

Welcome To Line Dancing

I hope you find line dancing as much fun as the many others who are enjoying it. Line dancing is not difficult - it's just the first few nights that are always the hardest! After a few weeks things will start to flow for you and you'll find your mind is doing less work and your dance steps become more natural. Everyone has a different rate of learning depending on previous dance and musical experience. Those without prior experience will have to work harder - but remember, everyone can do this. We have seen some of the most uncoordinated people become excellent dancers if they don't give up too soon. Each line dance is a sequence of steps. You will learn that sequence in one direction and then repeat it in different directions. There are only so many steps and each dance consists of a combination of one or more of these. Although it may seem complex to start with, once you know all the steps, you'll be able to learn new dances much faster.

Here are some important points to remember that will help you get off on the right (or left) foot!

Footwear:

It is most important for both your safety and your dance performance that you wear sensible shoes. Leather soled shoes or boots are best, with a wide non-skid heel (not too high) least Heels that are very narrow are dangerous as they may cause you to lose balance or slip. Make sure shoes fit your foot securely - sandals and slip ons are a definite hazard. With proper footwear you will find your dancing much easier and safer.

For correct Posture while dancing:

Stand with:

Feet together

Weight falling slightly forward over the balls of your feet,

Knees flexible (not bent, not locked),

Hips tucked in a bit (don't stick your rear out!),

Back and Shoulders relaxed but straight,

Head held up (important for balance and control)

A common temptation is to look down at your feet (or someone else's). If your head is down your balance can be thrown off. You'll learn faster if you exercise your own mind to remember the steps rather than watching someone else's feet (besides, they will probably make a mistake and then so will you!)

Step Length:

Generally the correct step length when dancing is the same as your shoulder width. If you take large steps outside your frame you may lose balance and co-ordination.

Variations:

A variation is something which changes the basic steps of a dance but doesn't change the basic flow of direction. (It's also the name for when the instructor makes a mistake (-: Variations are a lot of fun but can be confusing to a beginner. Don't worry if you've just learned a dance and a more experienced dancer starts changing the steps!

Don't watch them and just keep doing what you know. In time you will experiment with variations too, but remember, it is most important to know the original version first. Please don't do variations during the lesson until everyone has had a chance to learn the pattern especially if it is a beginners class. And sometimes the instructor will teach you variations. Then you can go ahead and try them while you are learning.

Sequence:

As we said earlier, each line dance is a sequence of steps with sequence being the operative word. You need to think about the next step so that your balance is on the correct foot ready to perform the next step. You do not have time to do one step and then stop and think about what comes next - you are already at least one step behind. As you complete a vine right, you should already be thinking about vining left if that is the next step. The flow of one step to another is important.

If you forget what you're supposed to do and everyone else is going left - pretend you know and go with the flow!

Floor etiquette:

Line dances and stationary couples dances like the swing dances are done in the center of the floor. Progressive dances like the 2 Step, Shuffles, etc. are done around the outside of the dance floor. Unless this is a line dance lesson, when everyone is line dancing, you need to remember to stay in lines and leave space around the outside of the floor for the 2 steppers.

Don't make your own line either. Get in an existing line if there is room and stay in that line. When people wander around during line dances, they usually run into other dancers or cause others to get off step.

As a beginner, don't be too hard on yourself. Line dancing, like everything else, takes practice (Remember when you learned to ride a bike how hard it was at first! Could you drive a car after your first lesson?) The more you practice the easier it becomes. At home, when you are ironing or washing up, washing the car etc, do some vines, some 45's etc. Every time you hear some music on the radio or TV that sounds like you could dance to it, practise your line dancing steps - vine, waltz, cha-cha etc. If you are having difficulty with a particular step in a dance, don't not do the dance because of it. Pick up the rest of the dance and fake the bits you have trouble with. Then ask the instructor to go through the difficult step with you again. Gradually you will be able to do the whole dance without a problem.

Believe in yourself and anything is possible! You don't have to get it right first time. The most important thing to remember about Line Dancing is that its not about competing or showing off.. Its simply about

HAVING FUN! and healthy exercise..... and making friends.

***Adapted from a sheet sent by Nikki Tamassy, sane@midcoast.com.au, a line dance instructor in Australia*