

## Dance Floor Advice

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At social ballroom dances, you can expect to see dancers who are at various skill levels. This can range from those who are new to ballroom through high level competitive dancers. This article will address the topic of asking for or giving advice on the dance floor.

Dance floor etiquette is a well-established traditional set of practices that address safety as well as social behavior. This includes such things as, navigating the dance floor in an orderly counterclockwise direction, not crossing the dance floor center lines, approaching and leaving your partner and many others. One of the most important areas of concern is giving or asking for advice on the dance floor. There are many things to consider on this topic. The general rule of etiquette excludes giving advice at social dances especially if it is unsolicited. Offering or seeking advice has numerous implications that can easily detract from the joy of ballroom dancing.

It will usually have a negative effect on your partner. It can create defensiveness and provoke many unfavorable reactions. Very few people like to be instructed at a social dance. It implies superiority on the part of the one giving the advice. This creates an atmosphere that can make the recipient of

the advice feel put down. People go to social dances to relax and have fun. For that reason alone, it is better to refrain from giving dance floor advice. It is more important to support a joyful dance experience in a lighthearted manner. This is an important foundation of etiquette. Dance floor etiquette is after all a guideline for politeness.

The most difficult part of this subject concerns the various reasons that some dancers feel compelled to impart their wisdom to others at a social dance. From a human nature perspective, one of the most prevalent reasons for this behavior centers on the need to be noticed and appear superior. Although the desire to help is generally well intentioned, it still can suggest a persona of superiority. That said, the recipient partner will likely become defensive and not be able to relax in the dance. Sometimes the need to help others in the context of social dancing may be a disguise for self-validation. There are numerous instances in which the one giving advice does not have a clear understanding of the basic techniques; however, in spite of that, they continue giving unsolicited advice. A great deal of this is driven by a strong need for recognition. These individuals want to be revered as experts.

On the other side of the coin, there are some who seek advice from their social dance partners. While this may seem to be in conflict with proper dance floor etiquette, there are reasons for this behavior. This is frequently seen with new dancers who have limited or no ballroom experience. In this case the general rule for giving advice on the dance floor may be slightly stretched. While teaching at a social dance is typically frowned upon, it is more acceptable to help a new dancer get started with the basic step. This sits in the grey area of proper etiquette; however, if the inexperienced partner is asking for help, the other partner needs to decide if and how to proceed. If help is offered it should be brief, concise, and just to the basic step. This kind of assistance needs to be sincere and gentle so as not to intimidate or discourage the inexperienced dancer. Another acceptable request for dance floor advice includes couples who have attended the same dance classes who wish to dance specific choreographed routines together. In



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this case, both want to excel in their routine and agree to help each other.

A less acceptable scenario for seeking advice is when a teacher and one of their students are social dancing. This can get complicated because of their predefined roles. Teachers generally do not like to be asked for dance instruction at a social dance. Many teachers view this as being taken advantage of for their time in an inappropriate setting. It remains a tenuous situation which needs to be worked out by the individuals involved.

It is a well-established fact that most people do not wish to receive advice at a social dance. Therefore, it is better not to ask for or offer to give a quick dance lesson at a social dance event. This can otherwise be a joy killer for many. It is enough just to enjoy the dance experience with each social dance partner.

