

BALLROOM DANCE ETIQUETTE

Proper dance etiquette makes the difference between having a happy or unhappy dancing experience and the difference between people wanting or not wanting to dance with you. Good social graces (**GOOD MANNERS**) will help you get along with others. A good attitude will allow you to have fun and a good time. If you are in a bad mood, for whatever reason, **STAY HOME!**

Everything here applies to both males and females whether you think they do or not!

Dress should be suitable for dancing. Ladies should avoid beaded sleeves, snagging fabrics, long trains etc. 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. Cotton shirts work well at absorbing the wetness and don't feel as yucky unless really wet. Don't wear tank-tops, sweat pants and or sweat shirts or workout clothes.

Dirty clothes are not acceptable and may be reason enough to not allow your entrance.

Always wear dance shoes. Do not wear sneakers or other shoes with rubber or spongy soles

Personal oral and bodily hygiene is of utmost importance. Shower and use a deodorant. Brush teeth and use mouthwash or breath mint. Abstain from foods that produce strong odors, like those heavy in garlic; also the odor of cigarettes and alcohol on one's breath or clothing can be very unattractive. Breath mints are good. Gum chewing is OK, as long as you don't chew it like a cow or to the beat of the music while dancing.

Perfumes should be used sparingly. A nice, lite 'clean smell' is lovely.

The tradition was that men asked women to dance. This custom has gradually changed. Today, women should feel equally comfortable asking, even in a formal setting.

Try one's best not to turn down anyone who has asked for a dance. If you must, for whatever reason, be as "polite as possible". However, if you do this a too many times, you will be billed as a snob and may be treated rudely by otherwise nice people that have never asked you to dance and never will.

It is all right to state that one is "sitting this one out" or that one is not familiar a particular dance. It is extremely rude to turn down one

person and then accept another invitation during the same dance number.

Do not to be overly aggressive when asking for a dance. If you do get turned down (we all do from time to time) just smile, say "Thanks"! (watch your "Tone" of voice) and walk away!

Introduce yourself to your partner right away
Get in the habit of saying "hello and talking, even briefly to people without having to ask them to dance.

Avoid dancing above your partners level - No exceptions! Be polite and considerate to all and do the best you can.
Teaching your partner while dancing, even if you are a Pro is not acceptable. Don't do it unless asked.

Bumping Into Others: Apologize ! even if you think it was their fault.
waitress / waiters have the right-of-way at all times.

Line of Dance: Go Counter-Clockwise. Don't dance against the flow of traffic on the floor.

The gentleman always leads the lady in dancing. Do this firmly and avoid ambiguous leads.

After the dance one should thank his/her partner for the dance and walk your partner back to their seat. However, walking them back to the edge of the floor gives the person an exit if they choose.

Don't stand on the dance floor talking... other people want to dance ... so move it off the floor!.

Group Dance Lessons / Classes:

The instructors deserve your utmost attention. This is not a social time, other people and the instructor are trying to concentrate. While in the class it is assumed you will attempt to do whatever the instructor asks of the group (you) when dance related. If you are not getting it, the instructor has a responsibility to the entire class.

Asking excessive questions is selfish and hogs a lot of time away from the group. Wait till after class or better yet, schedule a private lesson.

Dance Faux Pas to be Avoided by Women:

1. The Claw: this is when a woman clutches the man right arm with an iron grip. This can be painful with long nails especially in combination with the Coat Hanger
2. The Coat Hanger: this is when the woman does not support the weight of her own arms or body but sort of hangs off her partner as dead weight that he must drag across the dance floor
3. Role reversal: Other than lack of rhythm, the most common complaint that men have: women who lead and/or don't follow the man's lead. This faux pas will land you on the sidelines (and blacklisted) for sure unless you have stunningly good looks.
4. Limp-wristed spaghetti arms: this is physically taxing and no fun for the man since he has put in twice as much effort to lead the woman
5. Miss Sour-Puss: shaking one's head, rolling one's eyes, looking bored, unenthusiastic or pissed off and ignoring one's partner all fall into this category of bad attitude.
it is the job of the woman to look like she is having the time of her life"

Dance Faux Pas to be Avoided by Men:

1. The Egoist: The primary job of a male dancer is to make his partner look good," It is, therefore, impolite to dance above the level of one's partner. If you sense that a lady is not comfortable with a certain step, avoid it. Please be sensitive to your partner's level of dance experience.
2. Limp-wristed spaghetti arms: Lack of frame is bad enough in women but it makes dancing almost impossible when it is the man that is guilty of this unacceptable behaviour.
3. The Unpleasant Dictator: Men who lead by barking orders and arm-wrenching or in various degrees, bulldoze and drag their partners across the dance floor.
5. The Pervert: Wandering hands, indiscreet stares, stalking, unwanted advances.

