



Larry's Corner

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Dance Etiquette

I have been noticing for a while now that dance floor etiquette is disappearing. So I am publishing Etiquette again.

Line of Dance is counter clockwise around the room for dances that move, like Foxtrot, and Waltz.

People who aren't moving like Rock and roll, Rumba, or Swing Dance in the middle of the room.

If you bump into someone, say sorry.

If you step on partner, say your sorry, then forget it. (Don't rag on it.)

Finish the song you started dancing to, before excusing yourself.

Don't do a step that requires kicking, on a crowded floor.

Dance etiquette offenders

Bulldog: One who does step or kick, no matter who is in the way.

Chatter box: One who is always talking. (Social talk ok but not constantly)

Crooner: One who sings or hums with music.

Debater: One who talks politics or religion while dancing.

Iceberg: One with no smile (At least look like your having fun.)

Jolly Extrovert: One who is cheerful with surrounding people, but forgets his own partner.

Quitter: Suddenly tired 1/2 way through song. (Finish Song)

Wrong way charlie: Clockwise traveler. (Against line of dance)

Do you have any likes or dislikes, stories, or helpful hints for dancing? If so, write it down and give to Larry Ablin or Barb Johnson. We will add it to one of the future News letters.

If you would like to tell us how you became interested in dancing, write it down and give to Larry or Barb, we will add your picture with it and put it in one of the future

If you have anything you would like to write for us, just write it up and give to Barb or Larry.

I enjoy writing something for you. LARRY

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Out on the Dance Floor

OK, so now you and your partner are getting out on the floor to dance. This section provide some tips on things you should do when dancing.

- Follow the line of dance -- dance counter-clockwise around the room for the dances that progress/travel around the floor. Some moves may take you against line of dance and it's OK to do them if the area behind you is clear, but watch where you're going. Just remember that you don't really want to be going against line of dance for more than a couple of steps.
- Stay in the proper section of the dance floor. Faster moving couples stay to the outside and slower moving/stationary couples stay to the inside, just like traffic. This is very important because people travel at different speeds and if you're in the wrong section of the floor, you can end up blocking or running into other dancers or maybe force them to dance around you when they shouldn't have to. If you're not traveling, then get to the center to dance; don't try to hide in the corners because you'll end up blocking traffic on the outside of the room.
- Don't practice routines at social dances. There are other times and places for doing routines.
- Don't teach if you weren't asked to -- remember that the social dance floor is not a classroom. Unless the other person specifically asks for help or advice or you already know that the person is willing to accept unsolicited help and advice, then you should avoid trying to teach things to your dance partners. This is especially true if you're not a dance teacher; leave the instruction to the ones most qualified to give it. However, you should feel free to ask for feedback from your partner on how a move felt or something. I do this at times in order to gauge how well I'm dancing and get tips on how to improve. If I don't ask for feedback, then I won't know what's wrong and can't try to fix it. :) But avoid telling your partner how to do something when out social dancing. There are other times and places for teaching.
- It's also generally not a good idea to ask someone to teach you a certain dance if you don't know it at all, particularly if you're asking someone you don't know very well. This puts the other person in an awkward situation -- they may not want to turn you down, but they may also not want to take the time to teach you when you don't know the dance at all. It's different if you only know a few steps, because then

you can at least do just those steps. A better option is to hint that you'd like to dance, but don't know the dance at all because this gives the other person an option -- offer to teach you some steps or just accept it as a legitimate rejection. If it gets treated as a rejection, just accept that and don't hold it against the person; asking to be taught on the dance floor is asking for a pretty big favor.

- Both partners need to look out for danger and potential collisions. Generally this task is performed by the man, but the woman must warn the man if he's moving into danger and doesn't realize it which will often happen when the man is moving backwards (and so can't see exactly where he's going). If the danger is still some distance away, just keep an eye on it. If it's closer, like only a few steps away, the woman should signal the man with a gentle squeeze, not a death grip, on his arm. The man will then attempt to alter what he was doing so as to avoid a collision, but the woman may assist in this if necessary. As a last resort the woman can stop dancing to prevent the couple from moving anywhere else, but this should be done only in emergencies; you should always try to avoid the danger as early as possible and allow the man a chance to move out of it.
- If a collision occurs, apologize to the couple you collided with. This goes for both couples involved, regardless of which couple bumped into the other.
- Use caution when entering and leaving the dance floor when other couples are still dancing, so that you avoid causing collisions. Also, try to avoid stopping while dancing so that you don't block traffic.
- Practice good floor craft. This means two things - - avoiding collisions and keeping the flow of your dance. Lots of social dancing helps you learn floor craft and how to plan ahead and select the right steps for the situation you're in. However, even without lots of steps at your disposal, you can still do things like overturn or under turn turns, hesitate at the end of a step or in the middle of a step, etc., so you should always do your best to avoid collisions. Don't just assume someone else will get around you or clear the way for you. Things will flow a lot more smoothly if everyone does their best to practice good floor craft.

Miscellaneous

This section is basically for other points that didn't really seem to fit in any of the above categories. Also included are points that may be more personal than general rules, but others may also like to follow.

- Always thank your partner after the dance is over. Being polite goes a long way on the dance floor. People generally like to dance with other people who are polite and well mannered. It's also nice to walk your partner off the floor when the dance is over, but not required, especially since both of you may be looking for another partner for the next song.
- Personally, I attempt to dance with everyone I know at a social dance. Now I know so many people that I'm almost never able to do that anymore, but I do try to dance with a lot of people, especially ones that I haven't seen for a while.
- Try to avoid dancing with the same person many times, particularly in a row. Social dancing is just that, social, so you should try to dance with many partners. That's why it's usually a good idea to go and find a new partner after each dance. If you and your partner both wish to keep dancing with each other, then it is OK to continue to do so. But if you are going to dance with each other multiple times, it is still a good idea to change partners once in a while. There are other people that want to dance with both of you, too.

