



Scottish Ceilidh Dance Guide



Strip the Willow

High energy, breathless fun — usually the highlight of the evening

Formation Longways sets of couples	Difficulty ♥♥♥ Energetic	Music Fast reels
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About This Dance

Strip the Willow is the dance that separates the committed from the cautious. It's fast, physical, and absolutely exhilarating — especially when the caller keeps the pace up. The top couple work their way down the set, turning everyone in turn, then cast back up the outside. Once you've done it, you'll understand why it's always one of the most memorable moments of the night — and why guests are still talking about it the next morning.

How to Dance It

1	Form sets of four couples: a line of ladies and a line of gentlemen facing each other, with couples paired up. The couple nearest the band are the 'top couple' and go first.
2	The top couple face each other and link right arms (elbow grip). Spin each other clockwise for eight counts.
3	The top lady releases and turns to the first gentleman in the opposite line. They link left arms and spin anti-clockwise for one turn.
4	The top lady returns to her partner, links right arms, and they spin clockwise for four one turn. The top gentleman stays near the centre.
5	The top lady continues down the line: left arm with the next gentleman back to right arm with her partner. Repeat until she reaches the bottom. This is repeated on the way back with the man turning the women at the side then his partner.
6	When the top couple reach the top, they link right arms again and spin for eight counts.
7	The top couple then, both at the same time, turn the man or woman at each side then their partner and work to the bottom of the set..
8	When they reach the bottom they turn each other for eight and join the set at the bottom. Next top couple start at the beginning.

Caller's tip: *The most common mistake is the active couple losing track of whose turn it is. Keep calling it through the first run: 'left arm with the line, right arm with your partner, repeat'.*

What to Watch For

- The active couple spinning too long and losing their place in the sequence.

Did you know?

The Orcadian version of Strip the Willow has multiple couples stripping simultaneously in very long sets. It is often the last dance before Auld Lang Syne at Hogmanay celebrations, and is considered by many the definitive finale to any Scottish ceilidh.

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