

TANGO DICTIONARY

A - tango dictionary of terms

Abrazo **embrace**

The tango embrace, in which the lead's right arm is around the follower's back; and the lead's left hand is clasping the follower's right hand.

1. Close Embrace: upper bodies touching or in very close proximity.
2. Open Embrace: no body contact.

Adelante **forward**

To dance or move in a forward direction.

Adorno **embellishment**

A creative movement that adorns or embellishes the dance.

Aficionado **fan**

An enthusiastic follower, devotee or fan of something - in this case tango.

Aguja **needle**

A man's embellishment in which the foot is vertical with the toe into the floor whilst pivoting.

Al costado **to the side**

To dance or move in a sideways direction.

Amague **fake**

Move in one direction that changes the direction at the last second.

Apilado **piled on, leaning**

1. When the dancers are off axis and leaning against each other more than usual.
2. A style of tango dancing which involves leaning.

Arrabal **slum**

A term denoting the slums, which were pivotal to the creation of the milonga and tango.

Arrabalero **rough**

1. Belonging to the outskirts.
2. Illbred.
3. Rough in dress or manners.

Arranque **start**

A device for the leader to create momentum during a molinete: executed by pausing and leading the follower to the side.

Arrastre **dragging**

Same as **Barrida** - see on this page.

Arrepentida **repentant**

Steps which enable a couple to back away from a collision.

Atrás **backward**

To dance or move in a backwards direction.

B - tango dictionary of terms

Bailamos **shall we dance?**

A question a man may ask of a follower: *shall we dance?*

Bailar **dance**

The tango dance itself.

Bailarín **dancer**

1. A term for any dancer.
2. A very accomplished dancer.

Bailongo **local dance**

A Lunfardo word for a milonga.

Balanceo **rocking**

Same as **Cadencia** - see on this page.

Baldosa **floor tile**

A step sequence in the shape of a square.

Bandoneón

An accordion-like musical instrument to create the mournful sound of modern tango music.

Barrida **sweep**

The foot (normally of the woman) is swept with a swift movement - interchangeable with the terms Arrastre and Llevada.

Barrio **neighbourhood**

A district or neighbourhood.

Básico **basic**

The basic tango pattern, the most common of which is the 8-count basic. See the **Eight Count Basic** on this page.

Bicicleta **bicycle**

A circular movement of the feet executed by the lead.

Bien Parado **well stood**

Elegant posture.

Bloque **block**

A step where the motion of one dancer's feet are blocked by the other dancer. Normally executed by the lead.

Boleo **whip**

The women's ocho is swiftly changed direction, producing a whip action from her leg.

Brazo **arm**

The arm of the tango dancer.

C - tango dictionary of terms

Cabeceo **invitation**

A non-verbal invitation to dance from man to woman - the man looks at the woman and indicates with a movement of his head that he would like to dance; if she accepts she will move towards him, if she refuses she will look away.

Cabeza **head**

The head of the dancer.

Cadena **chain**

A turning figure in which the man steps outside left or right in crossed feet and leading the lady in a change of direction to keep her in front of him as he turns.

Cadencia **rhythm**

1. A series of forward-and-left series of steps executed by the lead to to change direction, usually to avoid collisions.
2. A subtle shift of weight to and fro at the start of a dance to synchronize on rhythm and ensure both dancers begin on the correct foot.

Caída **fall**

Executed by the lead such that he steps backward and crosses his free leg in front of the supporting leg without a weight transfer, while the follower is led to the outside position to cross her free leg behind her supporting leg also without a weight transfer.

Calesita **carousel, merry-go-round**

The lead ensures the follower is upright on her axis, and dances around her whilst she pivots on her supporting leg. The follower's free leg is generally held in the Cuatro position.

Cambio **change**

The lead executes a cambio when he pivots both feet in the same direction (either clockwise or anticlockwise), usually as the follower performs a molinete. Often called Cambio de Frente (Change of Front).

Caminada **walk**

Series of steps that walk forward.

Caminado Valseado **carried walk**

A sequence of steps, as part of step 3 of the **Eight Count Basic** (see this page), wherein the lead steps forward right, forward left and continues the the follower to the cross.

Caminar **to walk**

Similar to a natural step, with the ball of the foot placed first instead of the heel; the body is in balance over the forward foot.

