

# MILONGA ETIQUETTE FOR SOCIAL TANGO

Some basic guidelines for an enjoyable social tango dancing experience.

## Safety First

- Safe driving: respect line of dance, stay in lane, keep traffic flowing.
- Visibility: be aware of blind spots, no backwards steps, pass carefully, avoid obstructions, no drinking & driving.
- Avoid injury to self & others. In case of bumping, apologize.

## Manners

- Asking & accepting: no obligation nor duty, 'cabeceo' eye contact first then smile & nod, no stalking or pressure, no cutting in, "NO" means "NO".
- At a Milonga: no teaching on the dance floor, no critiquing. We're here to dance and to have fun!
- Embrace is comfortable & gentle, close embrace is by mutual consent, no squeezing, no head pushing.
- During dancing: generally not talking, no need for apologizing. Be respectful of partner.
- "Thank you" after a song is a polite way to say we're done. If you want to continue dancing the tanda, express your appreciation.

## Comfort

- Hygiene: shower, clean clothes, antiperspirant, dry change of clothes, fragrance used sparingly, breath mints or gum, clean hands, colds & flu bugs stay home!
- Closeness: shave to remove stubble, control your hair, glasses off.

## Milonga Format

- Tandas are sets of music by the same orchestra or style, 3-4 songs in each set.
- Cortinas are short breaks of non-tango music between tandas. Time to thank partner for dance, escort back to table. Usually change partners during cortinas.

## Navigation

- Follow LINE OF DANCE counter-clockwise
- Enter dance floor when there is space
- Make sure you are seen by advancing couple before entering dance floor
- Make space for other nearby couples.
- Continue dancing in one lane.
- Change lanes carefully, space permitting.
- Be cautious of other leaders blind spots.
- Don't change lanes unnecessarily or suddenly
- Don't dance backwards against LINE OF DANCE
- Keep moving with the other dancers, staying in place can cause a traffic jam.
- Walk around the dance floor to meet your next partner.



# ARGENTINE TANGO - BASIC VOCABULARY

**ABRAZO:** The dance embrace.

**BAILEMOS:** "Let's dance."

**BOLEO:** A whip like action of the free leg while swiveling on the supporting leg. A boleo can be executed forward or back and either high or low depending on the power and intention of the lead and the follower's choice.

**CABECEO:** This gesture is used from a distance to invite a partner to dance. When eye contact has been made, the receiving partner nods their head signifying, "Shall we dance?" A returning nod of the head, or any other barely perceptible facial movement, indicates "Yes, I would like to dance with you."

**CALESITA (Carousel):** A figure in which the lead places the follower on one foot and then dances around the follower in a circle. Follower is on own axis and is pivoting on supporting leg.

**CLOSE EMBRACE:** The follower's arm is around the shoulders of the lead or behind the lead's back. The embrace can open slightly to accommodate more complex moves. The lead and follow have their own axis and share a common third axis in between the contact of their bodies. (also see Open Embrace)

**COLGADA:** When the follower and lead are tilted away from each other and a rotation on a shared axis is executed with the lead and follower's feet typically in a sandwich or close contact position.

**CORTINA (Curtain):** A brief musical interlude between tandas of a totally different genre. It is used as a time to change partners.

**CROSS-FEET SYSTEM** or **CROSS SYSTEM:** The couple is stepping together using the same foot instead of the opposite as in Parallel System.

**CRUSADA (Cross):** Occurs anytime a foot is crossed in front or in back of the other.

**GANCHO (Hook):** A quick motion of the leg bending at the knee and hooking sharply around the partner's leg and then releasing. This can be performed to the inside or outside of either leg and by either partner.

**MILONGA:** Milonga has four meanings. It refers to a type of up-beat Argentine music written in 2/4 time; the dance style that corresponds to the music; the dance salon where people go to dance tango to the music; or a dance party where Argentine Tango, Vals and Milonga are danced and where teaching or practicing is not appropriate.

**MILONGUEROS/MILONGUERAS:** Refers to those frequenting the milongas who have mastered the tango dance and embody the essence of tango.

**MOLINETE (Windmill):** A series of turning steps that follow the pattern of a forward step, side step, back step, side step and repeats. This often occurs when the lead directs the follower around his body while he is positioned in the center of the turn.

**NAVIGATION/FLOOR CRAFT:** Maintaining safety by following line of dance, respecting the space of other dancers, avoiding movements into “blind spots” and keeping movements compact on a crowded dance floor.

**OCHOS (Figure 8's):** Crossing steps with pivots done in cross system. A front ocho consists of a step forward with a pivot and then another step forward; while a back ocho consists of a back step with a pivot and then another back step. The ocho is considered to be one of the oldest steps in tango, along with caminar, the walking steps.

**OUTSIDE PARTNER:** Anytime the lead walks on the outside (either to the left or to the right) of the follower, resulting in contra-body movement for both partners.

