



## USA Dance, Inc. Guide to Social Dance Etiquette

### MAY I HAVE THIS DANCE?

When you ask someone to dance, be sure to make **eye contact** with your prospective partner, offer our hand, and ask clearly, “**Would you like to dance?**” If your partner says yes, smile, offer your hand, and escort him or her onto the dance floor and into dance position. This will make your partner feel supported and at ease.

### YES, THANK YOU, I’D LOVE TO DANCE

When someone asks you to dance, your response should be, “**Yes, thank you, I’d love to.**” In a social dance environment, it is customary to say “yes” when someone asks you to dance. In order for dancing to be a joyous activity, it is important that social dancers are supportive and kind to each other at all skill levels.

### YOU DANCE DIVINELY!

During the dance, be sure to be aware of your partner. Smile and make eye contact, *but don’t stare*. It is fun to dance with a partner who is gracious and appreciative. At the end of the dance, **ALWAYS** say THANK YOU to your partner and begin to escort them off the floor.

### WHEN TO SAY NO

When a person asks you to dance, it is appropriate to say no if you have danced with this person before and he or she has been physically or verbally abusive. It is also appropriate to say no if the person is obviously drunk or threatening in some way. If you feel that a dancer is physically dangerous to the other dancers, you should report the situation immediately to a Chapter Board member. Unless someone is truly offensive, it is not appropriate to say no because your partner may have poor dance technique. While dancing with this person may not be one of life’s peak experiences, a dance is only three minutes long and the experience will not kill you.

### CIRCULATING

In a social dance situation it is appropriate to dance with a variety of people. It is generally poor dance etiquette to partner up and dance with the same person all evening long. Naturally, some people will prefer certain dance partners to others, but this should not prevent them from accepting an offer to dance from a new person. If the same person asks you to dance repeatedly, for several dances in a row, it is acceptable to tell that person, “thank you, but I’d like to meet and dance with some other people for awhile. I’ll be happy to dance with you again late in the evening.”

### CLEANLINESS IS HEAVEN AT A DANCE

Social dancing is a quasi-intimate activity that requires a certain degree of physical closeness. Good hygiene shows respect and consideration for the other dancers. Dancers should bathe, use deodorant, **use breath mints**, and wear clean clothes that will not be too hot. Some dancers sweat a great deal while dancing. In this case, it is considerate to bring a towel and/ or change of clothes. If you find yourself getting too sweaty on the dance floor, you should stop, dry off, and cool down for a few minutes. Your partners will thank you for it. Dancers should also use a **light touch applying perfume or cologne**. Some people may be sensitive to fragrances.

### YOUR PARTNER’S TECHNIQUE

Unless someone asks you directly to make a correction of their dancing, **you should never volunteer** criticisms of your dance partner’s technique. Know that your dance partner is doing the best he or she can. If your partner is dancing off time, you should view the situation as a challenge to dance to the same internal rhythms as your partner. Your partner is not dancing off time intentionally. Again, he or she is doing the best he or she can. Do your best to respect each other’s rhythms. If your partner is physically hurting you, it is probably inadvertent. You should stop dancing for a second, and say “I’m sorry, but you’re holding my hand a little tightly. Could we try again?” If you receive an inconsiderate response or your partner seems unwilling to modify his behavior, it is then appropriate to say, “thank you, but I’d like to stop now.” Social dancing should never be physically painful or dangerous.

### FLOOR CRAFT

In order for a social dance to be enjoyable for all participants, it is crucial to be considerate and aware in your floor craft. No matter how much you may want to *swing out*, on a crowded dance floor your primary consideration should be **respect for the other couples on the floor**. You don’t have to dance big to have fun. At times, collisions do occasionally occur in the heat of the moment. When there is a collision, everyone involved should **stop and apologize**, regardless of whose “fault” it was. If someone has been hurt, you should make sure that person is okay before you resume dancing.

Sometimes people are not okay after a collision. In this case, you should escort the person off the floor to a chair and see if that person needs ice, a drink of water or medical attention.

Careful observation of the traffic lanes in a ballroom can prevent mishaps. In Waltz, Foxtrot, tango, Quickstep and Samba, dancers move in a counterclockwise circle around the floor. This circle is known as “**line of dance**”. The very outside lane of the line of dance is the “fast lane”; it is generally used by very experienced dancers who cover a great deal of ground. The inside lane is for less experienced dancers who may be moving a bit more slowly. Beginners and those who would like to practice the basic steps without traveling can stay on the inside of the circle, out of the line of dance completely.

**In addition** -- It is considered inappropriate to cut across the dance floor, especially when carrying food or drink. And also, remember to move off the dance floor when engaged in conversation.

## **GROUP CLASS ETIQUETTE**

Many of the same dance etiquette considerations for dances also apply in a group class environment.

### **ROTATING PARTNERS**

It has been proven that you will learn to dance 30% faster by dancing with a variety of partners. Sometimes, in our group classes, we have you rotate. Be sure to say hello and introduce yourself to your new partners.

If you only want to dance with the same partner for your own personal reasons, you may do so by stepping out of the circle each time the instructor ask you to rotate. This way, it is clear that you are not part of the rotation.

In order for dancing to be the joyous activity that it is, it is important that social dancers are supportive and kind to each other no matter what level the dancer is at. You should never refuse to rotate to a particular partner because you don't think that person is good enough.

Everyone needs to grow and learn. Rotating partners enhances your dancing.

### **THIS IS OVER MY HEAD!**

If you really can't get the step, you can tell your partner that you need to step out of the rotation for a minute to try to master the steps on your own.

### **IN CONCLUSION**

Thank you for taking the time to review this Guide to Dance Etiquette. Keep in mind to use common sense, respect, and manners for an enjoyable dance experience for both you and your partner. We hope this will help you enjoy any dancing situation with grace and finesse. Now go out there and experience the pure fun of social dancing!

## **THE PURPOSE OF DANCING IS TO LOVE DOING IT!**

Social dancing is pure fun. This fun can be dampened by a snobbish, superior attitude and lack of consideration for your fellow dancers. A social dance is not a dance competition – your job is not to be the best looking dancer on the floor but to **connect** with your partner in a way that is supportive and enjoyable for both of you. Partner dancing is not a performance, and it is not about winning or losing. It is an activity which is above all, fun, and will enable you to share your love of dancing and music with another person.

**Social dancing is one of life's rare** opportunities for pure fun. It is important to remember, however, that dancing is a social activity which requires interpersonal as well as physical grace. Being a considerate and thoughtful dance partner can ensure a wonderful experience. Dance courtesy is even more important than a social dancer's physical technique. It is not always intuitive but it can be learned. To this end we provide you with the following guidelines of Dance Etiquette.

## **See you on the dance floor! HAPPY & SAFE DANCING!**

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### **Compliments of USA Dance Chapter:**



This article from the brochure at

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