Candombe

A drum based dance which originated from the descendants of black slaves in the Rio de la Plata region and still performed today.

Cangrejo **crab**

A pattern of dance steps where the lead advances turned nearly sideways to the follower.

Canyengue

An old-guard style of tango from the early 1900s, still danced today.

Carancanfun

Dance of tango with many interruptions or *cortes*.

Caricia **caress**

Stroking with the leg or shoe part of the partner's body.

Carpa **tent**

Same as **Apilado** - see on this page.

Castigada **seduction**

An embellishment in which the follower caresses her supporting leg with her free leg.

Chiche **delicate ornament**

An embellishment in which small beats are executed by the free foot in time with the music.

Cintura **waist**

The waist of the tango dancer.

Código **code**

The code of behavior, such as cabeceo, in the milongas of Buenos Aires.

Colgada **hanging**

Fast turns which takes the woman off her axis or plays with her axis.

Compadre **honorable man**

A responsible, macho and honorable working class man.

Compadrito **punk**

A street punk. Compadritos originally invented the tango.

Compás **beat**

The musical beat to which tango is danced to.

Connection

A beautiful and sensual communication between lead and follower, established during a tango dance when everything fits just right: the music, the style, the rhythm, the ambience. In a milonga situation, all tango dancers strive for this.

Contrapaso **contra step**

A step in which one foot is locked behind the other.

Corrida **run**

A syncopated walk which will look like a run. The dancers take a series of short double-time steps so the feet appear to run while the bodies move at the same pace.

Corrida Garabito **covered run**

A milonga step in which the couple alternately step between each other.

Corte **cut**

A sudden turn in direction, generally done by holding for several beats (or syncopating) - often in a back-and-forth action to double time.

Cortina **curtain**

A musical interlude in between a tanda at a milonga.

Contrapaso **backstep**

Same as **rabona** - see on this page.

Cross System

A dance in which the man steps in the same way as the women (right foot to right, left to left).

Cruzada **cross**

Executed when a step leads to the free foot being crossed in front of or in back of the supporting foot, almost always by the follower.

Cuadrado **square**

Same as **baldosa** - see on this page.

Cuatro **four**

An embellishment in which the follower flicks one of her lower legs backwards, keeping her knees together, creating a numeral 4 in profile.

Cucharita **spoon**

The lifting of the follower's foot with a gentle scooping motion. Usually led in forward ochos to create a flicking motion of the follower's leg.

Cuerpo **body**

The body of the tango dancer.

Cunita **crib**

The rocking back and forth that can be done in order to mark time or change direction.

D - tango dictionary of terms

Dedo **finger**

The finger of the tango dancer.

Derecha **right**

The right side of the body or the dance.

Derecho **upright**

To stand upright.

Despacio **slowly**

A slowing of music or dance.

Desplazamiento **displacement**

Same as **sacada** - see on this page.

Dibujo **sketch**

Same as **Rulo** - see on this page.

Doble Tiempo **double time**

Tango danced at twice the musical beat.

E - tango dictionary of terms

Eight Count Basic

The basic step sequence - also known as the 8CB - is taught to beginner-level students:

1. lead backward R during follower forward L
2. lead side L during follower side R
3. lead forward R (outside R) during follower backward L
4. lead forward L during follower backward R
5. lead feet together (1/2 step) during follower cross L over R
6. lead forward L during follower backward R
7. lead side R during follower side L
8. lead closes his L to his R while follower closes her R to her L

Steps 1 through 3 (sometimes 1 through 5) are known as the salida. Steps 3 through 5 are known as 'walking the follower to the cross'. Steps 6 through 8 are known as resolución.

Eje **axis**

The physical axis of the dancer, along which the posture and balance are formed. Both lead and follower have their own axis, though in certain styles of tango the axes may align into the one.

Elevada **elevated**

Dancing without keeping the feet close to the floor. This was the style in the early 1900s when tango was danced on dirt surfaces and on cobble stone. When tango went to smooth surfaces, such as polished wood, dancers began to 'caress the floor'.

Embutido **inlaid work**

A foot swinging behind other foot.

Enganche **hook**

Same as **gancho** - see on this page.

Enroscar **corkscrew**

The man pivots on his supporting leg whilst his free leg is either held behind him, or is hooked onto his working leg. Generally performed as the follower executes a molinete.

