

**Jeni Breen Tango Academy**  
**www.jenibreentangoacademy.com**

## **Tango Terminology (Glossary)**

This is a short glossary of common terms/names in Argentine Tango as used at Jeni Breen Tango Academy. It is by no means exhaustive but will help to orient the student as you become more fluent in this gorgeous dance!

**Abrazo:** Embrace, Hug. An intimate but respectful embrace is arguably the heart and soul of social Tango.

**Adorno:** Adornment

**Baldosa:** A fundamental figure in Argentine Tango; so called because it is a box like figure that recalls the “Baldosa” pattern of big black and white checkerboard tiles on the floors of cafes and bakeries popular in 1800’s Buenos Aires; a Tango fundamental.

**Barrida:** Sweep. Most commonly initiated by the leader, a Barrida is executed by capturing his partners foot with his and using that connection to sweep her foot along the floor. In certain situations the follower can sweep her partners foot as well.

**Boleo/Voleo:** A Boleo occurs when a pivot in one direction is reversed, causing the non weight bearing leg to swing in a circular manner. The free, swinging leg can be on the ground, in the air, low, high, soft, or very snappy!

**Bailar:** To dance!

**Cross System:** Cross System is a system of relationship in which both partners are simultaneously on the right or the left leg, rather than on the natural opposite of right to left or left to right (Parallel System). Crossed System allows for wonderful interlocking musicality from the partners as well as extraordinarily creative figures.

**Cruzada:** Cross The Cruzada is a position in which one leg is crossed in front of the other. It is most commonly the woman’s left in front of her right, however the man may often cross his feet.

**Giro:** Turn ( A Media Giro is a half turn.)

**Lapiz:** Lapiz means “pencil” and refers to a decorative tracing on the floor with the dancers free foot.

**Media Luna:** Half Moon A half circle or half Giro.

**Milonga\*:** The word Milonga” is used to mean two things-the first is any social event of Argentine Tango dancing. The word also refers to a specific music that preceded Tango- rhythmically driven, playful, both elegant and earthy, Milonga is arguably the “guts” of Argentine Tango and will be part of any Tango dance event! (We go to Milongas where we dance Tango, Milonga, and Vals!)

**Molinetti:** Pin Wheel A full turn consisting of several steps (usually an open or sideways step leading to a forward and across step, another open step, and a backwards and across step) that repeat in series.

**Ocho:** Ocho means “eight” and refers to a figure that consists of a step (forward, back, or side) with a pivot on the new weight bearing foot. If done in place it looks like the dancer is stepping out a figure eight or infinity sign on the floor.

**Ocho Cortado:** Ocho Cortado means “cut ocho” and refers to a figure wherein the woman executes a quick reversal of (usually) a side step into a sharp Cruzada or Cross.

**Parada:** Parada means “to stop” or “stand” and usually refers to a little play wherein the leader slides his free foot next to the foot upon which his partner is turning while at the same time leading her to take a brief “stop”!

**Parallel System:** Parallel System is a system of relationship in which the dancers are always stepping on to the leg opposite of their partners, left to right and right to left. It is more intuitive and “natural” than Crossed System.

**Resolution:** The Resolution is a figure that consists of a step with the free leg then closing so that the dancer can change weight right underneath the center of their body. The Resolution can punctuate the music, end or “resolve” a danced phrase, or be the transition into a new danced phrase.

**Ronda:** Ronda refers to the line of dance that the leaders follow counter clockwise around the dance floor.

**Sacada:** A Sacada is a displacement of your partners position in space, usually made by stepping between their feet and tangentially through their line of movement.

**Tanda:** A Tanda is a group of 3 or 4 songs played for social Tango dancing. Tandas usually feature the same orchestra, with the same singer, at roughly the same historic era in order to build and deepen a mood. Usually one will dance the entire 9 to 12 minute Tanda with the same partner. Tandas are separated by a “Cortina” (little curtain) of 20-45 seconds of something clearly non tango, in order to provide a break for the dancers and to provide structure to a night (or afternoon) of dancing.

**Vals\*:** Vals means Waltz and refers to Tango music written and danced in 3/4 time.

\* The vocabulary for Tango, Milonga, and Val's is roughly the same-that cool step you learned in Milonga can (and should!) be done in Tango and Vals, but the rhythmic structure and "feel" of Tango, Milonga, and Vals are each different and so will be danced differently.