

How's YOUR Dance floor Etiquette?

The dance floor is like the interstate: there are definitely rules of the road. Although it varies with the dance you're doing and the venue at which you dance, below is a good primer that applies to almost all-social dance situations:

Dance floor etiquette is everyone's responsibility: It's easy to blame a single person or group. The reality is that it is everyone's responsibility from the club owners/managers to the dance teachers and dancers. Each has a responsibility to either communicate the correct information or set the right example.

Stationary dances: Many stationary dances - hustle, east coast, cha cha, some salsa styles, meringue, and others - tend to be ***circular*** in movement or at least have the appearance through the use of rotational slots. This requires you to (1) pay more attention paid to the space you are moving into and (2) for both partners to be watching out and communicating to each other through their connection.

Other dances hold a stricter **vertical/linear** slot like West Coast Swing and other salsa styles. This usually makes floor control a bit easier on leaders, since the slot usually stays consistent. But the follower still has responsibilities too, which we'll cover in a bit.

West Coast Swing dancers: try not to set your slot so that it runs opposite everyone else's slot. Look at the floor's flow and lines: when everyone is dancing east to west don't play the rebel by positioning yourself in the middle of other dancers and dance north and south! Go with the flow to keep it easier.

Traveling dances These are some of the toughest from a floor etiquette standpoint, due to the added challenge of moving in and out of ever-changing dance traffic as you navigate around the floor. Old rules used to dictate 3 lanes of traffic on a dance floor when traveling dances dominate. Center lane for stationary dancers...inner lane for slower, less experienced dancers....outer lane for faster, more advanced dancers. However, this is a bit outdated – and never really worked well anyway.

The reality? The center is generally for stationary dancers. The rest of the floor is for traveling dancers. Beginner dancers rarely know to stay to the inside - it is up to the more experienced dancer to stay aware, navigate around and be very patient with newer, less experienced dancers. (Remember...we were all beginners once!) It would be nice if club deejays announced proper dance floor etiquette periodically – but in reality, few people listen to deejay announcements anyway.

When DJ specifically calls a LINE DANCE or majority of patrons are line dancers:

Most of the floor, with exception of outer perimeter, is for line dancers. Couples: learn to work with this - not against it. Usually the outer lane is reserved for couples.

This means you do NOT intrude on line dancers' space, (even if they do get *all* the best West Coast songs, darn it 😊) Stay on that perimeter.

Line dancers: please be respectful. Watch where you are going and don't take that cool grapevine or spin to the very edge –smack into the couples dancing on the outside! If the floor is full, this does NOT mean you get to squeeze into space on the perimeter designated for couples. They'll play another dance! Just because you don't see a couple dancing at that exact moment does not mean people are not headed that way.

Which couples dance (traveling or stationery) rules when line dancers share the floor? Majority rules. If more traveling dancers are on the floor, stationary dancers should wait for next song. And vice-versa. Please don't "fight" for your dance, when you're the only one on the floor doing it – there will be another chance to dance.

3 key skills to better floor craft:

1. **Better connection.** This leads to better communication between you. Leaders can stop followers on a dime; followers can alert leaders to problems they can't see.
2. **Better footwork.** Cool is neat. Crazy is NOT. Please know the difference! Don't kick wildly into the air or take triple the space you should to do a turn or spin.
3. **Be alert every second.** On crowded floors, be constantly aware of who is around you – don't get lost in a world of your own. This goes for both leaders and followers.

Leaders:

- DO NOT do inappropriate, choreography-style moves on crowded floors that take a huge amount of space or get in other dancers' way.
- DO NOT abruptly stop a traveling dance on a crowded floor to do a move unless you have already checked that there is no one close behind you.
- DO NOT do lifts and drops on crowded social dance floors - yes you might be a whiz at them, but you cannot control the traffic around you. It takes just one second for someone to move into your space without seeing you and seriously injure you or your partner. We have seen people needlessly hurt – even rushed to the hospital, thanks to showing off moves that had no business being done on a crowded floor.
- DO NOT bump into someone, then ignore that you did it! Apologize and ask if they are okay! Even if you think it was the other person's fault - be the better person and make sure they're okay.
- DO NOT stay near someone who clearly is not in control of themselves or their partner. Avoid confrontations - simply move to another spot on the floor immediately or wait till the next song to dance.

Followers:

- DO NOT fling your arms out wildly around on crowded floors without consideration for where others might be. If you must do your competition arm lines, take arms UP – not out. Those arm lines impress no one when they hit others in the head or face!
- DO NOT assume your leader is solely responsible for floorcraft. You MUST take personal responsibility for how much space you're using when you spin/turn (so your sexy spiked heel doesn't paper-punch someone else's foot!) Always keep your core/center over your feet, no matter where you move, so you stay in better control, vs. wildly teetering in every direction.
- DO NOT run into someone, then ignore or glare at them! We've seen ladies step on people's feet, slam into them during spins, and seem totally oblivious to it all. Same advice as for leaders: please apologize and check that the other person is okay!