



# HOW DO I DANCE TO THIS MUSIC?

Dancing was an important skill for white men and women of the upper and middle class, indicating refinement, proper manners, and genteel behavior. Traveling dance masters even came to towns and homes to teach children the proper steps.

There were different types of dances, but English country dance was the group dance of choice in this room. Picture two long lines – men in one line, women in the other - facing each other. Partners danced up and down the lines, repeating the various figures of the dance.

**Give English country dancing a try!** *Modified for ease and various numbers of people*

**Before you begin: Face your partner and “honor” each other**

Ladies: Heels should be together with toes pointing slightly outward, making a v. Keeping your back straight, bend both knees slightly, lowering the eyes without bowing the head. Rise and look again at your partner.

Gentlemen: Heels begin together with toes pointing slightly outward, making a v. Slide one foot forward in preparation for the bow (show off your best leg!). Lean forward from waist to bow, with arms kept along the side of your torso. Rise and look again at your partner.



**Follow these steps to the music.** You should always end where you started after each step.

**Set (4 counts)**

Count 1 Step to the right and bring your left next to it.

Count 2 Step to the left and bring your right next to it.

Repeat for two more counts.

*Note: The steps aren't too big, but you can have a little spring in your step.*

**Circle two hands (two dancers) or four hand (four dancers) (8 counts)**

Count 1-4 Join hands in a ring, a little above waist level, and move to the left for 4 four counts.

Count 5-8 Do the same as above, but to the right.

**Back to Back (4 counts)**

Partners face each other and move forward to pass each other along your right shoulders. Once past, step to the right behind each other, and walk backwards to return to where you began.

Keep combining the figures of set, circle, and back to back in 4 count increments.

**End by honoring your partner**

Want to learn more? Check out the many dancing books in the museum shop. These descriptions were modified from *Country Dances from Colonial New York*. The image is from *The Art of Dancing Explained* by Kellom Tomlinson, 1735.