

♪ for New Contra Dancers

Welcome! These are Appalachian & New England folk dances. Couples twirl & dance together & with lines of neighbors. You'll have lots of fun & get good exercise. You don't need to bring a partner, & you don't need experience.

A caller teaches every dance & keeps saying what to do during the dance. Evenings start with the easiest dances. Most people learn the basics after 1-2 evenings. "Oldtimers" will help you.

Wear loose casual clothing (knits & turtlenecks get too hot).

We change partners every dance, so you'll meet all kinds of people. Both women & men can ask, even people they don't know. When you find a good dancer in the line, compliment her/him & ask for the next dance. Dancing with good dancers helps you learn.

Definitions

Top=Near the band. **Bottom**=Away from the band.

Ones=Actives=1st, 3rd, 5th etc. couples in line.

Twos=Inactives=2nd, 4th, 6th etc. couples in line.

Progression=move along a line, dancing with new people, as caller tells you; at ends of line change from 1 to 2 or 2 to 1.

Corner=Opposite=Neighbor=person of opposite sex from you.

Lesson 1 - Basic Moves

Turn=Allemande=walk around each other, your curved palm in other's palm, at height of shorter person's shoulder, Fingers & thumb *CURVED*, not gripping. Bend elbow in a **V**. Pull moderately, to balance the other's pull. About as much force as opening a fridge.

Dosido=dos à dos=back to back around a person, arms at sides.

Swing=take hands; walk small steps (4") toward partner's right shoulder (foot isn't "glued" to floor: both feet move). Going fast, it becomes a "buzz step swing." Go at slower person's speed. Her left hand *BEHIND* his shoulder or arm takes $\frac{1}{2}$ the centrifugal force (weight). His right hand *FLAT* on her back, just below shoulder blades, under any long hair. For less dizziness, look at partner. End **side-by-side. Woman always ends on right; man on left.**

Lesson 2 - More Moves

Women's chain=women take right hands & pull by, then:

Woman takes left hands with closest man. His right hand behind her waist. Turn LEFT as a couple 'til you face back to the other couple.

Courtesy turn=the turn described in the *italic words* just above

Right & left through=two people walk through another couple, then do a *courtesy turn*. In some towns people touch the opposite's right hand; others not.

Star left=4 people: face person on your right, curve your left hand *gently* on that person's left arm; walk around in a circle.

"Part of the tradition is learning as you go" Brown+Fowler *Dance from Scratch*

Lesson 3 - To Learn Later

Balance (simplified)=step forward then back, or: right then left.

Balance=step on your right foot. Swing your left foot slightly into the air in front of your right ankle. This lifts your body so the right foot hops up on the same beat as the left foot. Then step left, kick right, while hopping on left.

Cast off=turn side by side, arms behind each other's back.

Hey=weave a figure-8: follow the person ahead. For people walking toward you, leave same sex on right, opposite sex on left.

Contra corners=**INACTIVES** stay put & keep your left hand up: look right to find & turn an active person with this left hand, then look left & turn another active with this same left hand. **ACTIVES**: 1. *right hand to your partner*, 2. left to an inactive; 3. *right to partner*; 4. left to an inactive; 5. *right to partner again*.

Being asked: Custom is to say yes to the first person who asks you to dance. However it's OK to say "I'm uncomfortable dancing with you," and then dance with someone else. If he doesn't understand, he deserves to know you're uncomfortable. If he understands, he deserves to hear no.

Do: If you're sitting & want to dance, ask anyone *as soon as* a dance ends, especially at the beginning for the easiest dances. Help each other be ready for the next step. Be open to each person's unique style. Protect yourself from roughness.

Good Feet: Most moves (turn, star...) take 8 steps, so count to 8 with the music; you'll learn the rhythm. Suede soles (bowling or dance shoes) give smoothest dancing & are gentlest on floors. **You'll dance 100% better on suede than rubber soles.** Many halls forbid hard soles & shoes that've been worn outdoors.

Avoid: Closing fingers on the back of someone's hand. Fingertips in someone's back. Sharp rings, nails, gum chewing, slippery lotion, bouncing, shouts in people's ears.

Good Twirls: His hand's open over her head, moving very little: she braces against it & twirls herself. No twirl if either person keeps hand low, especially for beginners. He helps her to the next step.



Oldtimers: How To Be a Sought after Dancer & Ergonomically Correct

(so we all have many years of Happy Dancing)

Introduce yourself & smile; be open to fun, flow & friendliness.

Enthusiasm is great; don't let yourself **bump** anyone (if you bump into people more than a couple of times in an evening, you're too tired: take a rest).

Fingers & thumbs never close far enough to touch the back of a partner's hand, thus allowing a feeling of freedom.

Give feedback: "I like...", "That's too fast for me/too tight...", "I'm uncomfortable with your hand there/ this close/..." "Ouch!" Tell the caller & musicians how great they were.

Tell the organizers what you like, & mention **any** problem: they want to fix it.

When Swinging: **Man gently pulls back against Woman's left hand** (which is behind his back, shoulder, or arm)

Woman pulls back against Man's right hand (flat just below her shoulder blades), to avoid strains on shoulder or back. Swing at the slower person's speed.

Sex roles here are nominal: female dancers can dance the positions usually danced by men, and vice versa. Be clear to beginners.

100 Swings (you're really expert if you learn from words alone):

Basic: his right hand on her back, her left hand behind his back, shoulder, or arm; other hands joined, loose, or on other's *shoulder*.*

Equal: each right on other's back, lefts *joined* or loose. **2-hand**: each left in other's right. **Elbow**: hook elbows. **2-elbow**: allemande right & each left hand on other's right elbow. **Turkey wing**: each right hand on other's right elbow. **Butterfly**: side by side, his right arm behind her back, her left hand behind his back. **Dragonfly**: right side to right side, each right hand behind other's back, insides of right elbows touch, left hand behind own back in other's right hand.

Shoulder: each right hand on other's right shoulder, left hands joined. **Gypsy**: lock eyes, don't touch. **All**: can reverse left & right, spin clockwise or *counter*, walking or fast. Women often adapt to man's swing; try having him adapt. **italic are good in crowds*

How to Find Contra Dances

tedcrane.com/DanceDB or contradancelinks.com

Paul Burke, Box 1320 Shepherdstown WV 25443 burke@smad.info
note.smad.info If writing, please say Aug'08