

# HOW TO DANCE THE BOP



*Art Silva is a dancer,  
actor and instructor.*

## THE COOL CAT SAYS

CL 1004

1. Use this book as a study guide.
2. Practice every day, preferably in front of a mirror.
3. Practice on a smooth or waxy floor.
4. Study all the photos carefully.
5. Try to master every step before you proceed.
6. Review every day.

## TO START

1. Take one section at a time.
2. Read it through 3 or 4 times.
3. Get on your feet, keeping your Bop book in hand, and do the steps as you read through them.

## FOREWORD

The Bop is a brand new distinctively American dance, but one that has its origins in the dances of the past. Probably its closest relative is the Charleston, which it resembles in the alternately turned in and turned out toe positions. Some steps have come directly from the Charleston to the Bop.

Another first cousin to the Bop is the Calypso. The dancers in both travel on one foot and stamp or tap the other lightly.

The body movement and rhythm-accent of the Bop, however, is so unique that whatever has come from these other dances is practically unrecognizable and actually something completely new has been formed. At any rate the dance is a lot of fun and has won complete approval of teen-agers wherever it is danced.

One intriguing thing about the Bop is that it requires a certain amount of dedication to master it. This becomes readily apparent to anyone who tries to pick it up in a few minutes: but once mastered it gives one the satisfaction and enjoyment of knowing and doing a very special dance.

The style of Bop put forth here is basic and typical of that danced throughout the United States. It is, also, the most flexible style, being easily adapted to any of the slight variations, of which there are many.

I hope that you enjoy learning the Bop through the use of this manual and that you develop a feeling for the music. The Bop, in my opinion, is the dance of our age and will be with us for a long time.

*Art Silva.*

## MUSIC

The beat in good Bop music sounds like BOOM-CHICK, BOOM-CHICK, etc., with the off-beat (CHICK) almost as strong or even stronger than the main beat (BOOM). So you imitate the music by saying aloud BOOM — CHICK, BOOM — CHICK, etc. This will give you the beat and the off-beat of the music and that's all you need to learn the Bop.

Try saying "BOOM — CHICK" to different speeds and styles of music until you can recognize the beat easily.

Also, this will help you to learn what kind of music suits your dancing best. My own preference is for a medium speed Rhythm-and-Blues. Take it slow to begin with.

# BOP!

## THE BASIC IN 6 PARTS

1. Start by *marching* softly in place, but only lifting your heels so that the tip of your toe remains on the floor as in the photos below. Pick your heel up quite high and then put it down and lift the other.

As you put your heels down say BOOM and as you pick the other heel up say CHICK and so on. Keep your feet *close together*. Softly!

2. Next, continue this marching, but each time you pick up your heel scoot that foot forward a few inches (toe still on

the floor, heel high) then bring it back beside the other foot as you put your heel down. Remember—in all this your toes don't leave the floor. Do the same with the other foot and continuously. As you can see by the photo to the right your toe comes forward almost in front of the other foot.

3. Now let's do a separate exercise to prepare for part 3 of the basic.

Standing in place, feet *fairly close together* simply bend your knees on BOOM and straighten

up on CHICK. Do this for a few minutes. Make sure that you're bouncing deep enough (see photo) and that you're straightening up softly, leaving just a slight bend to your knees in the straight position.

This is the way you start dancing the Bop, by just bending your knees on the BOOM which is the first beat of the music. Remember that! Start by just bouncing downward.

The rest of the Bop comes on the off-beat (CHICK) as you straighten up.

So, let's put it together very slowly with parts 1 and 2. Take your bounce on BOOM—as you come up on the CHICK part of the beat, scoot one foot out in front (toe down, heel high) then bounce deep again on *both* feet and as you come up scoot the other foot out in front. Continue this until it's easy. Remember—the count is BOOM when your knees are bent and CHICK when you straighten up and one foot is out in front. Keep your feet close together—don't let them get out to the side.



Bend knees on "BOOM" As you straighten up one foot comes forward.

4. Next, *lean away from the foot that's up*. This is important and do it in an exaggerated style. Lift your hip and shoulder a little also as in the photos. You will rock from side to side with each step. But bounce and lean softly, not jerkily. If it helps say BOUNCE—LEAN, BOUNCE—LEAN for awhile instead of BOOM—CHICK.

