



How to Bring a Song to Line Dance

How many times have you been driving down the road listening to the radio, or at home listening to Alexa, when a song pops up that you like and you think, “I wonder if we could line dance to this?” There is a fairly simple way to find out.

Bring the song up on YouTube (or Spotify). Make sure that you have the correct artist and look for the “official” audio version, if available. Listen to the song with a pen in hand and make a tick mark for every 8 beats of music. If your 8 beat tick marks fall nicely into groups of 4, (= 32 beats) you probably have identified a song that we can dance to. Most of our dance music is written for 32 counts per pattern. When doubled, they also fit our 64 count dances.

Do your tick marks fall into groups of 32 beats, then 16 beats, then 32, then 16? Most likely, you have identified a song that might work for our 48 count dances. 48 count songs are also popular in today’s music.

Do your tick marks fall into beats of 6, not 8? Do these 6 count tick marks fall into groups of 24? This means you have probably identified a waltz. When doubled, this fits most of our 48 count club waltzes.

Got the song’s tick marks batched into groups? Then go to the club website and look under Club Info/Leader Tools for the “Active Dance List.” This list identifies which dances are 32 counts, 64 counts, and 48 counts. Pick a dance that matches up to your 24, 32 or 48 count tick marks and try dancing it to the YouTube recording. If the dance “feels” right for the song, please send the YouTube link and dance suggestion to any member of the club’s Music Committee. Keep in mind, the speed can usually be adjusted by the Music Committee.

This simple sorting process is a first step in matching potential songs to line dances. There are other nuances to music, e.g., **syncopation**, which may point the song toward categories of dance (i.e., genres) such as cha cha’s, samba’s, nightclub 2, rolling 8, etc.

Another nuance is **tempo**, essentially the “speed” of the song. Slower tempos can suggest tangos or rumbas. Faster tempos can suggest jives, salsas or Viennese waltzes. Identifying syncopations and tempos are skills that come with developing a good “ear” for rhythms displayed in the basic count groupings (24, 32, 48 and 64) identified above. If you think you might have a good “ear” for identifying these genres, you would be a welcome addition to the Music Committee!