Please Note

The proper answer to "Thank you!" on the dance floor is: "Thank you!" The point is that the thanks is not due to a favor, but to politeness.

Other Things To Consider

Over Asking:

Basic rule of thumb is: If they have not asked you to dance yet, only ask once per event/day/night. Once they ask you, you may ask again. If you don't follow this rule ... you may be seen as an annoyance over a period of time.

If someone is inappropriate with you on the dance floor during a dance (remember accidents do happen, but you can usually tell the difference), just stop and give a warning such as "I do not appreciate what you are doing" and continue on dancing, if it continues, just stop dancing and walk away ... No need to say or explain anything.

Interrupting:

If the person you want to dance with looks involved in a conversation, stand by a safe distance (as to not interrupt with your body) and try to make eye contact. When they make eye contact, extend your hand and say something like "Is this a Bad Time to ask for a dance?" or "May we." If they agree, acknowledge the other person they were speaking too and say something like "Thank-You, I will bring him/her right back!" If they don't accept, give your apologies and walk away and try again another time.

Another form of interruption which is not as obvious is: Asking someone to dance that has just finished dancing with another; the dance starts and ends in the same location, and there you are panting like a dog in heat, wait till the person walks them off the floor or back to their seat or the person you want to ask walks away from the previous dancer. If it is a real popular person that gets asked, one, right after another, you may have to wait a while as some folks will be rude. Running up and jumping in front of another person that is about to ask for a dance makes you an idiot, it is very, very rude and considered ill-mannered by both dancers, even though they may accept ... DON'T DO IT!

About Dates:

Partners can be very similar to a date. If you have a partner just ignore anyone's comments and 'maybe' catch them another time.

If one of your regular dance partners come with a date ... "be respectful" and do not bug them to dance. If they want to dance with you they will seek you out and it will be obvious they are available for dancing, but let them do the asking and be respectful and acknowledge the date somehow or another. If you normally dance with them, try to get to know the date and make friends as this date may become the S/O in the future and if he/she doesn't like you, you've lost a partner to dance with.

If you are on a date with a non-dancer, be aware that they are in uncommon territory and it may be uncomfortable to even the most confident person. You may want them to see how you dance, which is fine, however showing them with 50 other people thru-out the night is not the right way even if they say "hey, go dance, I don't really mind." And please don't dance with someone who you may also be dating if they happen to be there too, male/female pissing contests can ruin an otherwise good time, and trust me on this one, they will make it known that they date you too thru their actions, be respectful to the one you are with. Introduce the ones who are just friends to your date, try to get some social conversation going with others, including your date, etc.

THINGS TO AVOID:

Dips:

Dips often times end a dance and are nothing more than that, an end! If the lady resists a dip, simply put "Don't Do It." Dips can be done during the dance also. Leaders, if you have not learned how to dip ... avoid it!, (You will end up with your butt on the floor sooner or later.)

Don't stand on the dance floor talking... other people want to dance ... so MOVE IT OFF THE FLOOR - damn it!

Do Not Flash wads of money around at a dance or it is not a good idea to keep valuables in a purse or jacket lying around.

Expensive Jewelry should not be worn. As a side note don't wear much jewelry at all ... be very simple here. Especially don't wear "Hooped earrings", or sharp or too many finger rings, or bracelets.

Do NOT bring your own refreshments/drinks (even water) to a dance that sells beverages.

It is not required to buy someone a drink, however if you are dancing with them a lot, a drink can make a friend (this applies to both male and female).

Drinking is not a problem with dancers... over drinking/getting drunk is.

Dress Code Guidelines

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 west-coat, 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, cummerbund 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 (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:** Gentlemen in dress slacks with dress shirt and tie, jacket is optional. Other options include a west-coat 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.)

* **Dressy Casual:** Applies to most practice dances, workshops, and dance lessons. Gentlemen can wear cotton slacks with solid color T-shirt, turtleneck, mock turtleneck, or polo shirt. Ladies have a much wider set of clothing options. Use your imagination and sense of fashion. In general this is a conservative and toned-down appearance that has grown increasingly popular on the dance floors. Don't forget your dance shoes!

If you wear a hat, take it off when going on the floor. It is improper to touch or otherwise handle 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 west-coat 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 midriffs 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. See also the next section on Comfort and Safety. 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.

* 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.

At The End Of The Dance:

Don't just disappear. Tell the folks you met good-bye, thanks for the dances etc.

Socially, your personality is the most important thing you have, not your dancing expertise, job car or money, nor car. YOUR Smile and laughter can make all the difference at you being socially acceptable or not!!!.