



Scottish Ceilidh Dance Guide



Virginia Reel

American-influenced and easy to pick up — wonderful for mixed wedding crowds

Formation Longways sets, two lines	Difficulty ♥♥ Medium	Music Lively reels or jigs
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About This Dance

The Virginia Reel has American roots but has been a popular fixture at Scottish ceilidhs for decades. It's a longways set dance — similar in structure to Strip the Willow but more structured and slightly less exhausting. The reel down the middle is the highlight. A lovely choice for a wedding with guests who haven't danced a ceilidh before.

How to Dance It

1	Two lines of four face each other: one line of gentlemen, one line of ladies. Couples are paired across the set. The top couple are nearest the band.
2	All advance toward the opposite line for four steps, double high-five, then retire for four steps.
3	All advance to join right hands and turn once clockwise in the centre. Return to place.
4	All advance to join left hands and turn once anti-clockwise in the centre. Return to place.
5	All advance to join both hands and turn clockwise in the centre. Return to place.
6	Top couple do-si-do: walk toward each other, pass right shoulder to right shoulder, go back-to-back, pass left shoulder and return to place without turning to face each other.
7	Top couple join hands and slip down the centre of the set and then back to the top.
8	At the top, the top couple cast outward and walk back down the outside of their respective lines to the bottom. The rest of the set follows.
9	The top couple form an arch at the bottom. All other couples pass through. The second couple become the new top couple.

What to Watch For

- Couples forgetting the do-si-do (step 6) before the reel — it's easy to skip when people are eager.
- The cast (step 8) — everyone in the set should follow the top couple; stragglers break the arch timing.

Did you know?

The Virginia Reel is closely related to Sir Roger de Coverley, an old English country dance that became the ancestor of several American contra dances. It became especially popular in the southern United States in the 18th and 19th centuries before finding its way back to Britain.

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