5. Keeping all the parts so far—as your foot comes forward turn your heel out *slightly*. It is possible with this to overdo it and get an unpleasant look by bending your ankle too much, so keep it subtle. By turning your foot this way you can touch your toe in front of the other foot easily. Always avoid getting your feet far out to the sides.



6. Do this exercise before we work in part 6—lean over to one side, put your toe out front, then with the other foot (weight on the heel) swing the toe of that same weighted foot back and forth—much as if you were grinding something with your heel. Do the same on the other side. Practice this until it's easy.



Now to work it in. As you're straightening up from the first bounce and your foot's coming forward (toe down, heel high) turn the toe of the other foot inwards a little toward the foot that's up—kind of pigeon-toed fashion. That's on the CHICK. That completes one side. As soon as you reach that position bend both knees going into the bounce (BOOM) and your feet point more or less front again. In other words the feet point front on the BOOM and toes

in on the CHICK. These 6 parts make up the basic Bop. Check constantly to be sure you're not leaving out any one part. 1. Marching. 2. Toe Front. 3. Bounce. 4. Lean away from the foot that's up. 5. Turn heel out. 6. Turn toes in. If part 6, turning the weighted toe in, throws you, dance it without it and it will come gradually. Many people leave it out anyway, although it gives the Bop a nice style.

## DANCE POSITION

The Bop should be danced in a slight crouch as in the photo, but remember to keep your head up and your back straight. The boy should be about two feet from the girl and hold her right hand with his left, holding the outside of her hand.



When the music starts the boy should establish the rhythm with a *slight* bounce and swing of the girl's hand. Then when he wants to start he should swing the girl's hand down definitely. That way you will start together. The hands (and arms slightly) will swing and bounce the same as the body—that is, down on BOOM and up on CHICK. To start to dance both the girl and the boy bend their knees on the BOOM (leaning slightly to the boy's right and the girl's left) and the boy picks up his *left* foot first and girl her *right* (leaning definitely to the side as you pick that foot up out front). Then you bounce and lean to the other side and pick the other foot up out front.

Following a partner exactly is not too important in the Bop, but so that you have confidence in the beginning use the routine I'm going to suggest. The routine will start with 4 basics.



BOOM



CHICK



# BOP

## DOUBLES

Start the same as with the basic to do these "doubles," that is, bounce and scoot your foot forward, leaning to the opposite side, BUT STAY OVER ON THAT SIDE—THEN BOUNCE AGAIN ON BOTH FEET—AND THEN AGAIN PICK UP THE SAME FOOT OUT IN FRONT. In other words you do one side of the basic twice. This, of course, will take two full counts for one side—(1) BOOM—CHICK (2) BOOM—CHICK. Do the same to the other side.

You bounce twice on each side and your heel swings out each



1. BOOM — — CHICK

2. BOOM — — CHICK

time you come up from the bounce. On these doubles keep your feet even closer together

—your toes pointed right toward each other when the one foot is up.

## WALKING THE BOP

So far our Bop has been in one place. Now we're going to move on it. Start the same as with the basic, bouncing and scooting your foot out in front—a little farther out this time as in the photos at the right.

Then STEP ON IT OUT IN FRONT (instead of bringing it back) bending your knees of course, because the count is BOOM. As you walk the Bop let your whole side go with the front foot so that first one shoulder points in the direction you're going and then the other.

Practice this walking Bop alone until you have mastered it and can change directions easily.





Also start Bopping in smaller and smaller circles until you're finally turning in place—both to the left and to the right.

Now that you've practiced and mastered this walking Bop let's work it into our routine. You've done four basics and two doubles. On the first step of the Bop-Walk the boy swings the girl's arm across to his right (see photo right). This turns the girl away from him and also turns his back slightly to the girl. Then, on the next step he swings the girl's arm back which brings partners facing each other, then the arms forward, facing away again, and so on. Partners' outside and inside feet are together on this. As usual the

boy picks up his left, girl her right to begin.

Do four of these walk steps—on the fourth the boy's arm is swung back. On the fifth step he swings his arm forward a little farther and swings the girl clear under his arm (letting her hand turn lightly around his). The girl takes 2 steps to turn under the boy's arm while the boy takes two Basics in place as the girl is going under.

After this is easy the boy should for variety try going under his own arm at the same time the girl goes under. When you go under your arm remember—keep bopping—don't just walk around.



