1, 2, 3” to match the
music while the it is playing.**

Now let's take a look at the pattern itself.

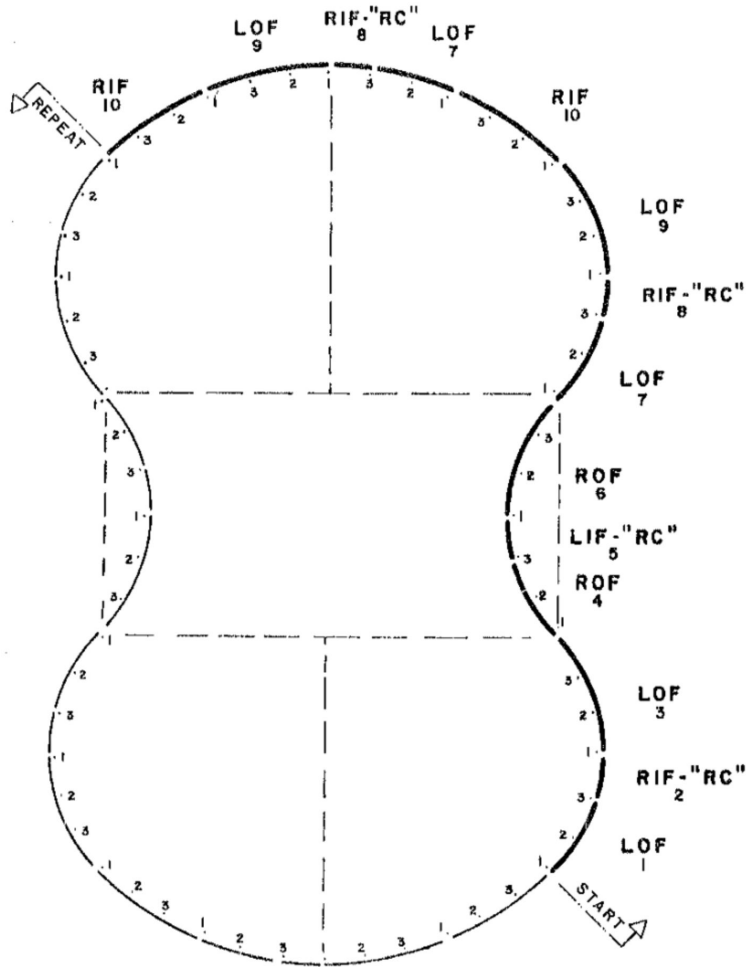
So many abbreviations and dashed lines!

- The outer dashed lines represent the shape of the dance. The Glide Waltz has one center lobes and is peanut-shaped.
- The long vertical line running from top to bottom is the long axis. It divides the rink into equal halves along its longest point.
- The dashed-lined rectangular box at the center of the pattern represents a baseline for dance step placement.

