

# **Social Dancing & Dance Floor Etiquette**

## **Hey! Can We Talk?**

First of all, let's talk about the meaning of "etiquette" as it is apparent that many folks don't know. The American College Dictionary defines "etiquette" as conventional requirements of socially correct behavior as established in any class or community for any occasion. "Etiquette" is a borrowed French phrase meaning required code of rules governing social behavior to safeguard against conflict in social interactions. To put it more simply, etiquette is just plain old-fashioned good manners!

Dancing is one of the few social activities in which you might find yourself intimately "cheek to cheek" with a complete stranger! Dance etiquette is nothing more than polite consideration of your dance partner and others around you as well as a concern for the safety of everyone involved. Good dance etiquette helps to avoid accidentally offending or harming other dancers or people around you. When in doubt about a specific point of etiquette, just remember the Golden Rule and treat others as you would like to be treated and be kind, generous, courteous, and considerate of others.

After searching the web and borrowing from some other shag club web sites, below is a summary of good social dancing and dance floor etiquette. Many of the shag club web sites are posting "Shag Etiquette" which was originally posted on the O.D. Shag Club web site and those pointers are included as well. Thanks to all of them for sharing!

Everything here applies to both males and females whether you think it does or not! And remember – they are just suggestions, not the gospel; however, it **is** good etiquette. Although some of this stuff may sound negative, most of the time it is never an issue when dancing – but there are always the "clueless" and the "special people" that think that the rules and graces don't apply to them. Try not to be one of them and . . . *Good luck on the dance floor!*

1. **Show your appreciation.** If dancing to a live band, applaud the band. If dancing to music played by a DJ, tell the DJ how much you appreciate him/her and they don't mind applause when it's appropriate either. They don't just play for the money! The more you show your appreciation, the better they will play and feel.

Also, don't forget your waitresses and bartenders! They work hard to accommodate you so show your appreciation and be kind!

2. **Line of Dance.** Shag and swing are considered stationary dances (although swing dances can take up a lot of space). Two-stepping and ballroom dances like the waltz or foxtrot are traveling dances. These traveling dances should move on the dance floor in a counter clockwise direction. This is called the **line of dance**. Sometimes, while dancing to the same song, some couples will dance a traveling dance while others may dance a stationary dance. In this case, the traveling dancers should travel along the outside of the dance floor while stationary dancers should dance nearer to the center.
3. **The dance floor is for dancing.** If you're having a conversation or learning something new, move off the dance floor. Dance space is a premium, so, if you're not dancing, stay off the dance floor.
4. **The dance floor should be treated with care.** Beverages, food, lighted cigarettes, and chewing gum should never be brought on the dance floor.
5. **Asking for a dance.** It is equally permissible for a woman to ask a man to dance as it is for a man to ask a woman. Take your partner's hand onto the dance floor and at the end of the dance, thank your dance partner.

Typically, it's good etiquette to accept an invitation to dance, but if you don't want to dance, say so politely by saying, "No thank you." If someone turns you down, accept it graciously and ask someone else to dance. Don't be persistent, take them at their word.

It's considered bad social etiquette to refuse a dance on the basis of preferring to dance with someone else. In addition, declining a dance means sitting out the whole song. It is inconsiderate to dance a song with anyone after you have declined to dance it with someone else. The choices are to dance with whoever asked first, or to sit out the dance.

6. **Keep your opinions to yourself.** It is not polite to correct your partner on the dance floor. Remember, this is social dancing!  
  
If someone does ask for help or instruction, kindly take them off to the side away from the other dancers.
7. **Dance class instructors should do the teaching.** If you are in a dance class, let the instructor teach. The instructor will ask for your help if needed.
8. **Use Selective Floor Placement.** Establish your slot and continue to dance in it. Usually the first couple on the dance floor will establish the slot.
9. **Dance small.** Don't dance all over the floor as nobody likes to be pushed around the floor. Also, save the arm waving, long and wide foot steps, and wild leg movements for elsewhere. Aerials, drops, and slides are best left for jam sessions, competitions, and performances. These type patterns are not appropriate for the social dance floor. You are not the only one on the dance floor and you could hurt someone!
10. **Leaders are responsible** for looking out for the safety of their partners since they are directing their movements. Keep them out of danger and be aware of the dancers around you.
11. **Leaders, make your partner comfortable.** If you are dancing with a less experienced dancer, dance to their skill level. Work as a team, don't showboat.
12. **Leaders, keep it quiet.** If you must count and give verbal leads, keep it low enough that just you and your partner can hear. It can confuse those around you.
13. **Pay attention to the beat of the music.** Just because you can count doesn't mean you're on beat.
14. **Be aware of the dancers around you.** Bumping into other dancers is inevitable. If you bump into someone, kick someone, step on someone's foot, or if they bump into you, **always apologize whether it was your fault or theirs.** (Even a short non-verbal gesture will do in some situations.) Show concern that no serious injury occurred.
15. **Take care of your personal hygiene.** For your partner's sake, avoid eating garlic, onions, or spicy foods, and always brush your teeth and shower before going out dancing. If you perspire a lot, pace your dancing, or bring extra shirts, T-shirts, blouses, etc., and change sweaty clothing. Sometimes mints or deodorants will be the right choice!

***Are you part of the problem,  
- or part of the solution!***

Thanks Sam Lail  
[keepshaging@yahoo.com](mailto:keepshaging@yahoo.com)