

DANCER ETIQUETTE

Daryl Clendenin

When we teach our new beginner dancers, it's important to include a few rules of the road (dance floor) along the way. Remember, we are much more than just a dance. We are a social function and have an obligation to deal with others in a way that will facilitate friendship and enjoyment for all. Many of the rules for dancers seem obvious and when dealing with others would be considered "common sense." A few though are peculiar to our activity.

NO ALCOHOL BEFORE THE DANCE: Only another person that is under the influence of alcohol could tolerate someone that is drunk. Aside from the obvious inability to perform the dance movements, the odors associated with drinking are unacceptable. Leave the drinking for after the dance.

CLEAN BODY & CLOTHING: Speaking of "odors," square dancing is a vigorous exercise and can result in a lot of perspiring (by both men and women). Fresh, wet perspiration on "dried sweat" activates the odors. Be sure that your clothes are freshly laundered. It is very important that we begin the dance with clean clothes. Bathe before the dance. Be sure to use deodorants (especially under the arms). Dive Thrus can be dangerous territory without it. Colognes in moderation are also nice, but overuse can trigger some allergies.

FILL THE SQUARES QUICKLY:

When the music starts that means it's time to dance. Enter the dance floor with a partner. If you need a partner, it is acceptable to stand at the edge of the floor and hold one hand in the air indicating that you are ready to dance. Join the first square you come to. It's not polite to pass a square that needs a couple in order to join a square of friends, club members or better dancers. It's also not polite to walk through the center of a square in order to join it. Walk around the outside to the nearest open position. If another couple fills that spot because it was nearer to them, smile and fill a position in another square. If all the square are full, raise your hand displaying the number of couples needed by an equal number of fingers. The caller will see you and encourage others to join your square.

NEVER LEAVE A SQUARE: It is an insult to the members of a square if you leave it before the tip ends and you have taken the time to thank everyone. This is especially bad if you leave one square to join another. Of course this doesn't apply in the case of an emergency. In an emergency everyone will understand. After all, it's just a dance.

SMOOTH DANCING: It is always safe and acceptable to do the moves as they were originally taught. Personal flourishes can sometimes be fun for you but for some dancers, the extras may be clumsy and occasionally dangerous. Extra kicks, stomps and twirls can get in the way of the timing and the space of other dancers. Don't rush. Taking one step for each beat of music should move you through the choreography comfortably and in unison with the other dancers in the square.

BE GENTLE: By using the proper handhold without squeezing, pushing and pulling will ensure an enjoyable dance experience for everyone in the square.

SHHHHH!: There should be only one caller giving directions to the dancers. Laughing is fun. smiling is fun. Even the occasional whoop or holler at the appropriate time can be fun but loud talking or making noise that competes with the callers commands is nothing but obnoxious.

At the end of the tip, always take the time to thank everyone in the square. Likewise, at the end of the dance, stop by the stage and thank the caller and cuer.

As always, remember, it's a people thing first and a dance second. "Treat others as you'd want to be treated" (Hmmm! I've heard that someplace before) and everything will be all right.