Entrada **entrance**

The man puts his leg between the woman's legs, without moving her or causing her to shift weight.

Entregar **surrender**

Denotes that the follower has surrendered herself to the lead.

Espalda **back**

The back of the dancer.

Espejo **mirror**

Executed when the lead and follower do mirror image steps of each other.

F - tango dictionary of terms

A B A R O E A

Fanfarrón **fanfare**

An embellishments in which the foot is rhythmically tapped in time to the music. It is also called Chiche.

Fantasia **show tango**

Same as **Show Tango** - see on this page.

Faroliito **small lantern**

Same as **rulo** - see on this page.

Firulete **embellishment**

Same as **Adorno** - see on this page.

Freno **brake**

To stop on a step.

G - tango dictionary of terms

Gancho **hook**

The action of hooking one leg around the partner's leg.

Garcha **screw-up**

A lunfardo term indicating bad luck or screw-up. In tango this refers to taking a bad step causing a collision.

Gaicho

The Argentine Cowboy central to the development of tango.

Giro **turn**

The turn in tango, generally performed by the follower stepping around the lead, who pivots in the centre.

Golden Age

The Golden Age of tango is the period between the 1930s and 1950s, when tango was at the peak of its popularity.

Golpecito **tap**

The golpecito is the most basic type of embellishment in tango, in which the free foot does one or more taps as part of a step or during a pause. It has a number of variations including the Punto, the Golpeteo, the Fanfarron, the Picado and the Zapatato.

Golpeo **strike**

Same as **Punto** - see on this page.

Golpeteo **drumming**

This is embellishment in which lead or follower taps the underside of the free foot - in other words the heel or the ball.

Grelas **woman**

A Lunfardo term for woman.

Guapo **handsome**

A handsome and desirable man. Also denotes a **compadre** - see on this page.

H - tango dictionary of terms

Habanera

An Afro-Cuban dance which contributed to tango.

Hamaca **hammock**

Same as **Cunita** - see on this page.

I - tango dictionary of terms

Inclinado **inclined**

Same as **Apilado** - see on this page.

intrusión **intrusion**

The intrusión is executed by briefly placing the free foot between the partner's legs, often in the form of a 'quick kick'.

It takes two to tango

A phrase, coined as a result of the 1952 song by Al Hoffman and Dick Manning named *Takes Two to Tango*, implying that some activity cannot be successfully completed unless both parties are united in a common objective.

Izquierda **left**

The left side of the body.

J - tango dictionary of terms

Junta **close**

The essence of elegant tango is ankles and knees that pass by each other closely between each step.

K - tango dictionary of terms

L - tango dictionary of terms

Lápiz **pencil**

Same as **Rulo** - see on this page.

Latigazo **whipping**

The whipping action of the leg during a boleo.

Lento **slow**

In tango, refers to a dance or music that has a slow beat.

Liso **smooth**

1. A smooth dance.
2. Tango Liso was the early term for Tango de Salon.

Llevada **carrying**

Executed when when the lead uses his thigh or foot to carry the follower's leg to the next step.

Lunfardo

Buenos Aires slang. Many of the words are now used for tango.

Lustrada **polish**

An embellishment executed by the follower lifting her free leg and caressing the supporting leg of the lead - either in an upward action, downwards, or very commonly both. The inside or outside of any part of the lead's leg, including his foot, may be caressed.

M - tango dictionary of terms

Marcar **mark**

To lead.

Media Luna **half moon**

A half turn - the man creates a back, side, and forward for the women which makes the shape of a half moon.

Media Vuelta **half turn**

Same as **media luna** - see on this page.

Milonga

1. The meeting place to dance tango.
2. A fast paced form of the tango with 2/4 beat.

Milonguero

1. A tango fanatic, a person whose life revolves around tango, a title given to someone who has mastered tango.
2. Another name for **Apilado** style of tango - see on this page.

Milonguita

An affectionate name for a woman attending a milonga.

Mina **bird**

An informal name in Lunfardo for a woman.

Molinete **windmill**

The woman dances around the man side-back-side-forward using forward and backwards ochos.

Mordida **bite**

Same as **Sandwiche** - see on this page.

