

# A Selection of Hand Holds for Social Folk Dancing: 'swings' and 'baskets'

# Introduction

This document gives a brief, visual overview of some hand holds used for certain figures in social folk dance forms found across Britain, North America and beyond - including country, ceilidh and barn dancing.

It includes photographs and brief descriptions of a selection of hand holds in which two people turn round together ('swings') and those where groups of people circle round closely linked together ('baskets'). It does not aim to be a comprehensive guide to all known figures where dancers are holding hands.

The photographs were taken informally of volunteer dancers attending the English Folk Dance and Song Society's Callers' Development Day held at Cecil Sharp House, London, 9 February 2019.

Photographs by Rachel Elliott. Document compiled by Kerry Fletcher.  
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## 1) Swing Hold: Waist Hold

Right hand on partner's right waist, then left hand slides under partner's right forearm to hold left hand with partner underneath.

Good for compactness and therefore speed.



## 2) Swing Hold: Long-arm, Short-arm

A classic favourite for stability and speed in a restricted space. Important that the right hand is cupping partner's elbow, without a thumb in the inside elbow. (Note: it is easier to do this when your partner's arm is slightly bent.)





### **3) Swing Hold: Long-arm, short-arm**

A stage towards cupping elbows for the Long-arm, Short-arm swing (image # 2).

Slide your hand up to cup your partner's elbow, to avoid grabbing the elbow with thumb digging into partner's inside elbow.





## 4) Swing Hold: Buzz Swing

One choice for Contra/Appalachian-style swing with a buzz-step, ie scooting with your left foot and keeping the right-hands clasped strongly. This can also be used for a looser single step swing.



## 5) Palm-to-Palm Hold

Palm-to-palm hold, pressing lightly against your partner for a right hand turn.

Good for minimal and light contact.



## 6) Basket: Clover Leaf Basket

Clover leaf Basket for four dancers, holding hands, instead of wrists.

This allows flexibility for a relaxed swing round.





## 7) Basket: Clover Leaf Basket

Clover Leaf Basket for more than four  
dancers.



## 8) Basket: Classic Basket

Place your left arm behind your neighbour's back and take the wrist or hand of the NEXT person around to the left, and join the hand offered to you from the right.



## 9) Basket: Classic Basket

As above (image # 8), from the outside.



## 10) Basket: Russian Crown

Put your left arm in front of your neighbour's right, and take the right hand of the next person on their left, and join the hand offered to you from the right.



## 11) Basket: Russian Crown

As above (image # 10), from the outside.

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