

MILONGA ETIQUETTE

The following provides some tips on the appropriate etiquette at tango milongas

Milonga Etiquette for both leads and followers

- Never correct your partner whilst on the dance floor.
- Ensure personal hygiene (bathe, protect you breath, remove odors).
- Dress appropriately.
- Do not talk whilst dancing.
- Generally dance the entire tanda, unless the skills are wildly varying.
- Never stop dancing during a song.
- If you do not wish to dance further at any time, thank your partner - it is important to remember that "Thank you" generally signals an intention to END the dance (so don't be surprised when the other person says thank you back, and walks off).
- At the end of a tanda, when you naturally finish dancing, it is polite to still say "Thank you".
- Do not continuously apologize to your partner if you make mistakes.
- Do apologize if there is a collision with another couple - even if it wasn't your fault.
- Always - **ALWAYS!** - be kind and supportive to beginners; it does not take much to scare someone away for life.
- Milongas are not for practicing nor teaching.
- Do not talk to other dancers whilst they are on the floor, even between songs. This applies whether you are on or off the floor.
- Requesting a dance - whether verbally or otherwise - is done in a subtle and polite manner.
- When entering the dance floor, dancers have right of way.
- Walk around the dance floor, not through it.
- The answer to being thanked after a dance is a return 'Thank you' - not 'You're welcome'.
- Compliments go a long way to enjoying a milonga.
- In between songs, talking is fine (in fact some would say smalltalk is almost obligatory) but do not keep the embrace locked.
- If you did not particularly enjoy the dance, keep it to yourself.
- If the tanda becomes intolerable, tough it out. It is the extreme height of rudeness to leave a tanda before it completes.
- When you finish dancing, leave the floor as quickly as possible, ensuring those on it are given their space.

Milonga Etiquette for leads

- Gentleman-like behavior is expected at all times.
- When inviting a follower to dance, be aware of social queues: is she obviously resting? Is she engrossed in conversation? Is she avoiding your glance?
- When you enter the dance floor, either do so between songs or where is a gap - dancers on the floor must not be disturbed in any way.
- Move with the line of dance - counter clockwise.
- If you are a man who soaks his shirt in sweat, take breaks to keep from overheating; or consider wearing a jacket or bringing a change of clothes.
- The man must escort the woman on and off the floor.
- Respect the space and safety of other dancers - particularly on a crowded floor.
- Avoid collisions by managing your space carefully, including moving at the same speed as other dancers.
- Do not 'tail-gate' other couples.
- Do not overtake other couples.
- Don't zig zag or continually weave in and out of 'dance lanes'.
- If the dance is declined, accept gracefully.
- If you are declined, don't 'baby-sit' ... ie don't sit next to the woman and start talking until she is ready.
- Generally try to dance with a woman of your own level.
- It is OK to ask a woman to dance even if she is with a partner - but generally when her partner is already on the floor. If she is with her partner, it is polite in an old-fashioned sense to ask his consent; not mandatory but a bit of fun.
- Do not ask your partner to dance another tanda unless you are absolutely sure she wants to; tandas are intended as a natural mechanism to complete a dance, and requesting an extension is both impolite and pressures the follower unnecessarily.
- Understand the code for a dance invitation - whether it is verbal or the cabeceo (see the [cabeceo](#) page for more information).
- Wait until a follower has exited the dance floor before asking her to dance.
- Depending on the context, it *may* be rude to interrupt a follower deep in conversation to invite her to dance - try to determine first whether she is passively waiting for an invitation.
- Never invite a follower to invite by extending your hand - she is not a dog! 'May I have the pleasure of this dance?' or a polite variation thereof is in order.
- Ensure you touch your partner appropriately, and not too forcefully.
- If you choose to dance in the *ronda*, ensure you do not delay others behind you.
- The lead should never engage the follower with steps that are beyond her; this will serve only to humiliate her.
- Do not ask the follower to commit to steps or embellishments that could be a danger to other dancers, such as high boleos.
- Remember that whilst relationships certainly evolve on and off the dance floor, tango is not a 'meat market'.

- Be highly attentive to the follower's body language regarding the type of embrace she is comfortable with - some women, particularly beginners, may not welcome an intimate embrace - that intimacy must be earned. The leader chooses the frame of the embrace, but it is the follower's prerogative to determine its intimacy.
- If the follower is not doing precisely what you *thought* you asked her, react appropriately to keep the flow of dance - do not force your follower to 'do it right'. Communication for the action-reaction dance steps is the lead's responsibility to get right, even with beginners. The leader should, paradoxically, *follow the follower*.
- Eliminate the backward step from your repertoire, particularly at crowded milongas.

Milonga Etiquette for followers

- Understand that a close embrace in tango is the norm, and when offered try to adapt if possible.
- A follower has the absolute right to decline a dance - but remember that it will be most unpleasant to the lead, and may be considered rude, particularly in small tango communities. You should try to soften the refusal by saying you are sitting this one out.
- If you refuse an invitation, but wish to dance with the lead later on, say so.
- Don't decline a dance as feeling too tired, then immediately dance with someone else.
- Follow, don't back-lead.
- in a crowded floor, avoid high embellishments that may end up in kicking other dancers.
- If a lead is making the follower feel uncomfortable, she has the right to put a stop to it, politely.
- Yes - a woman may request a dance from a man (though it is unusual, certainly very rare in Buenos Aires).

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