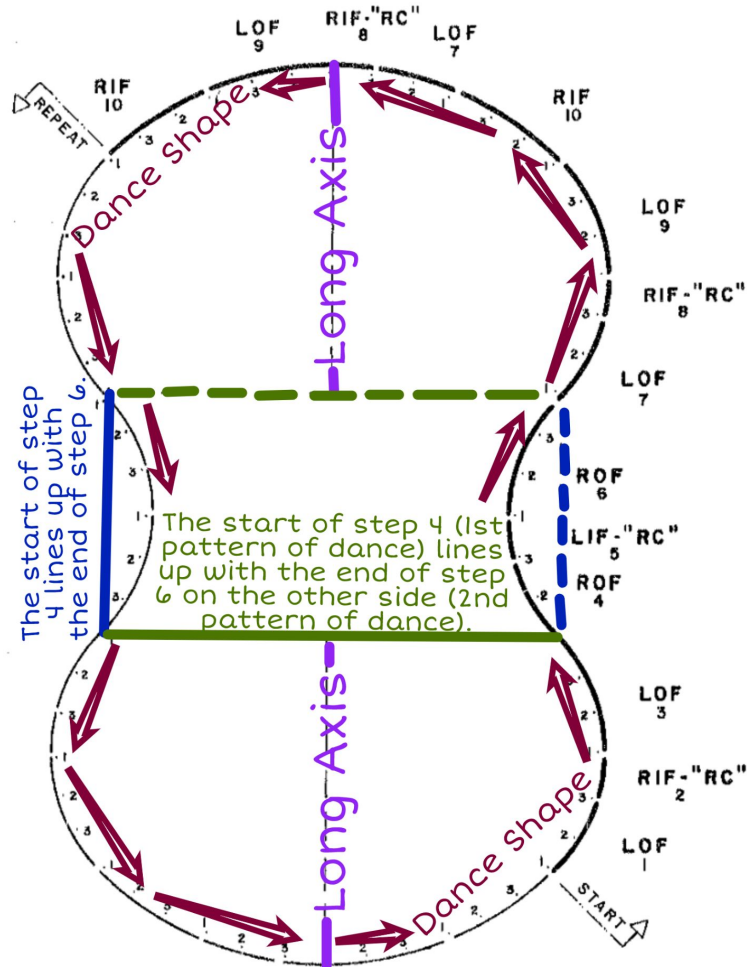
See the following slide.



GLIDE WALTZ



GLIDE WALTZ



Let's tackle the abbreviations...

Each step consists of a combination of three or more letters and a step number directly underneath of it.

Depending on the step, it may have an additional abbreviation before or after the "base" three letters.

The "base" three letters:

1st letter: either "R" for right foot, or "L" for left foot

2nd letter: either "O" for outer/outer edge or "I" for inner/inner edge

3rd letter: either "F" for forward or "B" for backward

Abbreviations (cont'd)

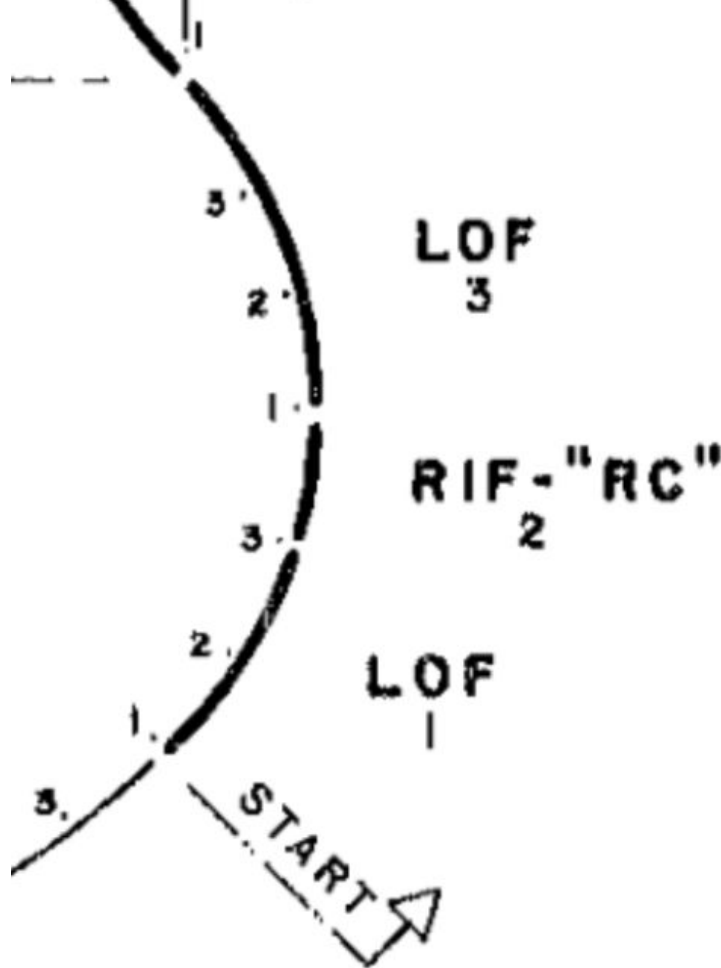
The first 3 steps of the
Glide Waltz so far:

1: Left Outer Forward

2: Right Innner Forward

3: Left Outer Forward

Note that step 2 has the
abbreviation "RC" next to it.



