



# 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.

[Http://www.comedancewithus.com](http://www.comedancewithus.com)  
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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

## *Inside this issue:*

How To Dress For Dancing 1

What To Carry With You To A Dance 3

Hygiene, Dehydration And Contagion 4

## **How To Dress For Dancing**

Dancing is a contact sport! Remove keys etc. from your front pockets before stepping onto the dance floor. Then take off your watches, rings and bracelets that have edges! Watches and bracelets, especially when worn on your right wrist, tend to scratch your partner's hand, arm, and/or neck. No extravagant belt buckles either! You can test what you choose to wear to determine if it is hazardous by rubbing your hand over it. Jewelry, of course, should be very carefully chosen. Be sure to check your rings, bracelets, and belts for sharp edges or even small points that can catch in your partner's clothing or jewelry. Long necklaces can also be hazardous, particularly if you're a fast spinner. Long chains with heavy broaches can be hazardous when she spins. Same goes for long hair, particularly pony tails. Extremely long hair that braid and pin to your chest. The way she spins, her hair would be lethal! Ladies, avoid high hair, doubly-so if sprayed. And don't forget to check your fingernails and any imperfections they might have that could damage someone's clothes - if there's anything wrong, borrow a nail-file.

Regardless of gender, when selecting an upper-body garment for dancing, it is very important that it be cut high in the arm pits and not have baggy or loose sleeves that can interfere with your partner getting a hand to your back. Aside from the inconvenience, such garments can also be dangerous as a leader might be looking for a way to get around your garment rather than looking to avoid other dancers. You may even have to baste shut men's long sleeve shirt cuffs because the buttons can get caught in the lady's hair. The waist and bodice should also not have excessive fabric. Not that you should wear skin-tight garments nor even tight-fitting ones, only that excessive fabric can create problems and accidental undesired body contact. You should also avoid lace where your partner's hands are likely to be (on the dance floor ) Jewelry can sometimes catch on lace or other loose weaves.

Long skirts that fly out when you spin can often be an interference. This is particularly true when they're cut so that they fly out from higher than mid-thigh. The shorter the skirt, the higher the fly-point can be. Long skirts provide the lovely sight of flowing fabric, but it's very important that there be enough room for the leader to get his knee between the follower's legs;

many skirts prevent that. For men who have to wear a jacket and tie to an event: take off the jacket and tie when you dance or bring lots of towels to wipe sweat off!

If you sweat wear an undershirt - sweat spots show much worse on your typical dress shirt than they do on the multi-colored rayon shirts so many of us wear as standard dance fashion. Avoid silk shirts without an undershirt.

This is a personal view of what women should and should not wear to facilitate the mechanics of Social Dancing, written by a man. The point of view is primarily Swing, but I think the same general ideas apply to all forms of Social Dancing.

**UPPER BODY:** Leaders and Followers must have quick and easy access to their partners' backs. Therefore sleeves should be cut high into the armpit and not have very loose cloth above the waist line, particularly the upper arms. Sleeveless tops are just fine, too.

I'm very uncomfortable trying to Lead from a bare back that's slippery with sweat. I much prefer fabric that covers the shoulder blades or anywhere else with which I'm likely to have manual contact. I also prefer zippers to buttons because the spaces between buttons are often entered thus allowing contact with slippery skin or bra straps. Garments that expose the stomach are also undesirable for the same reasons as bare backs.

Very clothly upper body garments can conceal exactly where we don't want our hands to go on the dance floor. Sometimes dancers I know wear such garments and, if they're wearing a different bra, might not be where I know they were.

**LOWER BODY:** I think pantsuits are not only attractive and flattering, but particularly suitable for Swing dancing.

Pants of any kind are just fine. For the mechanics of dancing, pants have no negative qualities.

Long skirts are fine if they're loose enough to, at knee level, pass a bit farther than to the backs of the thighs. Long skirts can also be a nuisance if they're cut so that they fly high. Bell cuts work well, though.

After pants, short skirts from about 4" above the knee are best. But not tight ones. Extremely short tight skirts are usually not a problem to dance with but can be a nuisance for the wearer. I find that short skirts that flare are best not only to dance with but to watch, even those that are cut to expose nothing but leg.

**JEWELRY:** Jewelry, in particular, should be selected with extreme care. Before putting on a bracelet, watch, brooch, or ring, you should pass your hand over it to ensure that it has no sharp edges that can cut or points that can catch in clothing.

Brooches, best not worn, should be placed high on the chest where contact with your Leader's clothing is least likely.

Necklaces should be no longer than the top of the cleavage/bottom of the chest.

**BELTS:** About once a month, it seems, a belt hook will slip under one of my rings and bring us to a halt to disconnect. Haven't gotten hurt yet but I have broken a few belt buckles. Belt closures covered by the fabric of the belt are best. Belts with numerous articulations, particularly those of metal, can be quite hazardous. I will not dance with certain types of them.