**OPEN EMBRACE:** Typically used in Nuevo tango with no upper body contact. There is energy in the open side of the embrace. On the closed side, the women's left hand is resting on the man's arm at or above the elbow, or on the outside of the arm without gripping. The man's right arm is on the woman's left shoulder blade. It is helpful to have connection all along the arms on the closed side, but to allow freedom to shift the embrace more open or closed.

**PARADA (Stop):** A position where the follower's progress is blocked by the lead's foot. The movement is stopped by a chest lead rather than the foot and creates the illusion that the stop is signaled at the feet.

**PARALLEL SYSTEM:** Is when the lead steps with his left foot while the follower steps on her right foot or when the lead steps on his right foot, the follower steps on her left foot. This is the normal dance position for most dances. Note the difference from the Cross System where the same (right or left) feet of both partners move together.

**PASADA:** A stepping over the partner's outstretched foot or leg. Often done in conjunction with a Parada.

**PAUSA (Pause):** Holding a position or pose for two or more beats of the music. Pauses can be placed anywhere in the dance that makes sense with the music and footwork and is also very good for reestablishing connection.

**PRACTICA:** An informal practice session to work on improving skills and technique for tango dancers. This is opposed to Milongas which are to dance and have fun and where teaching or practicing is not appropriate.

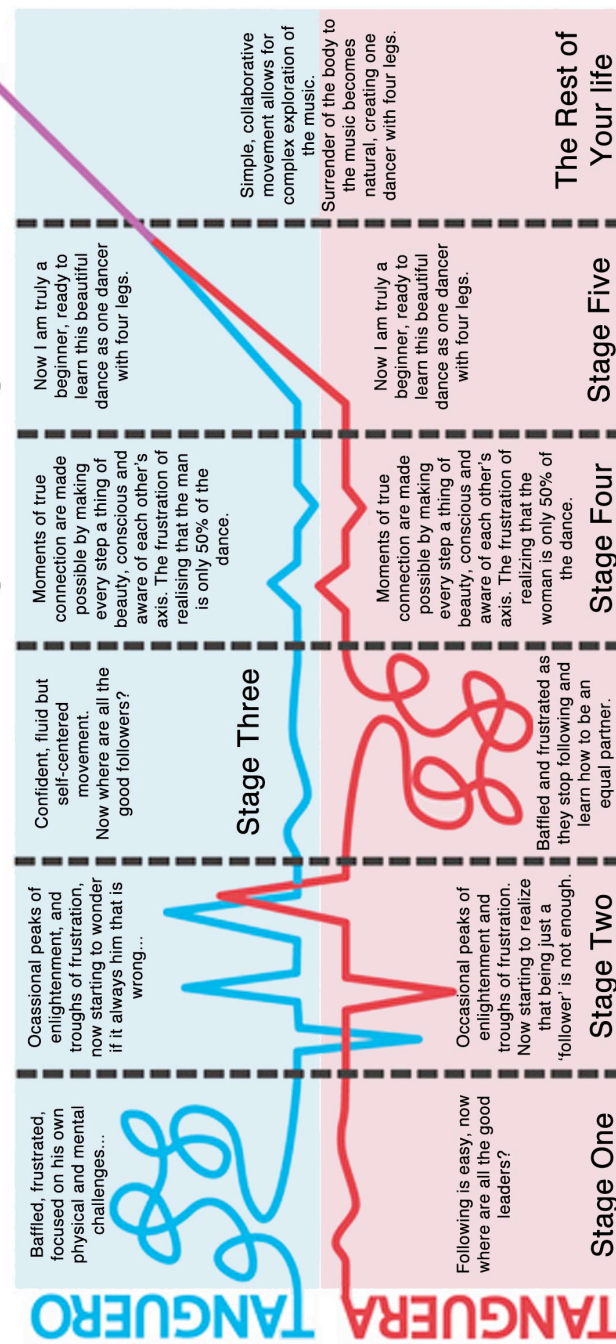
**SACADA:** The entering and displacement of the foot and space of the partner and then transferring weight to that foot. It has the “appearance” of sending the partner's leg to its next position.

**TANDA:** A set of dance music - usually three to four songs of a similar style of tango (vals, milonga or tango) and often by the same orchestra or another orchestra in the same mode. It is customary to dance the entire tanda with the same partner.

**VALS:** Argentine waltz done to tango music in waltz or  $\frac{3}{4}$  time. This is a faster waltz than the Viennese Waltz where each beat in the measure makes a comfortable walking beat. Syncopation or traspie steps and more complex steps are added on the subdivisions of the beat.

**VOLCADA:** Literally a “tip-over” of the follower's axis towards the leader.

The many twists and turns in the journey of effortless, fluid, connected tango dancing.



The longest journey starts with a single step, and this journey is worth all the detours.