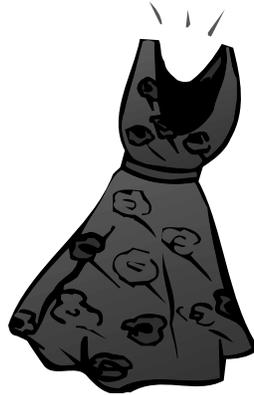


IV. DANCE CLOTHING AND SHOES

What To Wear?

The dress codes for dance events range widely. Classes are often casual; dance parties are smarter; and special events, like annual balls, tend to be somewhat formal. However, no matter how casual or dressy the event, you'll want to choose clothes that are both easy to dance in and kind to your partner.



For men, this is rarely an issue; it's hard to go far wrong in a shirt and pants. However, if you're wearing a jacket, you will probably find that the jacket's shoulders reach for the sky when you dance. (Ballroom dance competitors wear suit jackets that have been specially tailored for dancing.)

Women should watch out for tight, leg-binding skirts; material that is excessively rough or scratchy; and dresses with spaghetti straps that constantly fall down. The first will inhibit your motion, the second can be rough on your partner, and the third will keep you very busy. Also, if you're the modest type, you can wear shorts under your skirts to remain covered as you twirl or dip.

Both men and women should avoid protruding, partner-stabbing belt buckles. Also, don't forget to remove keys and other hard objects from your pockets before you start dancing.

A Random Tip: Silk Shirts

Short-sleeve silk shirts are nice to dance in, cost as little as \$10 each at discount clothing stores, and, despite the hand-wash-only warnings on their labels, can survive a year or two of weekly machine laundering if you use the delicate-wash and low-heat-dry cycles. They also dry faster than do cotton shirts when you're out dancing.

The Bare Wrist Campaign

Since watches and bracelets can scratch your partner's hands and body, I advocate bare wrists for dancing. Rings with large stones or sharp settings can also be dangerous.

Shoe Options

It's important to choose appropriate shoes for ballroom dancing. The ideal shoe will (a) provide optimal traction on the clean, unwaxed, sprung wooden floors used for ballroom dancing; (b) support and protect your foot; (c) be lightweight and comfortable; and (d) help you achieve your desired height.



I'll list your options ordered from worst to best.

- *Sneakers and other rubber-soled street shoes.* These are generally ill-suited for ballroom dancing because they will exert a pit-bull-like grip on the floor, making it difficult for you to turn and execute Latin steps. I know few people who can dance well in rubber soles. Also, watch out for sneakers with dark rubber soles that can leave nasty marks on dance floors.