Abbreviations (cont'd)

In dances, there are other steps besides pushing on a given foot and edge. Glide Waltz's step 2 "RC" is an example of this.

RC = raised chasse ⇒ in AND position, the free skate is raised straight up and placed down in the parallel (AND) position. No power is generated in this step.

So, the Glide Waltz steps would be the following:

1: Left Outer Forward

2: Right Inner Forward, raised chasse

3: Left Outer Forward

This means that on step 2, the left skate is lifted from the AND position, and the right skate is employed on the inner edge.

Abbreviations (cont'd)

Besides RC, there are other abbreviations. Here is a list and a brief description of each step:

RC = raised chasse ⇒ in AND position, the free skate is raised straight up and placed down in AND position

DC = drop chasse (slice) ⇒ from AND position, free skate is pointed in directly in front

S = swing ⇒ (moving forwards) after push behind, swing free leg to front; (moving backwards) after push to front, swing free leg behind

XF = cross in front ⇒ cross free leg over employed skate (becomes new employed skate)

XB = cross behind ⇒ cross free leg behind employed skate (becomes new employed skate)

Keep these abbreviations in mind, as they will be applied to many dances going forward!

A full list of these can be found on pg 23 of the [USARS Integrated Roller Figure Skating Dictionary Combining Previous Dance, Figure and Free Skating Dictionaries](#) (The attached link is a PDF download of the book updated as of 2021; you can also do a web search on the title and it should pop up.)

Only the most common are listed on the previous slide, but you will see other abbreviations not listed in some dances.

Glide Waltz Steps 1-6

With all this in mind, we know that the first 3 steps are as follows:

1: Left Outer Forward

2: Right Inner Forward, raised chasse

3: Left Outer Forward

Let's tackle steps 4-6!

4: ROF = right outer forward

5: LIF - "RC" = left inner forward, raised chasse

6: ROF = right outer forward

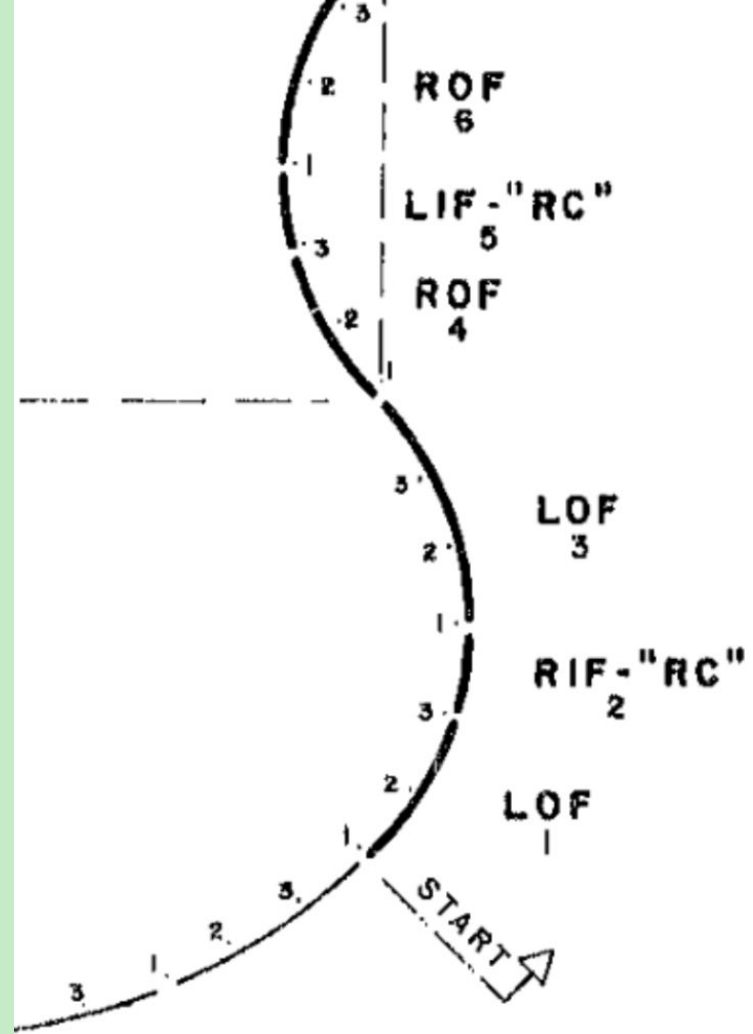
Note that there is a change in direction at step 4. We shift from staying on edges driving us counter-clockwise to edges moving us clockwise.

