



Larrys Corner

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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.

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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. We enjoy writing something for you.

Come Dance With Us

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Dance Etiquette - Beginners

Practice makes perfect! Just make sure not to practice on the edges of the floor, taking huge steps, bumping into everyone around you, throwing your arms, elbows, knees, and heads into anything and everything that gets near you. That would be bad! ;)

The Six Golden Rules: (most of these apply to everyone, not just beginners).

1) **Be aware of the people around you** and actively avoid hitting them! Sounds simple right? Well, if this sounds simple to you then you haven't been dancing in some of the more crowded nightclubs. This can prove very difficult at times, and you have to keep your wits about you in order to "steer clear". Avoid throwing your partner (i.e. the follower) into people as a means of clearing space for yourself (that's a joke). If you're dancing in a crowded place, **don't take large steps**, keep your steps smaller (this will help with the faster music anyway).

2) If you knock into somebody, or step on somebody, acknowledge your mistake. **Say you're sorry!** You don't have to get on your hands and knees and beg for forgiveness (although it might help), but you do have to actually look at the person and acknowledge the fact that you hit them, stepped on them, whatever. Even a friendly nod is better than nothing! If they are busy dancing, and they ignore you, it's ok to go up afterwards and just say your sorry. Ladies with spiked heels that step on somebody DO have to get on hands and knees and beg for forgiveness.

3) **Let the show-off's, show off!** You can't stop them. It's gorgeous to watch two people really groove. As a beginner, it might be in your better interest to actually give these guys some room (as some can be mighty forceful in taking it from you). Just move your partner to a safer place on the floor. Generally, "shows" are held on the outside of the floor, the edges. If you're going to show off, you want people to see it, so you're not going to go to the center of the floor right? Beginner's may find more space, and easier dancing in the center, or even in front of the band (if there is one).

4) Partner dancing is showy! It's nice to have people admire your dance style and super fast, razor sharp moves. However, as an alternative view to that above, show off's have to pay special attention to rule number 1! Be aware of your surroundings! The worst part is, most show off's are good dancers, thus they already are aware of their surroundings. They just don't care. They are going to clear space for themselves to do their stuff, at whatever cost to those dancing around them! Well, that's just life. Some people are cool, some aren't! As a beginner, my advice is to avoid these people like the plague. Believe me, you won't be able to miss them out on the dance floor. When you're watching them, you'll be awed and entertained, when you're dancing next to them, you won't be!

5) **Lay off the fancy dips!** I know . . . believe me. There will be plenty of time for that later. For example, let's say you just learned this great dip in class and

you want to twirl the lady around five times, absurdly fast, catch her with one hand behind your back, and gracefully take her body to the floor, as the woman is astonished by your grace, and the crowd is awed by your speed. Unfortunately, this often turns out quite poorly when starting out! The five quick turns don't go as well as planned as the lady spins out of control crashing into the couple next to you. In a flailing attempt to grab her, you leap forward catching her and throwing her into a dip far too fast. As you are lowering her body, you notice the spiked heel of the lady dancing next to you flick up in the air towards your partner's head. As her head and the lady's heel nearly collide you attempt to jerk her out of the way, throwing her into someone's ass, and then throwing both of you off balance, as you land (not so gracefully) on the floor, on top of the woman who is never going to dance with you again (nor will any of her beautiful friends). Not the most beautiful of pictures eh? Well, I see it all the time! It never ceases to amaze me.

6a) Leaders **protecting your partner**: Adding on to all of our previous tips, the underlying theme is, your partner is **gold**. Her safety is in your hands, and only your hands. Whether she is a rote beginner, or a truly advanced dancer, you are the leader (at least in most cases). You've learned that through the use of well placed turns, and cross body leads, you can deftly navigate the most crowded of dance floors. Your partner is not a weapon, to be flung out like a dangerous projectile, in order to clear more space for yourself. Likewise, if she is swinging out of control, you might try to reign her in a bit. Remember the simple truth, followers are following your lead. If an accident happens it's always the leader's fault (whether it IS or not). Leader's need to be vigilant in preventing dance accidents before they happen! Stay sharp . . .

6b) Followers **protecting your partner**: Does that mean you can close your eyes, and go blithely wherever led? Well, yes and no. In many cases, you are at the leader's mercy, however, in some cases (cross body leads for example), you have many choices. For example, let's take the biggest problem. Huge steps! Most of the time, unless you're in a ballroom, you're not going to get away with taking enormous leaps away from your partner! Keep it small, keep it tight. Watch some of those advanced female dancers we have in our midst. I hate naming names, because inevitably I'll leave out someone who will read this, but I can't think of a female teacher who takes big steps (when not performing). One dancer in particular, you'll know her when you see her (and if she's at the club, you WILL see her), is just lightning fast in the smallest space I've ever seen. In fact most of the really advanced dancers, dance incredibly tightly, and very controlled. Oh, and one more thing, if you see your leader about to crash into someone else behind him (he can't see back there, trust me), it's polite to give him a little pat (with either your left or right hand), alerting him to the impending *crash*.

