



HOW EXPERIENCED DANCERS CAN HELP NEW DANCERS

If it has been a while since your first Contra dance, you may have forgotten some of the challenges facing beginners. Please consider the following suggestions:

While we all want to be welcoming to newer dancers, it is best to **avoid unessential conversation during the walk-through and the dance itself**. Take time during the break to get to know newcomers instead.

Use gestures and physical demonstrations to guide new dancers, keeping verbal instructions to a minimum. It is difficult for newer dancers to listen to you, the caller, and the music all at once! If the newcomer seems receptive, you can always offer tips during the breaks.

During both the walk-through and the dance, **keep flourishes to a minimum with new partners**. Flourishes can be disorienting and slow the learning process for those newer to Contra.

Dizziness is one of the key difficulties newer dancers may face with Contra. Before twirling anyone whose dance experience is unknown to you, ask whether they are comfortable executing such moves. If they mention a problem with dizziness, advise them to keep a steady gaze on their partners' eyes, ear, or shoulder. Also, reassure them that they can always ask partners to slow down their swing, even to a slow walk.

Beginners tend to learn more quickly when they dance with experienced dancers, rather than with other beginners. If you and your experienced partner see a pair of beginners forming, consider offering to partner with the beginners instead. Also, as you finish dancing with new dancers, **consider introducing them to, or pointing them toward, another potential experienced partner**.

Respect the beginner's (and all other partners'!) personal boundaries and comfort zones. Avoid flirtation on the dance floor with newcomers and with dancers you do not know well.

Be encouraging to beginners in any way you reasonably can. Reassure them that mistakes are commonplace, even among experienced dancers. Above all, **try to help beginners recover from their mistakes**.

Make sure you leave beginners where they need to be and oriented for the next move, even if this means you are a moment late for your next move. You can recover better than they can. Remember, good dancers take good care of their partners and try to make sure they enjoy themselves enough to come back.

Thanks to CDNY for some of the above suggestions!