

STANDARDS OF BEHAVIOR by Buddy Weaver

Every form of recreation has its code of conduct. In the modern square dance activity, there are varied forms of this code most with elements that date back several generations. This article seeks to bring together some of the most important, yet sometimes overlooked standards of behavior that we should ask of everyone who comes in the door.

Before the dance:

1. Please don't drink alcohol or take any mind altering substance. Not only will you need a "clear head" but the happiness you experience while square dancing will alter your mood in a positive way much more than anything else.
2. Please dress cleanly and practice good personal hygiene. Square dancing is a team activity so your attention to "not offending" is appreciated. Also try to avoid strong perfumes or scents for the same reasons.

At the dance, squaring up:

3. Square up promptly. If you square up after the caller has started, please avoid disturbing the other squares with loud talk.
4. Square dancing should be an inclusive experience so if you must set-up squares with your friends, do it on the first and last tip only so the rest of the dance may include visitors, new dancers, etc.
5. Once you are in a square, please stay with that square until the end of the tip. Please join the nearest available squares rather than passing through or passing by a square in need of a couple.
6. Please welcome everyone to your square rather than "holding" a position. Turning a couple away from your square, regardless of the reason, shows bad manners and causes hurt feelings.
7. If time permits, introduce yourself to others in the square. They are your "team mates" for the next tip so get to know them.

At the dance, while dancing:

8. Do your best to know your part of every square dance call. If you do not understand material ask for help on a break. Understand that expecting someone in the square to pull, push, or tell you where to go is not an acceptable form of square dancing. Make the effort to learn the call as your square depends on you.
9. There is no place of roughness in square dancing. Rough talk (cursing, scolding), yelling, pushing, pulling, squeezing onto hands are all inappropriate behavior. Sometimes the folks who exhibit this behavior don't realize they are doing something wrong so a gentle conversation on how to avoid roughness may be all that is necessary.
10. When your square breaks down, remain calm and quietly, quickly move into a recoverable square formation. The easiest way to get back dancing is to create line of four facing lines of four where the man is on the left/woman on the right of every couple, wait for the caller to say something like "lines go up and back" then rejoin the action.

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At the dance, as the tip ends:

11. Take a moment to thank everyone in your square at the end of the tip. They contributed to your enjoyment and your kind appreciation will lift others.

Remember, one of the primary reasons that groups break up is tolerating behavior that flies in the face of accepted standards. While we must keep in mind how we feel when someone is overly critical of us and avoid being overly critical of others, we must also validate a complaint brought to our attention. A conversation with the offending party is necessary and should be done as privately as possible and without undue criticism. If you are the offending party, it is important to control your temper, listen, and change your behavior to ensure a positive and fulfilling experience for everyone.

Your comments are always welcome, please send them to: buddy@buddyweaver.com