



Scottish Ceilidh Dance Guide



Gay Gordons

The perfect opener — lively, simple, and gets everyone on their feet

Formation Couples in a circle	Difficulty ♥ Easy	Music 2/4 or 4/4 March
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About This Dance

The Gay Gordons is almost always the first dance of the night — and for good reason. It's energetic enough to warm the crowd up, simple enough that anyone can do it within the first eight bars, and it works for all ages. Named after the Gordon Highlanders regiment, it's been a staple of Scottish ceilidhs for well over a century and is a wonderful way to get every guest onto the dance floor together.

How to Dance It

1	Couples stand side by side in a large circle, facing anti-clockwise. Right hands are joined over the lady's shoulder (man's arm behind her back), left hands joined in front at waist height.
2	Walk forward four steps together in the anti-clockwise direction, starting on the right foot.
3	Without letting go of hands, both pivot to face the clockwise direction and walk four steps the other way. (Right hand is now in front, left hand behind.)
4	Repeat: walk forward four steps (clockwise), pivot, walk four steps back. You're back where you started.
5	Drop the left hand. Raise the joined right hands above the lady's head to form an arch. The lady spins on the spot (four turns). The gentleman marks time or sets in place.
6	Take ballroom hold — right hand on partner's back, left hand extended. Polka briskly together around the room for eight steps (or four full turns).
7	Release and return to the starting position. Repeat from step 1 with the same partner throughout.

Caller's tip: *Remind couples that the pivot in steps 2–3 is the trickiest bit. Tell them not to let go of hands and to keep moving — most pairs find it instinctively once the music is going.*

What to Watch For

- Couples stopping dead on the pivot instead of keeping momentum — encourage them to keep their feet moving.
- The lady's spin (step 5) — make sure right hands stay joined above head height and the man doesn't drop his arm too soon.
- The polka (step 6) — some couples ballroom waltz instead. Remind them it should be bouncy and quick.

Did you know?

The dance takes its name from the Gordon Highlanders, a famous Scottish infantry regiment. The tune most commonly used is 'The Gay Gordons' — a lively 4/4 march that perfectly matches the step pattern.

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Don't worry — every step will be called on the night before the music starts!