## THE CHASE



This step's a lot of fun. As soon as the girl gets under her arm in the walk the boy turns away from her letting go of her hand. He can turn either to the left or the right. Immediately he starts Bop-Walking away from her and she follows. When she catches the boy she taps him on the shoulder—he turns back—she turns away, and he chases her until he catches her and taps her on the shoulder. Then she chases him and so on. It's up to the boy to stop this and he does so by tapping the girl and taking her hand when she turns around—in- stead of running again.

On this one when you're chasing your partner your shoulders will lean to opposite sides, since when the boy is on his left, the girl will be on her right. Do this as many times as you like, although it gets monotonous if overdone. Some teenagers dance it like a game of tag—but keep the feeling of the Bop and step on the beat no matter how fast you go. When the boy takes the girl's hand start through the routine again from the beginning.

**ROUTINE:** 4 Singles, 2 Doubles, Walk 4 and Girl (or both) under on 2, The Chase.

## THE SPINNER

After the Chase do this "Spinner." When the girl turns toward the boy after being tagged he puts his right arm around her waist—she puts her left arm on his shoulder. Then in this position Bop-Walk an even number of steps, say 4, to the boy's left. Again, you will alternately face your part-

ner and face away slightly (see photos). This is up to the boy with his right arm to turn the girl first toward himself and then away. Then one time when partners are facing, the boy will turn away more forcefully—pushing the girl away with his right hand (photo to the right) so that she makes a

complete turn to her right. At the same time the boy's momentum should cause him to make a complete turn to his left. Both take two steps to make the turn. When you get around facing each other the boy takes the girl by the hand and starts through the routine again.



Facing



Facing Away



# THE SCOOTER



BOOM



CHICK

This is one of the most popular and typical of Bop steps. To learn the Scooter do this exercise. Pick one foot up out front in the usual manner, toe down, heel high (and no weight on it). Now, staying in this position, move sideways *toward the foot that's up* by moving first your heel and then your toe, and again heel and toe and so on. Let the foot out front just ride lightly, barely touching, and don't do anything with it for the time being (photo above). To move this way, of course, you must alternately put your weight on your toe

(move the heel) and then weight on your heel (move the toe). It helps to lean away from the foot that's up and riding free. This means, also, that you'll be leaning *away from the direction you're going*.

Now do this just as thoroughly to the other side. When you can move easily in this fashion to either side add this—start tapping the toe of the free foot each time you move the *heel or toe* of the weighted foot. Practice it.

Now start thinking about music, if you haven't already.



BOOM



CHICK

Move your heel sideways on BOOM and your toe on the CHICK. And *bounce* a little on the BOOM, straighten up on CHICK.

Finally, with that free foot, begin tapping first your heel and then your toe. When the heel of the weighted foot moves you tap the other heel, and they'll be right together (see photo). When the toe of the weighted foot moves tap the toe of the free foot and they will point together. Heels will come together on BOOM and toes will come together on CHICK—one foot is free of weight. This step is a sideways move and remember to lean well away from the foot that's riding free. When you change directions lean to the opposite side.

You will find that you do this more easily to one side than the other. This is natural, but try to compensate for this by practicing more to your awkward side. Most right-handed people have a stronger left leg, but more dexterity in their right. Below are two more photos of a couple doing the Scooter.

*ROUTINE: 4 Singles, 2 Doubles, Walk 4 and Girl (or both) under on 2, The Chase, Spinner, and Scooter (4 to each side).*

# BOP!

# THE DROP



This is a good-looking step and it takes a certain amount of physical strength to do it.

Partners drop hands and in a series of four steps gradually drop down onto their heels and then come back up to standing position in four steps. In this one do not attempt to swing your heel out in typical Bop style, but rather keep both feet pointing the same direction. Also, keep your feet fairly close together.

You turn from one side to the other as you gradually let yourself down. Start by bouncing on *both* feet and turning slightly to the boy's left and the girl's right—touching your toe out in front (boy's left and girl's right)—then do the same to the other side, bending your

knees a little more on the next bounce and touching the other toe out to the front. As you go down keep your back straight and your head up. Arms should be held out to the side as in the photos. Try snapping your fingers on each off-beat (CHICK) to help your rhythm. On four counts you should get far enough down for the girl's skirt to just about touch the floor, then gradually come up in the same fashion. Bounce a little on every beat as you go down and up. Practice this so that you gain strength and control. It's not good just to drop suddenly to a position where you're sitting on your heels, but rather let yourself down and up gradually, accenting each beat softly. Add this to the routine.

