

Larry's Corner

(Dance) Etiquette - For Everyone

1. If you try to do a fancy move and your partner doesn't get it, it's probably ok to try it again, but if she doesn't get it that time, please **DON'T** keep trying it over and over again! (unless she asks you to) It's frustrating for both of you and embarrassing for her. Even if you're an excellent dancer, she won't enjoy dancing with you if you keep trying to force her to learn something that she probably needs lessons to learn!

2. When it's really, really crowded, **PLEASE** remember to alter your dancing (make it "smaller") and don't spin the woman out to go crashing into the next couple. Men, it is **YOUR** job to stay in your area and prevent spike heels from going into the next woman's foot! Your shoes are closed so they better protect your feet, but you don't know what it's like for women who are wearing open shoes to get stepped on and sliced open by a pointy heel!

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3. To dancers who know lots of footwork / steps: if you can see that the woman doesn't know many steps to do without you, please don't leave her hanging! It might not be fun for her to dance alone and to keep doing the basic by herself. Save your fancy steps for a woman who loves to do them too.

4. When a woman says no b/c she's going to the restroom, she doesn't like merengue, or she's getting a drink, it is **NOT** a personal rejection of you! Even if you've asked women who have made up excuses, that does not mean the rest of them aren't being honest.

5. Advanced dancers: **PLEASE** remember lots of people have been in car accidents, have neck and back problems, and have had sports injuries,

so please be careful and respect the woman's wishes if she resists neck rolls under your arm, etc.

Get to know your partner. Let the first dance be a warm-up or introduction for you and your partner. Don't begin a dance with new partner with all your most complicated, difficult moves. Allow yourself time to communicate your style and rhythm to your partner. This applies to both leaders and followers.

Respect your partner. If your partner seems tired, tense, anxious or just having a bad night, adjust your dancing speed and style to make him/her relax and feel comfortable. If you are dying to try out triple turns or fancy patterns, wait until you're both up to the challenge. If not tonight, then there's always tomorrow. At the end of the dance, be gracious, express thanks and appreciation for your partner efforts.

Relax and have fun. Many people dance to decompress after a stressful day at work, school or home. Try to leave your troubles at the door and enjoy the warmth and positive energy of the people around you. If it helps, tell your friends that you've had a rotten day and that you're glad to have a chance to unwind. Most people will identify your situation and will be supportive. Smile, make eye contact

and have fun with your partner.

Be patient. Both beginner or experienced dancers have "off nights" Sometimes your rhythm, timing and control are just not there. Don't get upset, take a deep breath and go easy on your self and your partner. Don't berate yourself or your partner for mistakes. Just smile and keep going. This is not a competition and your life does not depend on how well you execute moves like "The Tornado". I am still grateful for seasoned dancers who stayed calm and supportive and smiled inspite of my mistakes.



Be thankful. Be thankful for your non-dancing friends who never see you anymore but still love you anyway. Be thankful for your spouse / significant other and family who forgive you for the dirty dishes in the sink, unpaid bills and unfinished chores that pile up while you spend your nights at the clubs. Show appreciation to the band members and D.J.s who give us the wonderful music that inspires and excites us. They love talking with the dancers.

Know the music. Listen to the music in the clubs, on the radio shows and in the CD stores. Find out what artists and types of music you like and talk to the D.J.s and band members about different music styles. Dance music is incredibly diverse and constantly changing. Listen to the local radio programs that discuss the roots, history and trajectory of salsa music. A greater knowledge of the rhythm and structure of the music will improve your dancing

and heighten your appreciation of the dance experience.

No dancer, no matter how advanced, should give instruction or "hints" to his / her partner unless and until the partner requests it. Unsolicited "help" presumes (usually incorrectly) that the help-er is more advanced than the help-ee, and is typically not welcome. If I'm uncertain whether or not I did what the leader intended me to do, I usually say "Did I do that right?" or "I didn't catch on to that -- could we do it again so I can learn it?" or "Feel free to give me any hints that will improve my following/make me more fun to dance

with." Likewise, even in class, never "help" a leader unless they say something like: "Was that right?" or "Was my timing off?" or "I'm not getting this -- do you know how to do it?"

