

PghWCS Etiquette Guide

Welcome to our dance community! We are glad you are with us. You will soon see that for many of us, our friendships here are just as important as our dancing. We have a few **rules** we expect everyone in our community to abide by:

1. Never offer your partner advice about their dancing.

Unsolicited advice is never well received, no matter how good you think your point is. If a dance isn't going the way you think it should, find what you can adjust in your own dancing to make it work.

*Tip: Just like in regular life, if someone offers you advice about your dancing you haven't asked for, simply smile and ignore it. If it continues, tell an instructor. If you do actually want some pointers, grab one of the instructors or a partner you feel good dancing with and ask them for feedback. *If somebody is hurting you, let them know right away! If they continue to hurt you, please inform an instructor. We can give them ideas on how to soften their movement.**

2. Change your shoes when you come in.

Don't wear your street shoes on the dance floor! Water and dirt muck up the dance floor and damage peoples' dance shoes.

Tip: Dance shoes will do wonders for your dancing. If you're not ready to invest in a pair, at least have a pair of comfortable smooth-soled shoes that you use just for dancing.

3. Mind the slot.

West Coast Swing is a slotted dance. Keep to your slot. Stay aware of who's around you. If you do bump into someone - it's bound to happen - apologize, make sure they are okay, make sure your partner is okay, then adjust so it does not happen again. Do these things even if you're sure it wasn't your fault.

Tip: Slots can be shortened by leader or follow if you see a collision coming. Practice this. It can actually lead to some cool new moves!

4. No inappropriate touching.

We mean this one! If we hear a complaint, we will talk to you about it. Two complaints and we will ask you to leave for the night. Three complaints and we will tell you not to return. Remember, it is how your actions are perceived, not how they were intended.

Tip 1: It is only possible to lead a follow from a bony place - fingers, arm, shoulder blade, and that's about it. There is no reason for your hands to be anywhere else.

Tip 2: If you are being touched in a way that makes you uncomfortable, you don't even have to mention it to the person who did it - please tell one of us. You probably aren't the only one anyway.

Here are some **guidelines** - things you can do to have a great time dancing:

- ❖ **Dance a ton!** Dive right in, don't wait till you think you're good enough to start social dancing. Stick around after classes and enjoy the evening.
- ❖ **Invest in dance shoes.** We recommend M.R. Boots in Monroeville, or online at mrboots.com.
- ❖ **If you want to dance with somebody, just ask.** Followers ask leaders to dance. Experienced dancers dance with new dancers. We're all here to dance!
- ❖ **If you want to dance, stand near the edge of the floor.** If you're sitting off to the side, people will assume you want to rest.
- ❖ **If you turn down somebody for a dance, do not dance with somebody else to that song.** *Good reasons to decline a dance:* you are resting, you don't want to dance to the song that's playing, or the person asking you makes you physically or psychologically uncomfortable. If that is happening, ask an instructor for some advice.
- ❖ **If somebody turns you down for a dance, it is okay to ask again,** especially if they invited you to do so. If somebody turns you down twice, just ask other people that night.
- ❖ **Dance to your partner's level.** Leads: make her feel safe and comfortable. If she couldn't follow what you just led, don't give her "another chance" - lead something else instead. Follows: we can tell when you're bored. Please stay present.
- ❖ **Thank your partner after your dance.** Remember that every dance has something to offer you - if you didn't see what that is, you didn't look for it. Heartfelt affirmations at the end of a dance are always welcome.
- ❖ **Stay dry!** Bring a couple extra shirts if needed.
- ❖ **Chomp a breath mint now and then.** (Even if you don't think you need one.)
- ❖ **Go easy on perfume and cologne.** (But don't spare the deodorant.)
- ❖ **If you are sick, please stay home.** We'll all be here again next week.
- ❖ **Relax!** Things take time, and you are making progress even if it doesn't feel that way.

How To Get Awesome In A Hurry

1. Take private lessons! Group classes are great and all, but the only way to figure out what's most relevant for your dancing is through individualized instruction. All of our instructors teach privates, and we can find somebody at your price point.
2. Go to conventions. We love dancing in Pittsburgh, but we really thrive on traveling around the country to dance with people from other communities. While you're there, take a private lesson with a top pro, challenge yourself and enter a competition, and social dance till the sun comes up.
3. Practice on your own. Put on music and dance around your bedroom. Get in front of a mirror. Discover what your body can do. Then, expand your limits! Practice with a partner too. Videotape yourselves, and (gulp) watch the videos.
4. Take charge of your dance education. Always have something you are working on. Ask your instructors and trusted partners for ideas on what to focus on to improve.
5. And of course, dance a ton! It's the only way to get good.