

TORONTO CONTRA DANCE GUIDELINES

TORONTO CONTRA DANCE is for all who wish to enjoy a sociable evening of music and dance. We believe in acceptance of all ages, races, beliefs, sexual orientations and life styles.

All are expected to conduct themselves in a manner that shows respect and consideration for the welfare of other dancers and the dance community including families and children. We value consent and safety.

ETIQUETTE FOR ALL DANCERS

Contra dancers generally change partners after every dance. Please look to the sidelines for new dancers or those who are sitting out. There is NO pressure to accept a dance request, if you want to sit out, or if you feel you are being monopolized in an unwelcome manner.

Give full attention to the caller, and take hands four on request, to avoid confusion and the need to reset later.

Contra dancing is quite aerobic. Some dancers work up a good sweat. If you perspire a lot, please bring extra tops to change into, and towel-off often. Consider quick-dry shirts that wick away sweat.

Dance hygiene: It is recommended that you wash your hands well after dancing, especially before touching food, or your eyes, nose or mouth.

TIPS FOR NEW DANCERS

Move with an easy walking step, keeping time within the musical phrase, usually 8 counts.

Give weight, pulling back with your arms to provide some resistance, in order to support each other through the figures of the dance.

Eye contact is an important part of contra dance, and it reduces dizziness during swinging. If you are uncomfortable with this, look at your partner's ear or shoulder instead.

Both men and women can ask either men or women to dance. Both sexes can dance either the lead or follow role. Women who are dancing lead frequently wear a tie to make that clear.

You will learn faster if you ask an experienced dancer to dance with you. They will help guide you through the steps, and get you to the right place at the right time. If you make a mistake or miss a figure, skip it and go straight to the next figure at the right time.

Everyone makes mistakes. Don't worry about it – have fun.

TIPS FOR EXPERIENCED DANCERS

Experienced dancers should welcome newer dancers into the community by asking them to dance, helping them to have a fun, satisfying evening. Refrain from extra twirls, spins, dips, etc, as this can be overwhelming and unfamiliar. The goal is to help them face the right direction and smile.

Keep verbal instructions to an absolute minimum. Point, tap, or call a dancer's name instead, as it is hard for newer dancers to listen to you, other dancers, the caller and the music simultaneously.

Flourishes are added on by mutual consent with each partner. Never force a move on any partner if they don't follow the lead, or if they resist. Make sure that the flourish is completed in time to move on to the next move, so that you don't hold up the other dancers.

TIPS FOR DEFENSIVE DANCING

Toronto Contra Dance accommodates a wide variety of dance styles. Innocent flirtation, eye contact and close physical quarters are inherent to the dance. On rare occasions, accidental inappropriate contact can occur. However, sexually suggestive behavior is not acceptable.

While contra dancing is often exuberant and fast moving, and includes the possibility of inadvertent bumps, it should never be out of control. Dancing in a manner that hurts or disregards the safety and comfort of other dancers is not acceptable.

If anyone makes you feel unsafe, uncomfortable or embarrassed, you can address it with them during the dance (see below) or after the dance. If you're not comfortable addressing it with them, we encourage you to approach the organizers.

Nonverbally, you can move their hand to where you prefer it. You can push away at the shoulder. If both their arms are around you in a cuddle-style hold, move the appropriate hand to the side. If you don't care to twirl, pull the arm down when it is raised to lead the twirl. If someone is not supporting their own weight, give less weight yourself and swing slower.

Verbally, try one of the following: "I need more space", "Could you back up a bit", "I prefer a regular swing", "Please put your hand on my shoulder blade, not my waist", "Ouch."

If you feel you need assistance, please talk to any of the Toronto Contra Dance Committee members who are wearing green name badges.

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