

Welcome to Contra Dancing!

Chattahoochee Contra Dancers (CCD) welcomes you to the best-kept secret in Atlanta: Live music and high-octane dancing in a clean, safe environment. Contra dancing is fun, easy to learn, accessible to all ages, doesn't require you to bring a partner, and is great exercise!

When and Where...

CCD gathers on Friday evenings throughout the year in midtown Atlanta at the **Clarkston Community Center**, 3701 College Ave, Clarkston GA.

We also dance on 1st, 3rd, and 5th Tuesday dances at **Messiah Lutheran Church**, 465 Clairemont Rd in downtown Decatur.

An annual November Festival, and other special events also dot the CCD schedule. Check it out at www.contradance.org.

Family Policies

Dances are **non-drinking and nonsmoking** events and include dancers of all ages. Children are welcome but we have no formal childcare. Older children are welcome to dance and, for the safety of all, parents are accountable for their children's behavior while in the building.

Join the fun!

The CCD is a non-profit, all-volunteer organization. We always need help setting up and cleaning up. Be a member of the community and **do your part!** Information on volunteer opportunities is available on the website at www.contradance.org/html/details.php.

You can also help the Steering Committee, which diligently produces a year's worth of dances. Come to their meetings and make some friends in the process. Monthly business meetings are announced at the dances, posted on the web, and are open to all.



How to be a Great Contra Dancer

We've assembled a few "pieces of 8" to help you master the basics and get the most out of your time at the dance. For more information check out "Read More About It..." on the CCD home page at www.contradance.org. We'll see you on the dance floor!



The Basic 8

1. Contra dancing is a **group activity** as well as a partner dance. Over the course of a dance, you may interact with your "partner," your "neighbor," your "shadow," and everyone else in the set.
2. **Single dancers and first-timers are welcome.** You need not bring your own dance partner. In fact, the fastest and easiest way to learn contra is to dance with more experienced people.
3. Each **dance couple** is composed of a "Lady" and a "Gent" and the dance normally starts with the "lady" on the right. That said, same-gender dance couples are not uncommon, especially during an evening in which the genders are unevenly represented. In such cases, the couple decides between them who will dance which role.
4. **Anyone may ask anyone else to dance.** Women can ask men.
5. All dances are completely explained and "**walked through**" by the Caller before they are danced.
6. It is customary to **change partners** for each dance.
7. When you are dancing alone, feel free to skip and hop with joy as much as you want. When you are dancing with a partner though, seek to **glide** in your dance movements by using a **smooth walking step** in time with the music.
8. If you make a mistake or miss a figure, no worries! Relax, **have fun** and remember: **It's only a dance!**

8 Tips on Technique – Advanced Dancing

The 8 techniques below explain how to quickly transform yourself into an advanced dancer. The most important tip is to listen, learn, and **let your body flow with the rhythm of the dance**.

1. **Hands four:** As a line is forming, begin “Hands Four” (two couples join hands) at the top of the hall and continue down the line until all couples are paired. Couple #1 faces *down the hall*, away from the Caller, and couple #2 faces *up the hall*, towards the Caller.
2. **Eye contact:** Make eye contact with the person with whom you are dancing while executing a figure. This does **NOT** signal a proposition. It simply acknowledges their presence and reduces dizziness during turns (swings, gypsies, allemandes). If eye contact discomforts you, look at their ear, chin, or forehead instead – anywhere but at the floor or the walls. Watching the walls or floor while turning is guaranteed to make you dizzy.
3. **Give Weight:** Picture the arm tension you use when helping a seated person stand up. In contra, this arm tension is called “giving weight” and provides the energy used in a swing, allemande, ladies chain, petronella twirl, and other moves. Just as giving weight helps propel both dancers through a figure, being “noodle armed” makes both dancers have to work harder to maintain their balance and energy.
4. **Swing:** Your objective is to glide smoothly, not bounce. Square your shoulders parallel with your partner and give weight so that you and your partner can move as one. Don’t squeeze their hand – your partner should be able to release his/her hand without tugging. If you choose to swing rapidly, always maintain balance and control of your own space while respecting the space of other dancers around you.
5. **Twirling:** “Twirling the lady” is a popular embellishment. Leading the lady into a twirl **should be done as a gentle suggestion only** -- it is the lady’s prerogative to follow the lead or override it. Note: “Cranking” your partner’s arm *will* risk serious injury to her shoulder.
6. **Timing:** Each musical phrase takes **8 beats**; counting the beats (to yourself) can help you stay on phrase as you go from figure to figure. All dances are designed and timed so that each figure should work with the musical beat to flow seamlessly from one pattern to the next.
7. **Recovery:** If you lose your place and all else fails, wait for the inevitable partner swing, find your partner, and pick up from there.

8. **Graceful Exit:** If you must drop out mid-dance (this is rare), please try to hang on until you are out at the top or bottom of the set. From there, you can usually leave the dance without disrupting the figure for other dancers in the line.

8 Points of Etiquette

1. **Be sensitive** to the safety of your fellow dancers. Never force a lady to twirl; jerk a partner’s hand, arm or shoulder; apply excessive force; squeeze with an inescapable grip; or push a dancer beyond his or her comfort level. Not only will this spoil the fun, it may also risk serious injury.
2. If you and your partner are both newcomers, split up and **seek out experienced dancers**, especially for the first few dances. You will learn faster and be better partners when you come back together.
3. When the caller is teaching, silence should prevail. **Pay attention**, take “hands four” promptly, follow the instructions, and be patient while others learn.
4. Smiling, eye contact, and innocent flirtation are part of the fun but predatory or intimidating behavior is not allowed. Use common sense, discretion, and **respect others’ personal space**.
5. A delicate reminder: Dancing generates heat and keeping **clean and dry** can sometimes be a challenge. As a courtesy to all, consider packing a hand towel, fresh shirts, breath mints, and, possibly, deodorant. If you use fragrances, please do so sparingly.
6. Protect our (rented) floor. Wear shoes with **clean, soft soles**.
7. Dress comfortably; beyond proper shoes, there is no dress code. Most women choose to wear dresses or skirts and some men prefer to dance in **kilts or long skirts** as well. This is only because twirling in them is more fun and skirts are cooler and more comfortable than pants; it means nothing more than that.
8. Make it a practice to **thank** guests for coming, instructors for teaching, callers for calling, bands for playing, partners for dancing, and everyone else who made your evening a pleasant one.