**HAIR:** When Sylvia Sykes had a waist-length braid of great thickness, she pinned it to her chest thus alleviating any hazard it could cause. The way she spins, a blow from that braid would have been disabling! Unless your hair is extremely fine and soft, resulting in a gentle brush of your partner's face, it can not only be painful when striking a face but hazardous if it slashes through an open eye. If your hair falls below the top of your shoulders, you should style it in such a way that it will not fly into contact with your partner.

You should avoid hair styles that require being held by spray. If you're a very experienced dancer capable of controlling your Leader's hand position over your head, you know what you're doing. But if you're not, the hair atop your head should be rather close to it in order to avoid getting really messed up. Besides, if you're dancing properly, you'll sweat enough to mess up the lovely look you had when you left home, anyway.

**HATS:** Unless you're in a C/W competition that requires them, leave them at the check room.

### **What To Carry With You To A Dance**

Things to carry with you to a dance on a regular basis:

- Dance shoes
- Notepad and pen to record new step you learn
- Comb
- toothbrush, toothpaste, chewing gum, breath mints, mouthwash in case you get close.
- Earplugs for the loud bands.
- Ibuprofen for headaches from loud bands.
- Paper fan, several towels, handkerchiefs for sweat clean up
- Extra shirt & t-shirt (2 extras for swing dancing), deodorant
- Plastic grocery bag (for sweat-soaked clothing)
- Shoe brush for when suede bottom gets plugged with floor wax.
- Spare shoelaces
- Water bottle for dance lessons. Not for dances.
- Safety pins for clothes that rip or won't stay shut.
- Band-Aids
- Towel - One good wipe between dances can make a difference! Nothing is worse than a sharp head snap in my direction that flings sweat drops in my eyes... well maybe when a dancer (either leader or follower) wipes their hand across their face during the dance and then hands it to you for a lead (or follow)...
- dance floor wax, cornstarch, powder (you are free to carry this with you if you'd like, but I'd hesitate to spread it on the dance floor, for it generally makes serious dancers and club owners want to kill you!)

Dance wax - One need only think back to the Pet Rock to realize that anything can be sold to anyone who doesn't know any better. That hardly qualifies a product for endorsement. The need for dance floor wax usually is a result of wearing improper boots or shoes for

dancing. I have watched in horror as people in tennis shoes or old worn out boots spread every form of "wax" on the floor to try to solve a problem that really doesn't exist. For some reason, many dancers don't seem to consider dance floors in the same category as basketball courts and would be outraged to be forced to buy 'special' shoes for dancing. It's a shame. Dance shoes are light-weight and comfortable. They need extra care to keep the chrome suede sole effective but they do smooth out the differences between floors in different states of repair and care. Dance floor "wax" is not a "wax" and is a hazard to anyone who wears proper footwear to dance in. Before spreading some foreign substance on a dance floor, one might consider that, in this age of lawsuits, it might be very costly to be found guilty of contributory negligence when a dance teacher, competitor, or trained dancer hurts himself due to something being placed on the floor that does not "naturally" belong on the floor. The only question to be settled in an action like this is... "who put it there, and with who's permission?" I personally stay off of floors that have been sabotaged like this. But then, I'm not into lawsuits. Don't risk your financial future betting that everyone comes from this point of view. It is easy to solve the problem without "dance floor wax." Wear proper footwear and you too can spin like a top and dance like you want to, without endangering others. I am a professional dance teacher, I teach dance on all kinds of floors. I have watched people get sued for this very act. I have read insurance policies that prohibit the use of "floor wax" and I know first hand how dangerous this can be. Unfortunately, not everyone has had the opportunity to slip and fall on a dance floor. Just remember, not everyone wears street shoes for dance. If the floor is sticky, clean it instead of putting more junk on it. I encourage others who have had bad experiences with foreign substances on the floor to help beginning dancers understand that the floor is not bad, it is the shoes. Most dance professionals do not prefer a fast floor or a slow floor, but would instead prefer a floor that reacts with the proper amount of speed and grab to allow PROPER footwear to adequately support the body in flight. The bottom line is that dance floor "wax" is dangerous and unnecessary. I have had to dance on cement, tile, grass, carpet, gym floors, etc. If you cannot dance without putting something on the floor, get some training. Ask yourself why don't we use silicone on the floor? Silicone is REALLY SLICK. Your dance floor "wax" is like silicone to anyone who knows how to move their own body.

## **Hygiene, Dehydration And Contagion**

If you're going to spend so much time and energy learning to dance with other people, it doesn't make any sense to neglect your hygiene. Things like breath odor, body odor, cleanliness of clothing, hands, fingernails, etc.

Drink a lot of water and dance like a camel. If you drink a lot of water before you go dancing, you may prolong your need to replenish your liquids. They say if you get thirsty, it is too late - you're dehydrated. I've shared this with a few friends, who have tried it and found it to be a success.

We're taught to cover our mouths when we sneeze, and usually we cover them with our hands, and if we're social dancing we'll then be joining those same hands with countless other people. Just something to be conscious of, now that flu season is upon us. Become much more careful at dance camps and weekends - particularly swing events where people sweat and exercise more - about washing hands frequently and not touching your own mucous membranes (mouth, eyes) in the interim.