(Dance) Etiquette - Female

I don't want to dance with him, what do I say? A simple "No" is NEVER the correct response to being asked to dance! While it is perfectly acceptable to turn down a dance with anybody you don't want to dance with, it is never acceptable to do it rudely. Generally, learn to add a thank you, and even an "excuse" to your "No".

A few examples:

"No thank you"

"No, thank you, I'm just listening to the music"

"No thank you, I'm relaxing",

"No thank you, I'm getting a drink"

"No thank you, I'm tired"

"Not right now, thanks"

Say it with a smile! It's generally considered polite to avoid the "distasteful" or "exasperated" look when a guy asks you to dance.

Don't say "No thank you, Maybe later", unless you mean it!!! Just makes more trouble for you later if you didn't want to dance with him in the first place.

Firm yet friendly . . .

Can I ask that guy over there to dance?



In a word, hell yes (ok, two words)! Now, I'm not a lady, nor do I have any idea how women think (or really do I know anything at all about them, as I have proven over and over and over again in my life). However, I've always thought it was nice being asked to dance. Maybe I'm just lazy (which is probably true), but it sure is great when all you have to do is relax and be approached by people who would like to dance with you. Should a woman have to sit and listen to song after song go by that she wants to dance to, but doesn't get asked? I say, hell no.

However, in the same breath, I urge common sense in this situation. This applies to both men and woman and is covered in other places, but let me review some basics. If someone is coming off the floor from a dance, and is a sweaty mess, that might not be the opportune time to ask them to dance.

If someone looks like they are bee

lining for the bathroom or the bar, that isn't the correct time either. If someone is obviously avoiding making eye contact with you, you might want to think twice about approaching them for a dance. Just use the basic telltale signs! All you have to do is reverse the roles. Ask yourself what you would be doing when you want to dance, and you are waiting to be asked. If you see a guy on the edge of the floor, tapping his foot madly, chances are, he's just waiting (like you would be). Go get him!

What should a follower do when she's dancing with someone who is not staying on the beat and/or gets off on their footwork? I'm not sure what the answer is but have thought of a few possibilities.

Q With respect to a leader that is "*dancing to a different drummer*":

A. Just follow the leader's rhythm. (This is really hard to do when your feet & body are wanting to groove to the beat. Not to mention it makes for a miserable dance experience. Plus you run the risk of other potential partners crossing you off their dance card because they think you're rhythmically challenged. But if that's the general consensus, that's what you do."

B. Ignore the leader's rhythm and stick to the rhythm of the music.

Q When a leader's footwork goes astray (this happens a lot with beginning dancers when they start doing fancier patterns):

A. Follower continues and waits for the leader to "catch up"

B. Follower "catches up" with the leader

When I first started dancing 28 years ago, I remember being told that it is always the leader's responsibility to catch up, no matter who made the mistake. So leaders if you feel that you are off with your partner either catch up with her, stop and start again, or lead her to catch up with you.

You've got a rhythmically challenged partner, what should you do? A follower's "job" is to follow, so I say try your darn-dest to figure out what beat your partner is on, and try to keep it. If there is no rhyme nor reasons to the rhythm of your partner, then I believe it is ok to "help him along". When I first started to dance with people (women) better than myself, I noticed sometimes they would help me stay on the beat (in essence, back-leading me). I never minded this at all, but BE CAREFUL. If the follower starts dictating the rhythm and speed of the dance, it's not dance anymore! What I am advocating is a very gentle process! Really, this is no different than an unguided follower's turn. During a free spin, or dancing



shines (not in closed position) the follower is expected to keep perfect rhythm anyway, now the follower is just keeping that same rhythm in closed position, gently guiding the leader to follow it!

With regards to mistakes . . . I have to agree! Followers, unfortunately, it is your job to catch up to the leaders beat. However, when I'm dancing, I always compensate (as a leader) for my partner. If my follower skips two beats, and say starts a back step to her basic two beats early, I will just go with her, right into a basic, two beats early. This can lead to confusion however, if you both are trying to compensate for EACH OTHER, which happens on occasion.

What do you think? Email in your etiquette! to labin@charter.net
More Coming soon!

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 Newsletters. 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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