N - tango dictionary of terms

Neo-Tango

A new form of the genre, with evolved music, embraces and moves. It consists of Tango Fusion (collaboration between contemporary tango and other music such as electronica) and Alternative Tango (non-tango music danced to Argentine tango steps).

Nuevo **new tango**

1. A style of music, invented by Astor Piazzolla around 1955, that combines the sound of traditional tango with jazz.
2. A term coined around the mid 1990s to describe a style of tango dancing infused with new combinations of steps, embraces, combinations, changes of directions, use of the loose embrace, and the exploration of the space between the legs and around the body of the partner.

O - tango dictionary of terms

Ocho **eight**

The basic turn in tango, executed by a turn that is first one way, then reversed, wherein the torso is disassociated from the top of the body. An ocho can be either forward (Ocho Defrente) or backward (Ocho Para Atrás).

Ocho Cortado **cut eight**

Performed when the action of the turn is interrupted and reversed. Upon reversal, the leader displaces the follower's space and pivots the follower, who then executes a cruzada (cross). Note that despite the name of this step, generally it is not the ocho that is interrupted but other turns such as the milonete.

Orillero

1. The historical outskirts of Buenos Aires.
2. A style of tango synonymous with Canyengue. See Canyengue on this page.

Orquesta **orchestra**

In tango, this is the orchestra playing the music. In the *Golden Age* of tango, the band was often referred to as the Orquesta Típica.

P - tango dictionary of terms

Palanca **lever**

The lead levers, or assists, the follower during jumps and lifts in Show Tango

Parada **stop**

Any stopping action in any direction.

Parallel system

A dance in which the lead steps in the mirror image of the follower: him on his left foot, her to her right foot.

Pareja **couple**

The two dancers in tango.

Pasada **passing over**

The lead performs a parada with his foot and leads the follower forward to pass over his foot; affords an excellent opportunity for the woman to adorn.

Paso **step**

The basic tango step.

Patada **kick**

A kick during or between steps, most often executed by the follower.

Pausa **pause**

The couple hold their position for two or more beats.

Pecho **chest**

The chest of the dancer.

Picado **chop**

An embellishment executed by an upwards flick of the heel, done when stepping forwards or in the turn, typically an ocho.

Pie **foot**

The foot of the dancer.

Pierna **leg**

The leg of the dancer.

Pinta **appearance**

The overall appearance and grooming of the dancer.

Pisar **to step**

The chest of the dancer.

Piso **floor**

The dance floor (*masculine*).

Pista **floor**

The dance floor (*feminine*).

Planchadora

This word actually means ironing lady; in tango it refers to a woman who sits all night at a milonga without being requested to dance.

Planeo **pivot**

A step used by the lead when he has stepped forward then pivots, tracing his foot on the floor, with the follower dancing around him.

Porteño

Historically, this refers to a ruffian who lived in the port city of Buenos Aires.

Postura **posture**

The posture of the dancer. For successful dancing, it is considered critical to have correct posture.

Práctica **practice**

A casual practice session, different to a milonga in that dancers help each other and work on their style.

Punto **point**

The punto is an embellishment executed by tapping the toe of the free foot. During a step the lead or follower may tap once or twice. During a pause, the lead or follower may tap any number of times.

Q - tango dictionary of terms

Quebrada **break**

A variation of the corte: a sudden turn in direction, generally done by holding the follower for several beats (or syncopating) and bending her at the waist - often in a back-and-forth action to double time.

R - tango dictionary of terms

Rabona **play hookey**

A series of steps in which the free foot is crossed across the supporting leg in a cruzada, repeated on each beat.

Resolución **resolution**

The finale (steps 6, 7 and 8) to the eight basic pattern.

Ritmo **rhythm**

The rhythmic structure of the music.

Ronda **round**

This is the outer-most lane where dancers move counter-clockwise around the perimeter of the floor - in most milongas this is right up against the tables, and dancers in the ronda have the right-of-way.

Rulo **circle**

An embellishment executed by drawing one or more circles on the floor with the free leg, either as part of a movement or during a pause in dancing.

S - tango dictionary of terms

Sacada **take out**

A displacement of the woman's free leg - when the leader places their foot or leg against the leg of their partner, transfers the weight to their own leg, and moves into the space of their partner's leg.

Salida **beginning**

The first steps of the dance or step.

Saltito **small hop**

A tango step in which either the lead or follower (rarely both) execute a small hop on the floor.

