

15. The Tango Etiquette

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The Tango Etiquette

Argentine tango general standards for milonga behaviour

The Tango Etiquette describes behavioral standards commonly observed in the culture of Argentine tango milongas. Some rules may be relaxed in some milongas and specific situations (ie. among close friends, etc.) Nonetheless, it is important to be aware of these standards. New tango dancers may not be aware of these rules. Therefore, experienced dancers set a good example and are sensitive with less experienced dancers. Always remember that once you were a beginner as well.

Tangueras and tangueros are invited to provide feedback and suggest amendments at info@portalatango.com.

1) The first dance and the last dance

Milongueras and milongueros will frequently see particular significance in their first and their last dance of the milonga. They often start with a familiar and smooth partner, and thereby start off the evening on the right foot. As for the last dance, we find many dancers dancing a tanda with their significant other or a potential lover. One may choose to relax this rule especially if in agreement with the host. Though if the partner is known to have a significant other, it is courteous to ask whether they wish to dance with you.

2) The invitation to dance (see Cabeceo in The Tango Dictionary).

The cabeceo makes the invitation to dance less stressful as it allows the invited person to decline discretely. Non-verbal cues are frequently used. So, as you are getting ready to ask someone to dance, try to catch their eye, smile, and nod in an inquiring expression or directing a nod towards the dance floor. Observe their body language. For instance, if you quickly turns away, pretends not to see you, or busies themselves in some way, it means they do not want to dance. If they returns your eye-contact with a smile and/or a nod, you are encouraged to invite them verbally (ie. "would you like to dance?"). When inviting a person who is in the presence of their significant other, it is courteous to ask their significant other for permission and avoid dance moves that are sexually suggestive. Avoid monopolizing anyone's partner with multiple tandas (see Tandas).

3) How to gracefully receive a rejection

When we invite someone and they give us a courteous "no" (ie. "not right now", "my feet need to rest", etc.), we do not insist. We are ready to dance. We let them be for a while. How long is "a while?" Regardless of the form in which a "no" was given, we should accept it. After 2-5 tandas you may consider inviting that person again. We may find that the person who rejected us earlier, may be ready to dance.

4) How to politely give a rejection

In the great majority of cases, avoiding eye contact will prevent someone from inviting you. If that person approaches you, it is fine to say "no".

When verbally rejecting someone's invite, although we might want to dance with them later, we can provide an excuse such as "I have already promised this dance to someone", or "thanks but I need to rest my feet". If our excuse involves resting, we should return to the line preferably for the next tanda before dancing with someone else. Always remember to be nice when rejecting someone.

5) Tanda communication

It is customary to dance the entire tanda with the same partner unless there is a particular reason to stop (ie. the male partner, your ride is waiting, your feet are aching, etc.). When two people are done dancing, one of the dancers will stop and respond the same way, and they leave the floor. So, the phrase "thank you" actually means "I am done dancing". This is preferably at the end of a tanda, unless they want to dance another set. When two people are finished dancing, the leader should lead the follower off the floor.

6) Line of dance (see Ronda in The Tango Dictionary)

Couples move counter-clockwise on the dance floor. This is the line of dance. Faster lanes are on the outside of the dance floor, closer to the center. Refrain from randomly intersecting these lanes, especially on a crowded floor. The dance floor is reserved for dancing and all others should clear the floor.

7) Collisions

When collisions happen, everyone involved should be generous and courteous in acknowledging the collision. It does not matter who is at fault.

Some contents may be debatable. Some want for milongueras and milongueros to be a good example by being patient, polite, and

ga. They may seek to dance their first tanda in tradition among porteños to dance the last with their significant other. For singles it's open to dance with their significant other.

smile and nod. You might raise your eyebrows when you make eye-contact and the other person says "no". On the other hand, if your potential partner asks "do you want to dance?". You should ask for permission. Be friendly but not flirtatious (Tanda in The Tango Dictionary).

Do not sit down beside them to wait until they are available. If you are not invited, it means no for at least 2 tandas. You can always track us down for a dance later.

As regards, and invites you verbally it is

phrases such as "Sorry, but I need a break", or "I would wait at least for the next song or two". Try not to hurt their feelings.

It is rude or very disappointing as a dance partner to say "gracias (thank you), the other person will be dancing and ready to leave the dance floor". If you are a leader, it is customary for the leader to escort

the dance floor, and slower lanes run closer to the center for couples who are currently dancing, and

It doesn't matter whose fault it is and we will not

make a big deal of the collision. To avoid collisions, both partners should help in maintaining awareness of others on the floor (opposed to "tango trance") certainly helps awareness. Try to avoid aggressive moves on a crowded floor (ie. high bolero) and be ready to slow down or even stop a step or figure as necessary. Leaders, be very cautious when you decide to step back or change direction. Followers, let your leader know, verbally or non-verbally (ie. hand squeeze, holding closer, slowing down, etc.), if there's an impending collision.

8) Feedback

While on the dance floor, please avoid providing chatting, feedback, corrections or pausing to show your partner a new move. This is inappropriate by your partner and/or others around you. Corrective feedback is best kept for practicas and classes. Offer discreet and sensitive feedback if it is asked for, or if permission is obtained to "make an observation".

9) No cutting in

It's simple, we do not ask whether we can "cut in" between two dancers in the middle of a song or tanda. Change of partners is only allowed in The Tango Dictionary). We don't interrupt dancers to say hello or goodbye either, though a non-intrusive nod and smile is acceptable.

10) Personal hygiene

Skill, talent, and courtesy aside, it will be hard to dance with a person more than once if they find you smelly. Solutions: 1. Use breathmints; 2. use a handkerchief to wipe your sweat, or take breaks as needed to reduce your perspiration; 3. VERY rarely use the washroom. 4. Have consideration for others when using fragrances. 5. Skip the milonga when you have a cold or flu. Hopefully, we have all learned these things as kids. If we haven't, now is the time to acquire these habits.

11) Romance

The tango embrace is a privilege, not an opportunity. Unwanted romantic advances should cease, and can be seen as a violation of the tango embrace.

11) Respect

Many of the rules listed above will be intuitively observed if we are respectful. That is, respect for your partner and other dancers, respect for the cultural heritage of tango, respect for the music and band, respect for peoples dance styles and their skill levels.

the dance floor. Keeping your eyes open (as
leos, hard ganchos, big figures, etc.) Be
backwards (ie. look first). Followers, let the
collision.

new step. This may be perceived as
otherwise, it is acceptable to provide

partners is done during cortinas (see Cortina
smile may be acceptable.

ns are: 1. Clean clothing; 2. use deodorant,
Y IMPORTANT -- wash your hands after
cold or flu.

very invasive if they happen during the

ther persons at the milonga, respect for the