Sub Rules of Dipping: Know which direction you are going to dip the lady, and make sure you're not dipping her into somebody!

The two not-so-golden Rules

While it is ok to ask someone phenomenally better than yourself to dance, it's not ok to do it more than once, or over and over throughout the night (unless invited). Be respectful of their right to dance at their level. They're out to have a good time just like you. If you are going to ask someone phenomenally better than yourself to dance, be understanding of the fact that they may wish to wait for a song or two. If they say no, don't take it personally. You may just have asked at an inopportune time (i.e. their favorite super fast dance tune just came on)! It's ok to ask again, once, but usually not in the same night.

The Opposite View

Advanced Dancers: Wow, a beginner just came up to you and asked you to dance during your favorite fast song, so you said "not right now, maybe later, thanks for asking", and went to dance with someone else. Be aware, and sensitive, to the fact that it is NOT easy to ask people to dance. He/She may have walked all the way across the floor, with her friends watching, to ask you that question that you so easily brushed aside. If you really just didn't want to dance with a beginner for that particular song, FIND him/her later and say something to the effect of "how about that dance". If you don't want to dance with a beginner, be POLITE about it, and go out of your way to be both charming and respectful.

Dance Etiquette - Advanced

Ok, you've been dancing for years. When you dance, people clear the floor. You've worked hard and are a skilled dancer. Yet, some pretty basic etiquette rules still apply for you as well. Most involve the use of floor space, and the "gentle" use of some of those skills. Finally, some special Etiquette (i.e. a higher standard) applies to teachers.

Let me start by acknowledging a simple truth. As you become a more advanced dancer, the ability to express yourself from and through the music greatly increases. You no longer have to count, nor think about "what am I going to do next"? Your body is now comfortable doing all the moves (yes, even the neck wrap, and drop). The dance becomes, ideally, an extension of yourself and your personal interpretation of the music. With this in mind, let's get to the meat.

Let me tell you a story, just from last night actually. I'm dancing, and I am **in** to the music. I'm really feeling it, and the amount of space I'm using is increasing. Pretty soon, I've cleared a nice area around myself, and I'm just flying through this dance. Then, out of nowhere, this total beginner couple comes right smack into my dance space, and starts practicing! I just can't believe it . . . right next to me, flinging his partner (and her shoes) dangerously close to my (and my partner's) heels. Ok, one of two things can happen at this point. I can either take my space back, which isn't very difficult, or, I can utilize my years of dance training to rein myself in a little. What did I do? Did I hustle this brand new dance couple off the floor because their drunken obliviousness interrupted my dance? That certainly would not have left them with a good feeling about their first trip to a club!

It ultimately is going to be determined by the specific facts of the situation you are in (and your mood at the time), but the FAQ urges restraint! Reign it in, keep it tight, give them a little more space. It takes a great dancer to dance fast and smooth in a very small space. I'm not saying it's easy to dance with speed and grace even in a large space, but I am saying that to do it in a controlled manner, in a smaller space, requires much more skill. Anyone can flail at enormous speed in a vast space. We see it all the time.

The Rule: Even more so than beginners, advanced dancers have a responsibility to be aware of their surrounding. As a beginner, you may not have the requisite skill to avoid another couple. As an advanced dancer, there's no such excuse.

Teachers: Pure and simple, teachers set the example for their students. In many ways, students emulate their teachers not only in their style, but in how they approach the entire "scene". I've actually seen a teacher, who shall of course remain nameless, clear space for themselves in the most alarming manner imaginable. As an example, these teacher's, while dancing on the edge of the floor, had a couple encroach upon their space (granted, it was during a pretty damn good show). The guy was definitely noticeably angry at this (at least it was noticeable to me), and on a back step (a rather large one), brought the back of his heel crashing down on the back of the encroacher's heel. Needless to say, the encroachers, who had been painfully oblivious to their encroachment, quickly retreated (in quite a bit of pain). No one was injured, no one's life was dramatically changed forever, but a pretty bad precedent was set, not only for the teachers themselves, but for anyone actually watching the "show". The moral of the story is pretty simplistic, as is the story itself. Teacher's have to set the example for their students, and keep dancing friendly.

Every beginner (and even advanced) class should **end with some basic rules about dancing and etiquette**. After all, if they don't learn it from you, who exactly are they going to learn it from? The basic rules I recommend, 1) Be aware of those dancing around you, 2) Say you're sorry and acknowledge stepping on somebody, and 3) Keep it small, and keep it tight. Grace before speed . . .