## FLEA HOP

This is an old musical-comedy step put to a new use and done in a slightly different way. Start the same as in the basic, bouncing, then leaning to one side as you straighten up—

only this time straighten up from the bounce sharply—so sharply that it causes you to take a little hop in the direction of the foot that's up. Actually the hop should be quite smooth, more like a skip sideways of a few inches. Then

bounce on *both* feet and do it to the other side. Count this if you like as BOUNCE—SKIP, BOUNCE—SKIP, etc. On this one lean away from the foot you're picking up even more than usual. To start, boy picks up left, girl right.



BOUNCE — — SKIP



BOUNCE — — SKIP

## THE CROSS-OVER



CROSS — — CHICK



CROSS — — CHICK

This is one of the essential Bop steps, because it can be used in combination with so many other steps. It starts the same as the basic. You bounce and slide that foot forward, toe down as usual. However, you won't bring it back beside your other foot, but will cross it over (see photos) and bounce on it crossed over and then pull the other foot out from

behind on the "CHICK." This back foot pulled out slides forward, toe touching, as you start the second half of the step. It likewise crosses over as you bounce on it. Count this, if you like, as CROSS—CHICK, CROSS—CHICK, etc.  
**ROUTINE:** 4 Singles, 2 Doubles, Walk 4 and Girl (or both) under on 2, The Chase, Spinner, Scooter (4 to each

side), The Drop, Flea Hop, Cross-over.  
This routine by now is long and complex. You should feel free to change it and adjust it to suit your own needs. You probably have anyway without my telling you. The routine does not form a complete list of Bop steps, by any means, but does include the most popular and typical steps.

## PART II PASSES

Passes are not so much steps as new figures in which you pass or approach your partner, sometimes going under his or her arm, sometimes not. In all these the footwork is the *Walking Bop*. To prepare yourself

to do these easily review the Walk, dancing it in all directions, changing directions easily. Do smaller and smaller circles until you're turning in place, both to the left and to the right.

## PASS LEFT (AND UNWIND)



Bringing her under his left arm.



Turning to face her. She will come back the same way.

The boy faces the girl, holding the outside of her right hand (regular hand position). He pulls the girl toward him and to his left on the first step, raising his arm high enough to let the girl pass under. He steps to the right of, and toward her, as he does this. Bop three steps on this and you will just about trade places.

As the boy does not change his hand grip during this he will come out with a back-hand grip and must bring the girl back in reverse order to unwind his hand and come out with the same grip. Unwinding, you also take three steps and again trade places so that you return to your original position.

# BOP!



## HANDSHAKE

Again the boy has the girl's right hand with his left and he pulls the girl toward him and *across to his right*, changing her hand to his right. As he changes the hand he turns his back to the girl and returns her hand to his left behind his

own back. Completing this he turns and faces the girl. The boy's hand may or may not come out with a back-hand grip, and if it does he unwinds in the same way that he did in the pass left with another 3 steps.



*Changes in front.*



*Turns back to girl and changes behind. Then faces her and unwinds.*

## DISHRAG

This pass is known as wringing the dishrag. The boy holds the girl by the outside of both hands. He swings both hands to the side, lifting them high and making an arch. This puts you almost back to back. You keep right on going—both under the arms until you return

to your original position. This can be done to either side. Try it both ways to see if one is easier than the other. The boy must remember to reach back over his head as both go under the arms in order to avoid bumping shoulders. Again take about 3 steps to do this.



*Swing arms high to the side—*



*Keep going—and continue all the way around.*

## PASS RIGHT (Both Under)

The boy holds girl's right hand with his left. He pulls the girl toward him and *across to his right*, lifting his left arm high enough for the girl to go under. The boy should get the feeling here that he's reaching across in front of his own face. As she goes under, her hand will turn lightly inside the boy's hand. Just as soon as her shoulder passes the boy's, the boy, whose hand is still high, will go under his own arm, then lower arms and face the girl. This will take about 3 Bop steps.