See the following slide for pattern reference.

Glide Waltz Pattern

Steps 1-6

There is a change in direction between steps 3 and 4 - steps 1-3 go towards the center of the rink, steps 4-6 go away from the center (towards the wall)



Glide Waltz Steps 7-10

With our knowledge of the abbreviations, let's tackle the next few steps:

7: LOF = Left Outer Forward

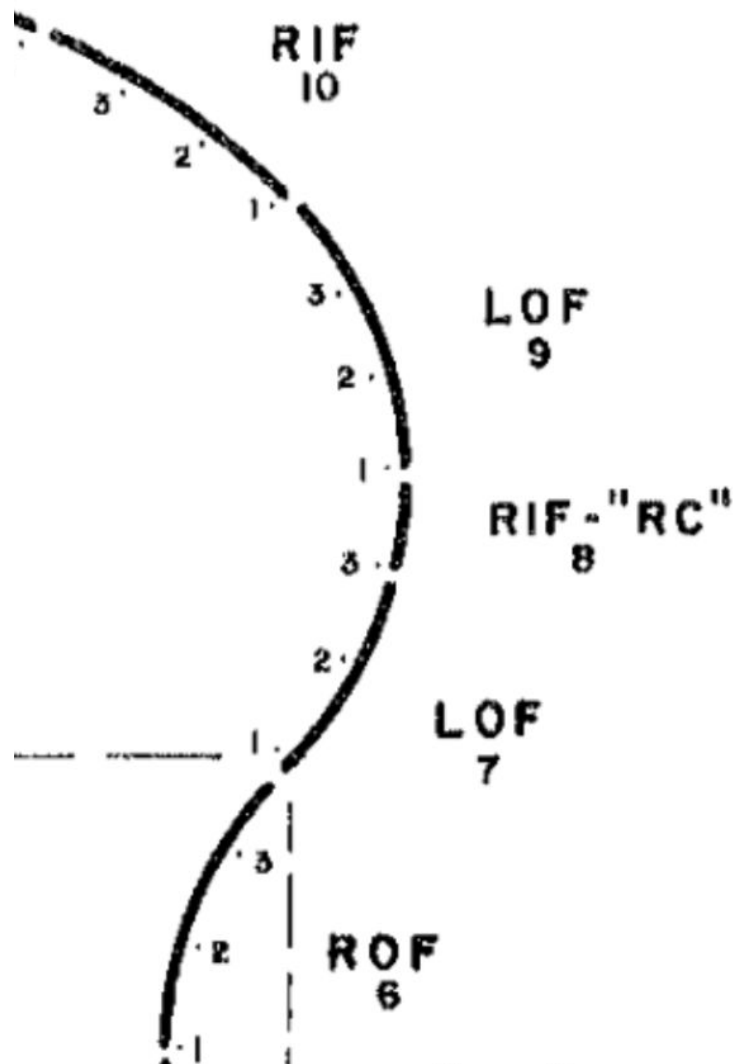
8: RIF - "RC" = Right Inner Forward, raised chasse

