

Chapter 18 - Square Dance Etiquette

Square Dancer's Ten Commandments

1. Thou shalt square dance only for the fun which thee will find in it.
2. Thou shalt not be a snob, considering thyself too good to dance with any and all, sitting out the mixers, or leaving a square lest thou be required to dance with those whom though demist unworthy of thy talents, for the gods of retribution are zealous gods and will visit their mischief upon thee and thou wilt be the one to goof the square.
3. Thou shalt not forget that thou were once a beginner.
4. Thou shalt be exuberant, but thou shalt act thy age. Do not offend others by thy high-flung legs and out-flared skirts.
5. Thou shalt go abroad and dance with other callers so that thy opinions expressed as to the merit of this one and that one are indeed based on facts.
6. Thou shalt not let the stranger in thy midst sit on the sidelines and cool his heels or fail to speak to him.
7. Thou shalt bath diligently, that the sweet aroma of soap and shaving lotion may assail the nostrils of thy associates, leaving the more earthly smells to the farmyard.
8. Thou shalt take care that the words of thy mouth are not scented with garlic or beer.
9. Thou shalt honor thy club and give it thy loyalty, for if thou canst not do this, it were better to separate thyself from it and join thyself to another, whose methods, members, and callers are more to thy liking.
10. Thou shalt not kill thy club with bickering and fault finding.

Follow the above Ten Commandments, and thou shalt be guaranteed a good time at any square dance you attend, and further, will know that you have helped others to have a good time, too.

Square Dance Manners

Assuming that you always wear your best manners in public, let's talk about manners that apply specifically to square dancing. A well-informed square dancer will follow the rules noted here:

- Arrive on time whenever possible.
- Form a circle or set up squares promptly when the music starts or at the caller's request. Bear in mind that one can be prompt without running. A square dance is not the proper place for the 50-yard dash! In fact, such attempts usually turn out to be an obstacle race with other dancers as the obstacles.
- Join the nearest square that is forming. If all the nearby squares are filled, hold your hand up high so that the caller can either guide dancers to a square where you are needed or get some other couples to join you.
- If time permits, introduce yourself and others within the square. You'll not only acquire a reputation for being friendly, but you will also acquire many new friends.
- Listen quietly during any and all instructions from the caller. If you are an average, good-hearted soul and you know the call being explained, resist the temptation to explain it to the others in your square – let the caller do the teaching. When the square is set up and ready to go, the well-informed dancers hear all of the professional instruction they have come to enjoy. However, after that tip your friends may appreciate some help from you and it is perfectly in order to offer it.
- There is no acceptable excuse for rough handling of fellow dancers! Roughness is the mark of ignorance – whether by chance or choice – and you will do well not to imitate even a more experienced dancer who has chosen to ignore the elementary rule of proper square dance conduct.
- At the end of every dance be sure to thank the others in your square. They did contribute to your fun. Thank your partner too, and escort her to a chair.
- Friendliness is a part of good manners. A square dancer promotes friendliness since it offers endless opportunities for new friendships to develop. If you are not continually making new friends, you are not getting the most out of square dancing. A good way to ensure a friendly atmosphere is to consider yourself always a host to all other dancers. Friendliness comes from within yourself, and you can best be described as your interest in others. Those who seek it will be wise to look for it at its source; those who display it are never obliged to seek it.
- Be a well-informed square dancer. Review these rules of etiquette often.

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