

## STICK WITH IT!

There's a LOT to take in your first few times contra dancing. Think of the complexity as compared to a sport. Most people aren't good skiing the first time and here you're dancing right from the start. Amazing right??? Stick with it and things will gel quickly. We all get better with practice. If you feel tired or confused, try to take in all the good stuff. And come back for more. ☺

## MORE INFORMATION

Lots of information, including our schedule, is available at

<http://www.ottawacontra.ca/>

Keep up to date by joining our email list via the contact us page on the website or via social media:

<http://www.facebook.com/groups/ottawacontra/>

<http://www.twitter.com/ottawacontra/>

For general tips, check out the etiquette poster posted at dances.

## COMMENTS? SUGGESTIONS?

We're interested in continually improving the dances, including the beginner's experience. Please do share any feedback. You can find an organizer during the dance (we're wearing pink buttons) or follow up afterward with us via e-mail : [president@ottawacontra.ca](mailto:president@ottawacontra.ca)

We strive to create a culture of *safety, respect, and consent*. If someone's behaviour makes you feel unsafe, uncomfortable, hurt, endangered, or embarrassed, please don't hesitate to let them know immediately or approach one of the organizers (pink buttons). We take concerns seriously and will listen, take action, and respect your confidentiality.



## NEW TO CONTRA DANCING?

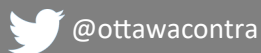


**Welcome!**

**We hope you have a really great time. ☺**

Please feel free to take this home with you and read through the helpful tips, answers to common questions, and more.

Some of our regular dancers have discovered that **contra dancing can be highly addictive**. Having a room full of people smiling at you all night while you dance to incredible live music is such a great experience!



[www.ottawacontra.ca](http://www.ottawacontra.ca)  
[dance@ottawacontra.ca](mailto:dance@ottawacontra.ca)

Find us on 

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## WHAT IF I HAVE NEVER DANCED BEFORE?

Thank you for giving dancing a try with us - you are in the right place and very welcome here! We're happy to welcome new dancers that come to our events.

**Are there lessons?** There's an optional introduction session from 7:30-8pm at our Saturday dances which is helpful as it can make your first few times easier. However, all dances are taught and prompted and other dancers will help you, so get out there - you really are ready to dance!

**What if I do it wrong?** We *ALL* make mistakes. They are soon forgotten. All experienced dancers were once beginners too. We're happy you're here.

**Can I watch a few?** For maximum enjoyment, jump right in! We begin the evening with easier dances so don't hesitate to get started.



## FINDING PEOPLE TO DANCE WITH

**Do I need a dedicated partner?** Nope. It's the custom to change partners for each dance; anyone can ask anyone to dance. If you want to dance - ask someone or stand up and look for someone without a partner.

**My friends are also new...** Try dancing with other people. Experienced dancers can very often provide helpful guidance while two beginners can't help each other as well. Once you feel comfortable, you can then share what you've learned with your friends.

**Dancing with experienced dancers** is one of the best ways to build skills quickly and learn how to contra dance! They want to help you learn, so ask them to dance. If you want to identify yourself as a new dancer, add a smiley-face sticker to your name tag. Experienced folks will then look for you!

## THINGS TO BRING

- ◆ Casual, comfortable, light clothing, as contra can be pretty energetic.
- ◆ Non-sticky, low heel, indoor shoes for maximum ease of dancing.
- ◆ Water bottle to keep refreshed.
- ◆ Just yourself. ☺ Of course... friends and family (including children!) are also welcome.

## TIPS FOR DURING THE DANCE

**Listen to the caller** The caller leads the dance and teaches and prompts everyone dancing.

**We're all working together** If you suddenly don't know what to do: smile and look for the person looking for you.

**Smooth steps** A simple smooth, walking step to the downbeat is all you need. Fancy footwork or hopping can tire you out.

**Behind in the dance?** Better never than late. Skip what you've missed and move on to what everyone else is doing.

**Swinging** is really fun but it takes a bit of practice. The key is that each person looks at the other and that they support their own weight (i.e., your legs hold you up rather than you pulling down on your partner).

**Eye contact** is common in contra - it is part of the connection with everyone else, working together, and not getting dizzy during swings. However, it is not necessary and do as you feel comfortable.



## TIPS FOR BETWEEN DANCES

**Hydrate!** Get a drink of water between dances.

**Ask:** When standing out or waiting, feel free to ask other dancers about the moves, or to dance.

**Getting dizzy?** Staying hydrated helps. You can always ask to swing slower. During swings, it helps to look your partner in the eye (or ear if it makes you feel more comfortable!) as they are stationary in relation to you. And by all means, sit out, catch your breath, visit with folks, and enjoy the music.

## IT IS MORE THAN JUST THIS DANCE

Some folks come strictly for the dancing while others also love the community aspect. If you want to get to know people ...

**Volunteer:** Volunteering is a fantastic way to meet folks! It takes many helping hands to put on the dances from small tasks to committee roles. For more information e-mail [setup@ottawacontra.ca](mailto:setup@ottawacontra.ca).

**Food:** After every Saturday dance, some folks go for drinks and snacks. Everyone is welcome! We also have double dances with afternoon potlucks or dinners out in between.

**More dancing and socializing:** In addition to the Saturday dances, there are low-key fourth Tuesday of the month dances at the Rosemount hall as well as occasional Saturday afternoon dances. Check the schedule for more!