

Lethbridge Scottish Country Dance Club SCD Ball Etiquette

Scottish Country Dancing is a fun and cooperative social activity
that typically requires 2, 3, or 4 couples (occasionally more) to complete the dance pattern.

Agreeing to dance is a choice. Dancers are neither required nor expected to dance every dance on a formal or ball program nor to accept every invitation to do a dance. Indeed, dancers should aim to participate in those dances with which they feel confident and will enjoy. When not participating in a dance, take the opportunity to observe others dancing.

Inviting a partner is gender neutral. Traditionally men invited women to dance, often “booking” a partner in advance, but those conventions are largely outdated and we no longer observe them. Partnering, which can be initiated by either sex, generally occurs in the short interval between leaving the floor after the last dance and the MC announcing the next dance.

Being helpful to other dancers characterizes SCD, and there are various ways to be helpful according to each dancer’s level of experience and ability.

- **Dancers with basic and intermediate experience and knowledge** can be helpful by:
 - * choosing those dances with which they are comfortable, familiar, and can dance with, at most, minimal assistance
 - * partnering with more-experienced dancers, rather than with another inexperienced dancer
 - * being attentive (eye contact) to other dancers in the set and recovering quickly in the event of a momentary memory lapse
 - * politely refusing an invitation to dance a dance that is difficult, unfamiliar, or beyond the person’s knowledge, comfort level, or ability
 - * as part of refusing an invitation to dance, indicating a willingness to dance some other upcoming more-familiar dance on the program

- **Experienced and advanced dancers and teachers** can be helpful by:
 - * encouraging everyone in the set to smile and have fun
 - * giving subtle guidance only when absolutely necessary
 - * using inconspicuous prompting such as a glance, a hand gesture, or a quiet word
 - * avoiding unnecessary contact (pushing or re-directing, except to avoid a collision)
 - * helping a collapsed set to reform in time to begin the next repetition
 - * not coercing someone to join a dance when the person prefers not to participate

Dances at Balls are always briefed but not necessarily walked-through.
Even if walk-throughs occur, they serve only as a reminder of a familiar dance,
not an opportunity to learn an unfamiliar dance.

Lethbridge Scottish Country Dance Club SCD Dance Protocol

Forming dance sets

- wait for the MC to announce that a dance activity is about to begin
- ask a partner to dance and come on to the floor together as a pair (or a trio etc., as indicated by the MC); do not come into a set unpartnered
- if other couples are already forming a set, additional couples always join at the bottom of the set below the last couple, never between people already in the set
- 1st man (traditionally) or 1st man with his partner counts off the number of couples and announces whether sets are complete or not; the MC will decide how to accommodate the number of couples available
- couples do not shift position within the set after the line has been counted off
- at the end of every dance, after the bow and curtsy, thank your partner and all the other people in the set, then vacate the floor until the next dance is announced
- once in the set, remain with your partner in the set until the dance is completed; if necessary to depart from the set at any time, alert your partner in advance and arrange for a substitute

Dancing with partners

- be sociable and dance with as many different people as possible, and typically only once with a given person in an evening
- as hosts of the biennial workshop, take the initiative to invite visiting dancers as partners
- teachers love to dance, so feel free to ask a teacher to be your partner
- newer dancers should partner with more-experienced dancers, rather than with another inexperienced dancer
- if there is an excess of one sex (usually women), take turns to dance as the other sex (usually as a man); being willing to dance as either sex increases the opportunity to dance and is the sociable thing to do
- at all times smile and make eye contact with others in the set, especially your partner; not only is this sociable but you can receive helpful hints from others in the event of a memory lapse
- when waiting in a dance, be ready to dance at any instant by standing upright with hands at sides and feet in first position with heels together

Scottish Country Dances differ greatly in the level of knowledge and expertise needed to complete a dance with minimal mistakes

Teachers and MCs can provide guidance on the skill level needed for a given dance so as to maximize everyone's enjoyment

If in doubt about anything, **ask one of the teachers:** Fiona Miller (Full Certificate 1978),
Gail Michener (Full Certificate 1990), Peggy Rodzinyak (Preliminary Certificate 2017).