Sándwiche **sandwich**

To sandwich a partner's foot between your own.

Sánduche / Sánguche **sandwich**

Same as **Sándwiche** - see on this page.

Seguidilla **merry dance**

Tiny quick steps.

Seguir **to follow**

Following the lead: this is considered an exquisite art-form in tango.

Sentada **sit**

An embellishment executed by the follower mounting, or appearing to mount, the lead's supporting leg. It is sometimes used as a dramatic embellishment at the end of the dance.

Show Tango

The term used for exhibition and competitive tango dancing characterized by a choreographed performance.

Suave **smooth**

Smooth, steady and a very chic style. Considered a critical goal to attain in tango, particularly for the lead.

Sube y Baja **raise and lower**

A milonga sequence in which lead and follower dance first forwards with chest turned in towards each other, then backwards with chest turned out towards each other.

syncopation

A subdivision of a beat caused typically by stressing the weak beat rather than the accent. In Spanish: sincopado.

T - tango dictionary of terms

Tanda **group**

A set of dance music which can be either three, four or five songs, separated by a cortina.

Tango de Salon

An inclusive term for the tango style danced at 'salons' (ballrooms) - in other words, milonga halls. It is characterized more by a wide variation than by a specific position; it is the style owned, practiced and shaped by the collective masses on the floor.

Tanguero

Someone who is passionate about tango.

Tijera **scissors**

A step in which the free leg is crossed in front of the supporting leg, and left there, so that it may be used for the next step.

Titubeo **hesitation**

Same as **pausa** - see on this page.

Trabada **connected**

Same as **cruzada** - see on this page

Traspié **trip, stumble**

A sequence of steps which are syncopated. For example milonga traspie indicates a form of milonga in which the dancers step between the beats.

Truco **trick**

Tricks or stunts, particularly in Show Tango.

U - tango dictionary of terms

V - tango dictionary of terms

Vals **waltz**

Argentine tango form of waltz in 3/4 beat.

Vareador **one who beats with a pole**

A lead who flirts with all the followers but does not get seriously involved with any of them.

Víbora **viper**

The man places his right leg between the woman's legs, and takes a sacada to her left and her right in succession using a back and forth action.

Volcada **capsize**

The leader causes the follower to lean forward and drop from her axis before he catches her. Generally this also involves sweeping the follower's leg as a result of the off-axis motion.

Voleo

Same as **boleo** - see on this page.

Y - tango dictionary of terms

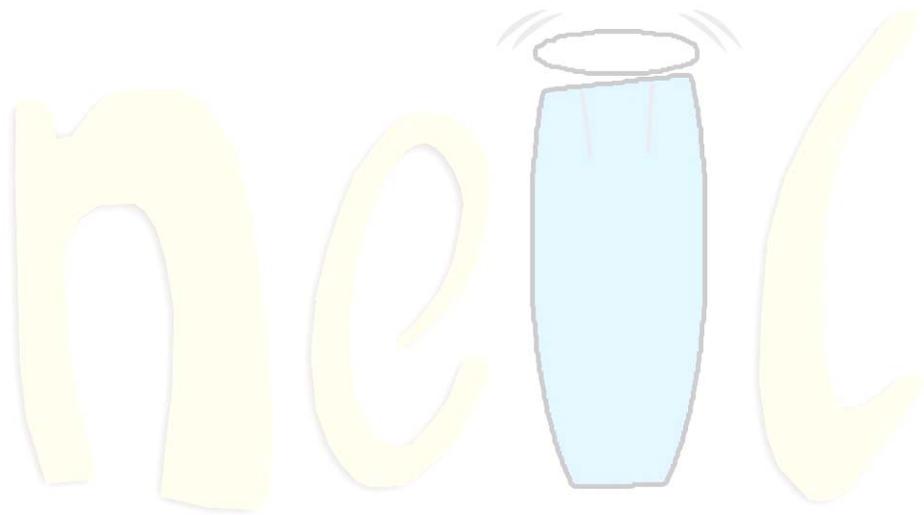
Z - tango dictionary of terms

Zapatazo **stamp of the foot**

An embellishment in which the shoes are tapped together.

Zarandeo **shaking**

Swinging back-and-forth or pivoting one the same place.



A B A R O E A
Salsa Tango Jakarta

