



# Larrys Corner

Volume 9, Issue 4

April 2009

This is called Larrys Corner because when I teach I stand in the corner so I can see everyone.

If you want to read dance stories they are under Headlines or Larrys Corner.

[Http://www.comedancewithus.com](http://www.comedancewithus.com) Or  
<http://www.dancempls.com>

Larry L Ablin : 612-599-7856  
lablin@charter.net

Barb Johnson :  
612-599-9915  
westcoast1@charter.net

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 about, just write it up and give to Barb or Larry. I enjoy writing something for you.

Come Dance With Us

*Inside this issue:*

Leaders Learning To Follow and Vice-versa	1
Dance Etiquette - Male	2
Dance Etiquette - Female	4

## Leaders Learning To Follow and Vice-versa

Learning how to follow will enhance your ability to lead providing you properly digest the obtained data from the experience. The same goes for followers who get a taste of leading. It manifests itself in better following. I took a teachers class where I learned to do both parts of each dance. Makes it much easier to lead and explain how to do the other parts and how to follow if you've done both yourselves.

Knowing both parts is fun and can help you in many ways but I think it's wiser to learn your own part well first. Some dancers should know both parts. Teachers for example. Everyone who teaches should know both parts, not just know them, and know them well enough to do them on a social dance floor.

I feel strongly that everyone should, at some point in their dancing, learn the other side. I think it makes the leaders much more sensitive as a leader and also a better leader because they can feel what a lead should or shouldn't feel like from the follower's side. The followers will learn to cut the leaders a little more slack because they finally understand just how difficult it is to lead. They also will understand just how pleasant it is to dance with someone who truly follows and doesn't back lead, walk in or over syncope.

I encourage my advanced students to come back through my courses as the opposite of what they normally do. I allow them to take the lower level classes for free if they want to do this. I can see a great improvement in their dancing.

It always amuses me when a leader who is learning to follow comes over and asks me to tell the leaders in class to stop holding on with their thumbs :-)

Teach everyone, male and female, the basics of both leading and following at the same time. And in part due to this approach, I felt I was learning much more rapidly than in any other type of dance I've been exposed to. Now it's possible that the somewhat different focus and character of Tango cause this to work better than it would with, say, WCS, but it would at least be an interesting experiment to try with some open-minded novice dancers.

I think that it is best to learn both parts. It is very helpful for the man to know the woman's part and for the woman to know the man's part for several reasons:

If a man teaches a woman (or if a woman teaches a man) he/she

needs to know the other part in order to teach it.

If a man learns to follow (or the woman learns to lead), then each will have a better understanding of the other.

If a man learns to lead (or the woman learns to follow), then he/she develops a better understanding of how to lead/follow because he/she knows what it is like to be on the receiving/giving end of it.

Learning both parts increases the number of people with whom you are able to dance.

Learning both parts helps you to develop a better understanding of the "big picture". Your view is not as one sided. There are probably other benefits, but I think that the ones listed are enough to convince someone that is really dedicated to dance to learn the other part.

### **Dance Etiquette - Male**

How do I ask a lady to dance? The wrong way: Point to the lady, then point to the floor right in front of you. Snap your fingers a few times for effect, and grimace as if she is taking to long. As she's getting up, turn your back to her and march on to the floor (don't bother to check if she's actually following you).

The right way. Walk to the lady, make eye contact, ask her "May I have this dance". IF she say's yes, extend your hand and lead her onto the dance floor, don't march out there alone). After the dance (even if the dance was "bad") do not bolt for the exit. Take her and lead her, approximately, back to the place from where you picked her up. Thank her for the dance!

### **SOME BIG (AND NOT SO BIG) TIPS FOR ASKING WOMEN TO DANCE:**

Here are some clues for asking that special someone to dance. These aren't rules, just tips you might want to think about.

.5) Hygiene! Hello . . . Wear deodorant, aftershave, cologne (in REASONABLE AMOUNTS). Don't stink when you dance. ;) There's no reason to. If you are getting turned down a lot, check your breath and your body odor. One more tip, don't overdo the cologne!