What to Wear?

Dancing has its own culture. If you want to join a group of dancers and enjoy their company, it is a good idea to follow the accepted customs of their dance group. One of the ways you get accepted into a group is by the way you're dressed.

How formally should we dress at a dance? The general rule is this: the more formal the dance, the more formal the outfit. For example, if you are invited to a formal charity ball, anything less than a tuxedo for men or ball gown for women would be inappropriate. On the other hand, at a dance lesson at your local studio, there is usually no need to dress formally.

A little common sense goes a long way. Also, if in doubt, follow the crowd! See what others do and follow suit. If all else fails, you can always ask the dance organizers about the dress code.

Below I give a guideline and explanation for dress code, which you may see on invitations and announcements, as well as a general idea of what to wear at different dance venues.

- **White tie:** White tie is the most formal category of dressing. For the gentleman, it means a black tailcoat with matching trousers trimmed by ribbon of braid or

satin on the outside of each trouser leg, a white pique' tie, white pique' single or double-breasted vest, and a wing-collar shirt with a stiff pique' front. White gloves are nice optional accessories for gentlemen. The lady appears in a ball gown, which is an evening dress with a full skirt, possibly with open back and low neck line. Elbow-length gloves are a nice addition for the lady.

- **Black tie:** Gentlemen in black tuxedo coat, trousers trimmed with satin ribbon along the outside of the legs, cummerband and bow tie. The phrase "black tie" does not refer to the color of the tie. In fact colorful ties (with matching cummerbands) are very popular. Ladies appear in ball gowns.
- **Black tie optional:** Same as above, except gentlemen have the option of wearing a regular suit with a tie (or bow tie preferred), and ladies wear a cocktail gown or dinner dress. Long to full-length skirts are preferred; short skirts are not recommended.
- **Formal:** Gentlemen in suit and tie (nowadays a sport coat is often an acceptable replacement for a full suit), ladies in cocktail gown or evening dress.
- **Semi-formal:** Applies to most dances at studios, universities, and dance halls. Gentlemen in dress slacks with dress shirt and tie, jacket is optional. Other options include a vest or a sweater that shows the tie. At the lower end of formality, these events can be attended without a tie, e.g. with a turtleneck and jacket. Ladies in evening dress or dinner dress, but other chic outfits are also acceptable (like flowing pants, etc.)
- **Informal:** Applies to practice dances, workshops, and dance lessons. Dress for comfort, but stay away from shorts, tank tops, and sneakers. Gentlemen can wear solid color T-shirts, turtlenecks, mock turtlenecks, and cotton slacks. Ladies have a much wider set of clothing options. Use your imagination and sense of fashion. Don't forget your dance shoes!
- **Country/Western:** Country western attire varies according to different regions, but generally it is acceptable to go in blue or black jeans (not stone-washed) and cowboy boots. Make sure that the boots will not mark the dance floor. If you wear a hat, it is best to take it off when going on the floor. Note that country western folks can be very sensitive about their hats. It is improper to touch or otherwise han-

dle someone's hat, even if it sits on a table. For a lady to pick up and put on a gentleman's hat is considered very flirtatious.

- **Milongas:** (Argentine Tango) For both ladies and gentlemen, black or dark themes are preferred.
- **Latin:** This refers to venues that specialize in Salsa, Merengue, Cumbia, etc. For gentlemen, any button-up shirt, solid T-shirt or mock turtleneck, dress slacks, and dance shoes. Jackets are nice, but a vest can be even more stylish. Unlike most other dance venues, bright and colorful outfits for gentlemen are acceptable, although dark themes are more common. Ladies can (and often do) wear sexy outfits: both short skirts and longer slit skirts are popular. Low necklines and exposed mid-riffs are not uncommon.
- **Swing:** There are no strict rules for swing outfits. Both the Gentleman and the Lady wear outfits that are reasonably neat and chic, although often not very formal. Many types of swing are fast-paced and athletic, so wearing suitable clothing is essential. For example, the Lady would be well advised to stay away from short, tight skirts. A cute trend, especially in Lindy Hop circles, is to wear vintage outfits from the 1930's and 40's. But this is not done everywhere and is not at all a requirement.

Comfort and safety:

Wear clothing that makes it easy and enjoyable to dance, both for yourself and your partner.

- Regardless of how informal the dance is, always wear dance shoes, or shoes with leather or vinyl bottoms. Do not wear sneakers or other shoes with rubber or spongy soles. They can stick to the floor during turns and spins and cause ankle and knee injuries.
- Avoid sleeveless shirts and strapped dresses, especially for active dancing: It is not pleasant to have to touch the damp skin of a partner.
- Sleeves that are baggy or cut low in the armpit are not a good idea, especially in Latin and swing dancing, because dancers need access to partner's back, and hands may get caught in baggy sleeves.
- Accessories like big rings, watches, brooches, loose/long necklaces, and big belt buckles can be dangerous. They can catch in partner's clothing, scratch and bruise.

- Gentlemen: if you have no place to leave your keys and loose change, carry them in the *left* pocket of your trousers. This makes it less likely to bruise your partner.

- Long hair should be put up or tied in a pony tail. It is difficult to get into closed dance position when the lady has long flowing hair (hair gets caught in gentleman's right hand). It is also not fun to be hit in the face with flying hair during turns and spins.

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Larry L Ablin : lablin@frontiernet.net

Phone: 952-898-3513

Barb Johnson : westcoast65@frontiernet.net