*Girl goes under.*



*Boy starts under.*

## HAND AROUND



*Passing her hand around.*



*Spinning her and returning her hand to his left.*

The boy pulls the girl toward him and he takes a step toward her so that he's almost as close as regular ballroom dance position. He passes the girl's right hand around behind her back, reaches around her with his right and takes the girl's hand. Then, having the girl's right hand behind her back (see photo), the boy pulls the girl's hand toward him which causes her to make a complete turn. As she finishes turning, the boy changes her hand back to his left. As you begin this step the girl must have her arm very pliable so that it's easy for the boy to pass her hand around. During the entire step the boy does the Basic in place.

## ROCK AND AROUND



*Together*



*Away*



*Around*

The boy holds the girl by both hands. He pulls her a step toward him and at the same time he takes a step towards her. Then both rock back a step. Then the boy faces slightly to his left and turns the girl slightly to her left, still holding both hands. To do this the boy holds his right hand out to the side and reaches across himself with his left. In this position take two steps around. That is, the girl takes two forward and he takes two forward, but in opposite directions so that you go around each other. Then repeat. Various patterns can be worked out with this.

## AROUND THE WORLD

During this entire pass, the boy does the Basic in place. He changes the girl's right hand from his left to his right—then pulls her toward him and to his right, raising his right arm high and to the side. The girl



*Under Right*



*Change Behind*



*Return Under Left*



## TWISTER

The boy reaches across with his right hand and takes the girl's right. He starts Bopping forward and the girl starts forward. This means that you'll be Bopping around each other in opposite directions. In order to get the style with this one, swing the girl's arm forward and back definitely. This will twist her one way and another and show off the step better. After going around holding right hands the boy can reach across with his left, take the girl's left (see photo to right) and start Bopping around the girl in the other direction. If you like you can do the twister holding both hands—it's much easier to twist the girl in this position by alternately pushing and pulling both hands. As you change directions keep Bopping—don't let down.



goes under and this puts her behind the boy as he still faces away. He reaches behind himself with his free left hand and takes the girl's hand from his right. Then raising his left arm high and out to the side he

pulls the girl back in front of him under his left arm. So this is what happens—the girl goes under his right behind him and comes back under his left to her original position. Take 3 steps to get behind—3 to return.

## SWING BOP



*BOOM*



*CHICK*

In this you dance the Bop like the Swing-Bop steps to a swing pattern. You'll see a great deal of this "Swing-Bop," but in order to do many of the variations you have to break out of the pattern now and then and do straight Bop.

Most of the "passes" can be done with this step pattern. Take two Basic steps of regular Bop, the boy of course picking up his left first, girl her right.

Then you take two *very small* plain walking steps back from

each other. For the boy that'll be back with a *right-left*, for the girl—back with a *left-right*. I say plain because there'll be no bounce on them. This puts you at arm's length. Then you start through it again. This time, though, because of being at arm's length you will step towards your partner on the bounce of the first step (BOOM) of the regular Basic as in the photo above. Count one Swing-Bop pattern as BOOM — CHICK, BOOM — CHICK, WALK-BACK, etc.

# BOP

## IMPROVISATION

Perhaps the most fun of all in dancing the Bop is getting to the place where you no longer have to think about steps and combinations, but can improvise as you go along. Following, then becomes less important and partners steps complement, rather than imitate each other. Your mind goes free and anything you do is the Bop. When you become this good you can dance more away from your partner and give rein to true improvisation.

This takes constant practice. As you dance don't be afraid to try something new. Now and then you'll discover a new pass or step quite by accident. Don't resist it. Try to do it again and if you like it work on it. This will develop your own style.

Also, you'll notice that different people have different ways of doing everything—as well as the Bop. Don't reject them as "wrong." Rather see what you can learn from other styles. If you think it's good, adopt it in your own dancing.

Again—practice! The Bop is a new dance with unique, unnatural movements. Unnatural in that you lean away from the foot that you pick up and sometimes move in the opposite direction from that in which you're leaning. Try to make these movements natural to you.

Through practice and dancing for fun you can attain a mastery of the Bop.

© Columbia Records Reg. Printed in U.S.A.

### HOW TO DANCE THE BOP

COPYRIGHT 1966 by Art Silva. All rights are fully protected. No part of this manual may be reprinted without written permission of the author.

CAUTION: AMATEURS and PROFESSIONALS are hereby warned that this book is for personal use only and that no part of it may be used, directly or indirectly, in teaching or instruction for profit.

COLUMBIA RECORDS