



# Thrilling dances

Has your husband-to-be got two left feet? Don't worry – help is at hand with *Cosmo Bride*

Once upon a time, a couple's first dance would be little more than an awkward shuffle. The bride would grimace with each toe crushed, while the groom could be heard counting the beat under his breath. Nobody gave it much thought; the idea of practising – let alone having lessons – was laughable.

How times have changed! Now couples want to do something a bit 'different' on their big day with fascinating results (including some very interesting shapes being thrown to the likes of MC Hammer and Michael Jackson). Here at *Cosmo Bride*, we just loved the *Thriller* dance seen on YouTube ([www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com)) where several members of the wedding party broke into a fabulous routine to the Jacko classic (see left).

And while dancing in sumo suits or body popping (yes, these have happened) might not be quite your thing, it's worth giving some serious thought to what you would like to do on the day. Here's *Cosmo Bride's* guide to looking fabulous on the dance floor – whatever moves you're busting.

**GET YOUR MAN ON SIDE** Most men have an aversion to dancing – it may be the fear of looking like their dad or that our generation never learnt to dance in

pairs like our parents did. Whatever the reason, it's likely your fiancé will be reluctant about strutting his stuff in front of his nearest and dearest. The earlier you warm him up to the idea, the better – especially if you're planning to foist the *Flashdance* routine on him. Reassure him it'll be less embarrassing if you're prepared, and point out that dancing involves lots of physical contact. Chances are, he'll end up enjoying himself!

## GET SOME PROFESSIONAL HELP

Whether you're planning a showstopper or simply don't want your toes trodden on, it's a good idea to get some dance lessons. Beth and David Simpson had group dancing lessons for seven months before their wedding. "Our lessons were in our village hall and it was well worth it," says Beth. "We learnt the basics of jive, cha-cha-cha, waltz, foxtrot, tango and rumba." The couple then chose to do jive to Billy Ocean's *Love Really Hurts Without You* for their first dance.

Adam Gardner and Gemma Rogers, owners of First Dance UK (see over), a company that specialises in wedding dance lessons, recommend that couples start planning their dance around 10 to 12 weeks before their big day. "We choreograph rather

## Celebrity first dances...

- \* **Marcia Cross & Tom Mahoney** *At Last* by Etta James
- \* **Katie Holmes & Tom Cruise** *Songbird* by Fleetwood Mac
- \* **Cheryl Tweedy & Ashley Cole** *Stay With You* by John Legend (live)

than teach people to dance," says Adam. "Learning to dance can take months and you learn a particular style, but choreography blends different styles to form a routine to your chosen song."

Many dance studios recommend having five one-hour lessons before your wedding. Private lessons are often on a one-to-one basis with a coach who will take into account your song choice and how well you can dance. If lessons aren't within your budget, try practising to a DVD at home. *First Dance Fever*, £15.99 at [www.dances4u.co.uk](http://www.dances4u.co.uk), features three routines (including in-depth tuition for the waltz and salsa dances).

**BE PROPERLY ATTIRED** Before you decide on a dance style, consider what kind of dress and shoes you'll be wearing – you might not want to do a rumba if you're going for a big flouncy number. "Do practise in a big skirt if you can," says Beth. "Mine was a nightmare on the night!" And don't forget to wear shoes that are a similar height to your wedding ones so your feet will get used to dancing in them.

**PRACTISE MAKES PERFECT** Whether you have lessons or not, the essential ingredient of a great first dance is preparation. Kele Baker, co-director of the Kensington Dance Studio (see over) and the Argentine tango choreographer on the BBC's *Strictly Come Dancing*, says: "We tell couples to find an open space – they can move the coffee table or even practise in their garage. The more you practise the more comfortable you will feel on the night!"

**SET THE SCENE** When choreographing your routine, make sure you consider the size of the room you'll be doing your first dance in. If it's small keep the dance in the centre; if it's large make the most of the space and be more adventurous. You can add drama by having a spotlight trained on you and your new husband or, for an extra-special entrance, go for a smoke machine – it's guaranteed to keep all eyes on you!

**SELECTING YOUR SONG** If the two of you don't already have a special song and aren't sure what to choose, DJ Shaun Easton of Shades Discos (see over), recommends going for a nostalgic touch by using a track from the year that you met.

Shaun also advocates being prepared, adding: "I make sure that both the couple and myself bring a CD of the song so we have two copies on the night." Rehearse dancing to the track so there will be no nasty surprises on the day. If you're going to have a live band play the big number instead, Kele advises asking them for a recording of it in advance. "Practise to a recording to make sure you get the right tempo and you can recognise when the song is going to end."

**ON THE NIGHT** Walk round the dance floor before the first dance and familiarise yourself with the layout. "For sticky floors, sprinkle a tiny amount of talcum powder on the soles of your shoes beforehand," says Kele. "Likewise, if the floor is slippery, put a couple of drops of water on the soles to make them damp and add some stick to them."

**TIMING** It's up to you when you do your routine – there are no set rules, but it's a good idea to give your guests a chance to settle down before you announce the dance. "We allow an hour for a meet and greet before starting the first dance – that ensures that the majority of people are seated and have their cameras ready," says Shaun.

**THE WOW FACTOR** If you want to surprise guests don't tell them that you're planning a dance routine. "It will make a better impact," says Gemma of First Dance UK. "Especially if you start off with a slow routine and then cut to a fast track!"

*Popular first dances...*

- \* *I Will Always Love You*  
Whitney Houston
- \* *Endless Love*  
Lionel Richie and Diana Ross
- \* *Angels*  
Robbie Williams
- \* *Wonderful Tonight*  
Eric Clapton
- \* *I Don't Want to Miss a Thing*  
Aerosmith
- \* *Unchained Melody*  
The Righteous Brothers
- \* *We've Only Just Begun*  
Carpenters
- \* *When a Man Loves a Woman*  
Percy Sledge
- \* *From This Moment*  
Shania Twain and Bryan White
- \* *Truly Madly Deeply*  
Savage Garden
- \* *One*  
U2

**SMILE** You're not Darcy Bussell, so don't set yourself a difficult routine or put too much pressure on yourself. Your guests know you're not a professional dancer – in fact, if you're too slick you can take all the fun (which is watching you doing something madcap) out of it. So, relax, smile and enjoy! ♥