9: LOF = Left Outer Forward

10: RIF = Right Inner Forward

in the Glide Waltz, step 10 is a "hold" step, representing the "Glide" motion

When learning these steps, you'll likely hear it as "push, chasse, push, hold"

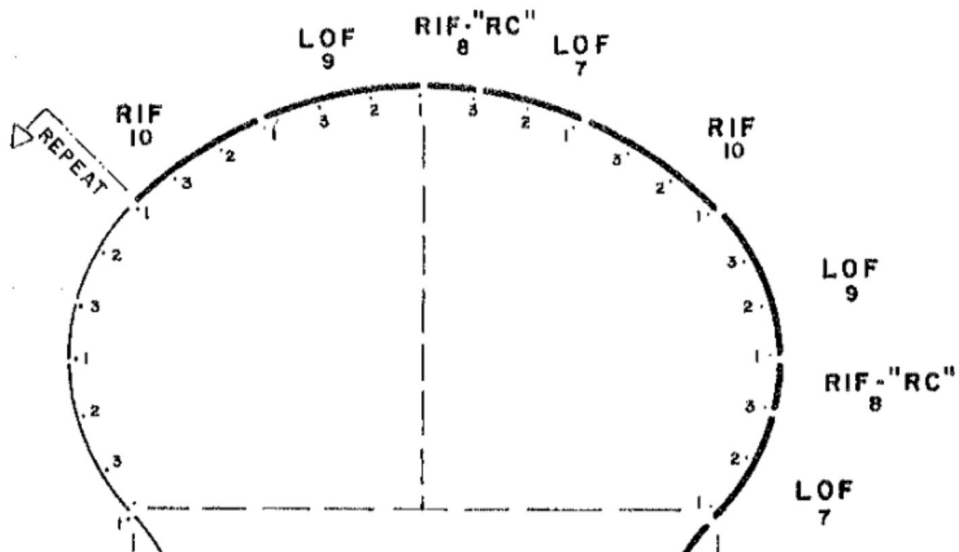


Glide Waltz Steps 7-10 (cont'd)

The idea of “push, chasse, push, hold” is repeated again to finish the dance (note how the numbers 7-10 are repeated on the pattern).

You’ve now learned how to read the individual steps of a dance pattern, particularly the Glide Waltz!

GLIDE WALTZ



Oh, the complexities of timing!

Knowing the steps isn't all that makes up a dance. We need to put the dance to music!

So... How exactly do we do that? How do we know how long to hold each step?
What type of music do I skate this dance to?

Glide Waltz Music

Remember looking at this on Slide 4? Take a good look at it again:

Music:	Waltz 3/4; Counting 1-2-3
Tempo:	108 beats per minute
Position:	Side "B" or Solo
Pattern:	Set
Axis:	45-90 degrees

The first two lines ("Music" and "Tempo") tell you **information on what to skate the dance to**. Every dance has this section on at the top of the informational sheet that accompanies the pattern.

From this we know:

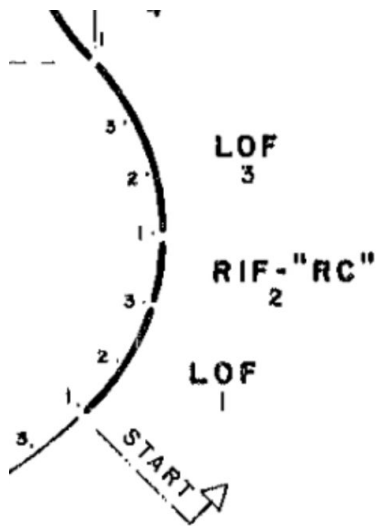
- Glide Waltz is skated to waltz music (what a surprise!)
- The waltz music has a count of 3. The heaviest beat will be beat 1, and two more beats will follow it before another beat 1.
- The tempo of the waltz music used is 108 beats per minute.

Glide Waltz Timing

We know *what* the music we skate Glide Waltz to is, but how do we skate *to* the music?