Being Asked to Dance by beginners, or in some cases, anyone: In this case, I think I'll start with what I consider to be "the rules", and digress (significantly) from there.

1) Always be respectful! It's just plain hard to ask someone to dance in the first place, but asking an Advanced Dancer to dance is even more difficult. They know they may not have the skills you do, but they've asked you to dance anyway, and that takes guts. In addition, respect the fact that in our society, [women ask men](#) to dance less often than vice-versa and thus, it takes more guts, and self assuredness, for women to ask men. Men, be extra-understanding of this!

2) If possible, say yes! By this I mean, if circumstances permit, and you've been asked to dance, say yes. What circumstances might prevent you from saying yes? A great song, wanting to dance with someone else, getting a

drink, the list is endless . . . However, the rule is simple. If you can say yes, do! This is one dance. 3-5 minutes. You might even like it (or you may not).

Now, after stating these basic rules, I'm going to give them some meat, and shred them to pieces. Remember these rules, as I tell you a few real life stories!

I remember, years ago at Kimballs, asking this fantastic dancer to dance. I mean, she was awesome. She looked me up and down, and asked me quite simply, "are you any good"? I had to answer, "well, I'm a beginner", because hell, it was true. With a look of absolute distaste, she said "I don't dance with beginners", and turned away from me. I was pretty crushed. Now, I might have stomached this better if my friends hadn't been watching the entire exchange, but of course, they had. Fast forward FIVE years, and I still remember this exchange! Must have been pretty powerful eh? Since then I've learned that being turned down for a dance isn't that bad a fate, however at the time, it was a powerful motivator to get better. I suppose some people are better at taking rejection than others.

Fast forward five years! I probably shouldn't write this, but since it happened recently, I thought I'd relate another personal experience. Last night, after a so-so band, the DJ finally decided to play some Cuban music. I felt great (because I love [Cuban music](#)) and I was ready to dance. Right when Bamboleo came on, one of my favorite bands, out of nowhere, this woman comes up, grabs me by the hand, and says, (I kid you not), "you must dance with me". Now, this is one great song, and I was bee-lining for Kristiaan (a great dancer), but what the hell, I said yes. As I lead her out on the floor, the real pain set in. She says "this is my first night dancing, and you absolutely have to teach me everything". Oh god! But I'm still ok, the music is just too good. However, as we dance, she continually asks me questions, stops to converse, etc . . . "How do I do this?" , "Am I doing this right?" Etc . . . All I want to do is dance! The entire 6 1/2 minute event "bummed my high". After the dance I made sure to lead her back to her table, and offer to get her a teacher's card for local lessons, but by that time, I really needed a "Dance-High" dance. In retrospect, I could have handled it better by being a bit firmer with her (i.e. Thank you, but not this dance, maybe in a bit), but at the time, for whatever reason, it just didn't occur to me. Granted, if I had been having good dances all night to great music, this probably wouldn't have been a very big deal, but since I hadn't yet had that one good dance, I was kind of yearning for it.

So, what the hell is the moral of that story? I certainly don't want to turn off beginner dancers from asking people to dance, because that IS the BEST way to get better, and I want to greatly encourage it (and I do mean GREATLY encourage it). However, I also want these same people to take a "no" with a grain of salt, and understand what might be behind it. These are two very different stories, one from each angle.

Moral #1, It is better to give than to receive. Whoever thought of this really pisses me off, but alas, it's got some tiny, miniscule bit of merit (somewhere). Here was my chance to bring someone new into the dance world, and show them what a great time can be had dancing to the music. Should that make me feel like I missed out on a great dance? Or should it make me feel like I've just done a pretty nice thing?

Moral #2, in the final account, you, and everyone around you, are out at clubs to have a good time. That means, in a nutshell, you have the right to say no, and dance with whom you want to dance, when you want to dance. In retrospect, I should have just said, "I'd love to dance with you, but I've promised this dance to someone else" and left it at that, possibly returning later.

One final note, I love seeing teachers dancing with their students. In fact, recently, I've noticed a change in the scene. When I go out and dance I see more and more teachers out at the clubs, having a good time. When I see teachers, who I of course will not name, that I see out dancing a lot, dancing with everybody, and I mean, everybody, I just think that's cool. Always looking like they're having a good time, regardless of the level of their partner, or the song that comes on. Not being obsessed with how they look, or who's watching them. That's just very cool (and very rare . . .).

Coming soon. Preview: Some teachers, you never see dance with their students. Some advanced dancers, you never see dance with a beginner. We were all beginners at one point, what do you think the rules are?