



## The Top Ten Tips For Modern Jive A Guide for Beginners

### 1. Relax And Have Fun

Modern Jive is, first and foremost, a fun activity. Relax, smile and enjoy the experience. It may seem a bit daunting in your first few weeks, but you'll soon get the hang of it. In time, those moves that look so impressive and complicated now will become second nature to you.

### 2. Use A Relaxed Hand-Hold

It's important to keep a loose hand-hold. Don't grip onto your partner's hand as this can hurt your partner, particularly during turns. As a general rule, keep your thumb off your partner's hand. If your partner's hand-hold becomes a tight grip and is causing you discomfort or pain, ask them to loosen their grip. This becomes even more important if your partner has long nails that are digging into your palm.

### 3. Either Lead Or Follow

Modern Jive is generally a male-led dance. Ladies, it's the one area of life where men still get to have their own way, so humour them! Men, it's your job to provide a clear lead. That doesn't mean yanking your partner around like a hod of bricks, though. Keep it smooth; remember that her arms are attached at the other end, and should ideally stay that way. Lead her; don't pull her. Ladies, it's your job to follow what the man leads. Don't put yourself into spins and turns; wait for the man to lead you into them, and you'll find it works better.

This is all made easier if you keep a springy tension in your arms; if you're not sure how, ask a teacher. They'll be happy to explain it to you.

Lastly some dancers develop a bad habit of bouncing their hands up and down in time with the music. Try to avoid this if you can, as not only does it look confusing, but it can make proper 'leading and following' much more difficult with all that extra bouncing going on.

### 4. Dance In Time

Dancing is basically moving to music. With that in mind, it's surprising how many people just throw their partners (or themselves) into moves without paying any attention to the beat. Your teachers teach moves to a count to help you dance in time.

Try to listen to the music while you're dancing. If you lose the beat, there's nothing wrong with pausing for a moment to pick it up again.

### 5. Practise

Doing dance classes is a great way to learn how to do moves, but in order to remember them and to learn how to put them together in a dance, you need to practise. At the end of the beginners' class, and again after the intermediate and beginners' revision classes, there is "freestyle" time to practise what you've learned. It can be nerve-racking at first, but try to relax. Men, try doing the moves you know, perhaps changing the order in which you do them. Have a simple "filler" move in mind to fall back on if your mind goes blank; the Octopus/Loophole or the First Move are good ones. Ladies, practise following the move leads and be patient if he's trying to master the new moves he's just been taught.

Don't be afraid to make mistakes. That's how we learn, and if a move goes wrong it's not the end of the world. Just laugh it off and carry on. Even the best dancers mess up occasionally.

### 6. Dance When Asked

One of the great things about Modern Jive is that you are allowed to ask anyone to dance. It's accepted etiquette that you accept any offer of a dance unless you have a good reason not to. Ladies can ask men to dance too. Don't be shy – the only way to improve is to dance as much as possible. Don't be afraid to ask experienced dancers, either. Most people are happy to dance with beginners. Having said all that, if someone turns you down for a dance don't take it personally. They may be too tired, needing a drink or any of a number of good reasons. Just move on and ask someone else instead.

It is acceptable to turn someone down or stop dancing with them if they dance in a sleazy way and make you feel uncomfortable. If anyone treats you like this please don't suffer in silence, but tell a member of the team. Such behaviour is unacceptable in social dance.

#### 7. Don't Try To Run Before You Can Walk

As a beginner, you should wait a while before attempting the intermediate class. The moves are generally much more complicated than those in the beginners' class and the basics are not taught as it is assumed that intermediates already know them. To get a good grasp of the basics takes 2-3 months of beginner lessons for most people. The best way to tell if you're ready to move up to intermediates is to ask one of the dancing team to dance with you and give you feedback. At the very least you should be able to lead or follow beginner moves competently.

Sometimes you'll see experienced dancers doing drops and other flashy moves on the dance floor, and you may think, "I'd love to have a go at that". However, such moves can be extremely dangerous if done by someone who hasn't learned to do them properly. Until you have been taught the proper techniques, NEVER do drops, lifts or other dangerous moves. Men, even if you have learned to do them safely, always check with your partner beforehand that she is happy to do drops. Ladies, never throw yourself into a drop, as more than one lady has hit the floor or injured her partner because she threw herself backwards when her partner wasn't actually leading a drop.

With any move, if you feel yourself pulling on your partner's arm in an awkward way *stop and let go*. Never try to force it or you may end up hurting your partner.

#### 8. Take Care On The Dance Floor

When you first walk onto the dance floor, try to find an empty space rather than dancing too close to another couple. Particularly if it's crowded, you should always be aware of what's going on around you. It is your responsibility to avoid bumping into other dancers and to protect your partner. Never walk backwards onto the floor without looking where you are going. Men, always look where you are leading your partner (e.g. look over your shoulder before leading her behind you in a Catapult). If there isn't much room to move, keep your moves small. Ladies, beware of where you're moving and keep an eye out for your partner's safety as well.

Also, remember that the dance floor is only for dancing. If you want to chat, move to the edge of the room. Always walk around, rather than across, the dance floor if you're not dancing and never carry drinks across the dance floor.

#### 9. Dress Appropriately.

You don't need to buy specialist dance shoes (though these will be worth considering further down the line if you start to take your dancing seriously), but wear smooth-soled, comfortable shoes that you can spin in. Rubber-soled shoes are generally a bad idea and can lead to serious knee injuries. Comfortable clothing helps as well. Don't wear bulky rings, because these can dig in and hurt your partner's hand when you're dancing. Avoid loose jewellery etc. as well, as it can easily get tangled or broken. Ladies with long hair should also consider their hair style; plaits and ponytails can be painful weapons if they hit your partner as you spin.

Dancing is a very physical activity, so it's a good idea to bring along a spare shirt or top (or several) so that you can change when you get a bit sweaty. A hand towel to wipe your face is a good idea too, as is a can of antiperspirant or deodorant. Nobody likes to dance with someone who is wringing wet.

#### 10. What's That Smell!

Personal hygiene is extremely important when you're dancing up close with someone. Always have a wash, use antiperspirant or deodorant and change into fresh clothing before going to a dance class or freestyle. There is no excuse for not bothering. Some people think they don't need deodorant - trust me, you do when you're dancing. This applies to both men *and* woman.

Try to avoid smoking before dancing. If you do smoke, eat a breath mint before dancing. Also, please remember not to eat strong foods such as garlic or smoked fish before dancing. Your partner *will* notice if you do. A little consideration goes a long way and will impact on the number of people who are happy to dance with you.