

English Country Dance—Etiquette

ECD is, first and foremost, a form of social dance—enlivened by music, movement, *and* community. It's meant to be enjoyable. If you're dancing for the first time with Victoria English Country Dancers, know that you are welcome and that other dancers are prepared to help you. Don't worry about mistakes and missteps!

Victoria English Country dancers are well-versed in the rules-of-the-road when it comes to helping—not just new dancers, but each other as well. This is the way we try to do things:

On Helping Fellow Dancers During the Dance (yes, please help!):

To foster a generous and pleasant experience for as many as possible,
be in the right place yourself and let others find their place around you.

Always assume your fellow dancers will respond to the most subtle cues.

If more help is needed, then please help in these ways:

- **minimally**
- **subtly**
- **silently, when possible**
- **gently (avoid pushing or pulling)**
- **kindly, and**
- **with forgiveness**

From the ECDC (English Country Dance Society/Folklore Society of Greater Washington)

How to Help: Guidelines (paraphrased) from Bruce Hamilton (Dance Leader, CDSS) **“When you're not the caller.”**

The best way to help is to avoid diverting attention from the caller—when the dance is being taught, or in the course of the dance. Don't say anything—subtle non-verbal cues only and only where appropriate.

Don't guide physically; hold onto fellow dancers only when the dance calls for it. There are other ways to communicate.

If mistakes happen, let them. If your approach to the dance doesn't work in the group, let it go. For example, if someone is approaching you from the left side in a hey that begins with the right shoulder, avoid correcting them. Catching a dancer's eye, smiling, and angling your body in the right direction is preferable to pointing at your own shoulder. “The time comes when this is going to be either a left-shoulder-hey or a collision... Shift your mind and decide a left shoulder hey is fine with you.” Remember, don't let it interfere with the genuine enjoyment this figure brings. Show that mistakes are no big deal by acting as though they are no big deal.

Dance well, enjoy yourself, and let it show. Your example teaches both choreography and style—and by dancing well (i.e., not stopping to “help”) you make openings for others in the right place at the right time.