1) Make eye contact (if possible): If it appears as if she is avoiding looking at you, you're facing a possibility of being turned down. However, that shouldn't faze you necessarily. Only if it's obvious that she is avoiding looking at you, should you consider just staying away.

1.5) Never take being turned down to dance personally. There are SO many dancers in this world, and not everyone wants to dance with everyone else. Just move on to the next person, you can even add a "Thanks anyway".

2) If it appears they are on the way to the bar, or the restroom, wait for a more opportune time.

2.5) If the woman is coming off the dance floor, and looks like she's about to pass out from dehydration, you might want to wait for a more opportune moment, or go buy her a water, and then ask her to dance.

3) If they are obviously with someone else, you may want to read the body language clearly before asking her to dance. I ask women to dance all the time that are "with" other people, however if I don't already know them, I acknowledge the guy, usually with a nod, to let him now it's cool. Opinions vary on this, but there are plenty of women who go to clubs with guy's (boyfriends) and dance with other people. Likewise, there are plenty of people who will not take kindly to you asking THEIR date to dance. Pay attention to the body language, and read the situation before asking women to dance that are obviously with significant others.

4) Don't interrupt a conversation that a woman is having! When a good song comes on, some guys will butt in, admittedly rudely, and ask one to dance (even though they can plainly see that two people are conversing). Well, I can't recommend this. It's rude and extremely bad manners. However, it's ok to park yourself close enough to the two that are talking so that she can see that you are anxious to dance. At that point, it's up to her, if she wants to talk, or wants to dance.

5) Look at the edges of the dance floor! That's generally where people stand that are waiting to be asked to dance. Look for the woman madly tapping her foot, or swaying back and forth to the music. These are pretty telltale signs she's ready to dance, quite probably with the first guy that asks her, so GET MOVING!

**What should my first dance with a new lady be like?** The **wrong** way: Grab her and immediately start throwing her into every conceivable move you've ever learned in class. Forget about the closed position, just spin her absolutely as fast as you can, without stopping, in order to impress her with your amazing leading abilities. Forget about the rhythm, and through sheer force of will, get right into the most complicated and intricate patters that you know. Do all this as fast as humanly possible . . . If she can't keep up, she'll just be impressed with how good you are. ;) If you're not very fast, grab the woman in as close an embrace as possible, pressing her body up against yours so she can tell exactly how many sit-ups and crunches you do every day. Enjoy the dance, because it will probably be the last one you have with this follower . . .

The **right** way. Once on the floor, take the lady in closed position. Try to actually keep your right hand up high, under her shoulder blade, and put some strength there (so she has a nice place to rest her arm). It's a pretty clear clue to ladies, when a guy takes her in closed position and puts his right hand on her ass, that he's not that great a dancer (or interested in something completely different). Likewise, give her some space. Now, I like to dance very close sometimes, but with new dancers, I always let THEM determine the distance of the dance. I'm not going to plaster them against my body right off the bat (I wait at least until the middle of the song . . .that's a joke). ;)

For those who have taken my classes, this should be familiar. Start with "The Rock". "The rock" is exactly what it sounds like! You rock back and forth, with the lady, to the rhythm of the music. This can last from 5 seconds, to a minute, but I don't recommend starting to dance until you both are rocking (back and forth) in unison. This assures that you both are on the same beat (and listening to the same music). When you both are feeling the rhythm, start with the basic step! Keep her in closed position for a while, play with it, try a few simple inside/outside turns. Get to feel each other for a while. At this point, you can actually stop staring at the floor (your feet) and take a gander at who you're dancing with! Smile . . . relax . . . the rest is up to you.

Important Note #1: Try and determine the level of experience the lady has with dancing. A good leader will always match his skills with that of his follower (i.e. making it easier for her (and you both) to have an enjoyable dance). Obviously, if she is a beginner you don't want to be dragging her forcefully around the floor with complicated arm movements, and vice versa, if she is advanced, you don't want to keep doing the basic forever (although this can be ok in some situations).

## 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!

You've got a rhythmically challenged partner, what should you do? A follower's "job" is to follow, so I say try your best 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 use to dance with 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 . . . 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.