

A photograph of a social dance event. The scene is dimly lit, with warm, low-key lighting. In the foreground, a man in a dark suit is dancing with a woman in a black dress. They are both looking towards the camera. In the background, many other couples are dancing, some in formal attire. The atmosphere appears to be a social gathering or a dance class. The text is overlaid on the lower left portion of the image.

The 10 Biggest Mistakes In Social Dancing

Disclaimer:

Mistakes in social dancing are usually that, mistakes. They are done unintentionally and are the result of a lack of awareness rather than done to distract, aggravate, or injure others.



Based upon a recent poll of Australian tangueros (dancers of social tango), the following are currently the biggest social dancing mistakes people commit:

1. **Chewing gum while dancing:** even though done with the intention of circumventing bad breath, when dancing closely with someone else do yourself a favour, spit it out before you dance! Having someone gnaw their chewy in your ear is distracting and your subconscious rhythmic smacking of your teeth is repetitive and annoying. Try instead switching to the current most popular brand of breath mint, Eclipse, they come in a variety of flavours.
2. **Trying out all of your 'moves' on the first dance:** your partner wants to dance with you, not be 'tested' like a new toy on its maiden voyage! Build the rapport and connection first by dancing simply for the first song or two. It really isn't until about the third song of a tanda that you experience that ultimate tango, so take your time and respect the time it takes to get to know your partner before trying to drive them like a Ferrari.
3. **If there's a free space on the floor, just take it!** while it may seem like a good idea to dive towards the nearest free space on the floor you may actually be disrupting the fine balance of the pista (or line of dance) by overtaking people to get to the free space. A good social dance floor is one where the dancers roll smoothly from one space to the other. If everyone constantly chased the free space, the smooth flow of dancers would cease and your partner would be most likely to be kicked, hit or shoved, not to mention being dragged across the floor on your whim. It is important that you maintain an awareness of the spaces around you, but also that you continue forward in your 'lane' as much as possible to assist the streamlined movement of the pista.

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4. **As long as I stick to the line of dance, I can move at whatever pace I choose!:** related to point 3, you can always chose to travel at whatever pace you choose, but if you are blocking the pista, be prepared for people to cut you off or charge at you and your partner. I mean, this is poor behaviour from the other dancers, but if you are letting the length of a train appear before you and are not making reasonable attempts to maintain the forward progression of the line of dance you will be surrounded by some very cranky fellow dancers. If you tend towards the slower side in your dancing, maybe you should instead consider heading into the centre of the milonga floor. According to etiquette rules, the further inside the floor you go, the slower you can expect to move. Save the outside spaces for the dancers who want to keep a steady forward pace to their dancing and everyone will be happy.

5. **If my partner does something strange or wrong I can tell them so:** Never, ever stop in the middle of the dance, especially on the social dance floor, simply to correct or explain a concept to your partner! The milonga is not a place for working on things or correction, it is for social dancing. This means that you accept the person, their level and what they offer, as they are at that moment! If you want to work on a concept, find a practica to attend and then a willing partner who wants to work on the concept with you. This is what a practica is designed for! Also, keep in mind that sometimes the reason why you try something and it doesn't work is a communication issue and this can be both of you! As you can only ever change yourself in the dance (not the other person, as this is a matter for them alone), if something doesn't work we suggest you instead focus on what you can do about it, otherwise just try other things that do work with the both of you. Remember at its absolute fundamental tango is a walking dance, so if nothing else, just walk and focus on building your connection with your partner.

- 6. People say ‘no’ because they think I’m not good enough to dance with:** actually, there are so many reasons why people says no to a dance. Sometimes they are tired and need a rest, sometimes they aren’t into the music being played at that time, sometimes they are not confident enough to dance with you. These are just some of the reasons. It is also difficult to dance with someone new the first time and not everyone is eager to try it at a milonga. It is especially difficult to dance a ‘milonga’ tanda with a new person. Some of the more experienced dancers will wait until they’ve at least danced a tango with you, or will ask you for the last song of a milonga tanda to minimise the risk of having a bad dance experience with a new person. We also recommend you try not to hang the success of your night on dancing with particular people either. While it is nice to have a dance with your favourites, sometimes it is not practical for them to dance with everyone they want each night!
- 7. Dancing socially is a great way of having a conversation with the person I’m dancing with:** this is true, but the conversation is ‘non-verbal’. Tango is a physical expression of ourselves but when you open your mouth to talk, you detract from the physical by engage the person’s thoughts. Followers particularly enjoy the dance because of the peace they can find in simply existing physically. Leaders need to have their attention on other things, such as their partner’s physical needs, the couples around them and the music. So, talking during the dance simply distracts them. So, chat, by all means, but save it for the small gaps between the songs in the tanda, or seek to engage the person in a conversation either off the floor, or outside of the milonga altogether! A local tanguero says that there are only 2 things he will say to a follower on the social dance floor: (1) how lovely they look (sincerely!); and (2) a gracious thank you for dancing with you! A humble man indeed :o)

8. **Wearing heavy perfumes or no deodorant:** because social dancing requires two people to be physically close to another human being you do need to be mindful of your body odour. As such, it is always a good idea to pay attention to your cleanliness by showering and wearing appropriate deodorant before social dancing. In contrast, some people wear heavy perfumes with the idea to mask their body odour, but this too can make it difficult for others to dance closely with you. Therefore, try to wear minimal perfumes and bathe regularly before dancing! Just remember, there is nothing wrong with a little healthy, clean sweat.

9. **You have an amazing connection with someone in the dance, it must be love, no? :** No! The beautiful thing about tango is that it can be enjoyed with many people of different shapes, ages and sizes. A typical night might contain a number of amazing connections with a small number of individuals but this does not mean you are destined to be together! Keep tango on the dance floor. If you want something beyond that, ask the person out and court them like you normally would in the real world.

10. **If my partner isn't dancing on the beat, I can influence them to dance on the beat by showing them on the dance floor:** while you may be able to do this, it is presumptuous to try and pull or push your partner onto a particular musicality. The beautiful thing about tango is that it is non-rhythm specific. That is, you get to choose your musicality! Sometimes we dance with someone and their musicality is different to the way we would dance. This is ok, it doesn't necessarily mean that the person cannot dance musically. It may be simply that they hear the accents in the music differently to you. That said, you can always build in your own accents to the movement by changing the intonation of your own individual movement in the dance.



If you want to learn more about this, come and learn from us!
We can show you how.

Happy dancing!

Yours in beautiful social tango moments,



The Tango Butterfly Team

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