Let's take a look at steps 1-3:

(push,
chasse,
push)



Do you see the numbers on the left side of the line tracing? (On Glide Waltz, they are 1, 2, 3)

These represent the **start of beats of music.**

- "1" represents the start of beat 1 of music
- "2" represents the start of beat 2 of music
- "3" represents the start of beat 3 of music

Glide Waltz Timing (cont'd)

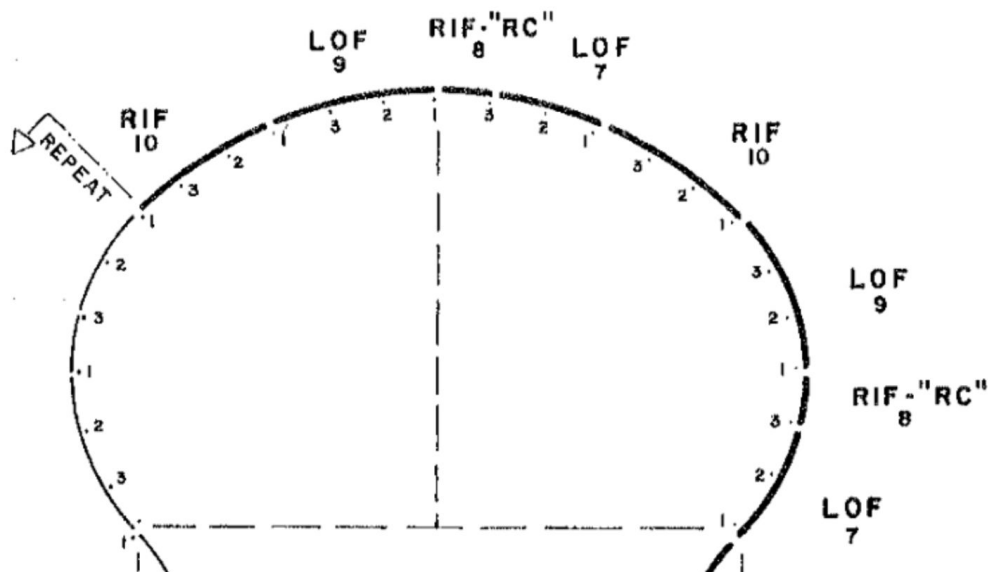
In steps 7-9, the normal 2-1-3 beat pattern holds, but step 10 is an additional 3-beat hold. (push, chasse, push, hold)

Step 7 is held for **2 beats**. (push)

Step 8 is held for **1 beat**. (chasse)

Step 9 is held for **3 beats**. (push)

Step 10 is held for **3 beats**. (hold)



The Little Details

Generally for most dances, the following applies (unless otherwise stated in the dance notes):

- On pushes, **dig your toe wheel and point it** - it looks more elegant and gives you power.
- For all steps (pushes, swings, DCs, etc.), make sure you **hold the step for the entire count** - for example, don't bring your foot back in after pushing in anticipation of the next step; hold that push until the very last second before your next push.
- Ensure your **steps follow the baseline(s) (see slide 8)/have the correct placement on the floor.** - this applies to all dances.

The Little Details - Glide Waltz Specifically

- Chasse steps:
 1. All the chasse steps (RC) are parallel to the long axis (with an exception of end step 8, which is perpendicular to the long axis). (See pattern)
 - Note that step 2 is done before the short axis, and step 8 (end step) is done before the long axis (see pattern).
 2. Do not begin turning into/out of the lobe until after the RC
 3. Do a strong push (3 beats) with a deep edge after the RC to ensure you can get in and out of the center lobe.

The Little Details – Glide Waltz Specifically (cont'd)

- “Glide” steps:
 - Step 10 is a glide step (hence the name “Glide Waltz). This means that from AND position, the free skate is taken straight back. No power comes from this step.

*When in doubt, always refer back to the
dance pattern and dance notes.*