

## Behavior Policy

The OFB accommodates a wide variety of dance styles, and recognizes that innocent flirtation is common to contra dancing.

Nevertheless, **the OFB does not condone or permit any behavior at its events which intentionally harms, intimidates, or harasses any participant, either physically, sexually, or emotionally.** Furthermore, **sexually suggestive, lewd, or indecent behavior on or off the dance floor, is not acceptable.**

Eye contact and flirtatious looks and gestures are part of the fun of Contra dancing, and will not be considered to be harassment unless the attentions continue after the dance is over.

Similarly, accidental body contact in the course of a vigorous dance will not be considered harassing, unless it can be shown to be part of a pattern of deliberately-planned "accidental" contacts.

Anyone who feels harassed, intimidated, or threatened is encouraged to let the offender know that he/she is making him/her uncomfortable, and/or report it to one of the event organizers (see box). The complaint will be evaluated, and if substantiated, the alleged offender will be informed of the complaint, warned not to repeat the offense, and observed to see that he or she complies. If the offense is repeated, the offender may be asked to leave.

To report a problem:

- Speak to a Board member, or a Community Care Team member - identified by buttons, or see the flyer table for a list of Community Care volunteers. The Community Care Team is a group of volunteers who have been trained to help respond to incidents. We aim for diversity on the team in an effort to ensure that any dancer present will find someone with whom they feel comfortable discussing their concern.
- Submit a comment using the comment box at the dance.
- Submit a comment online, using the link on the OFB website: [www.oldfarmersball.com](http://www.oldfarmersball.com).
- Reports of any inappropriate behavior may be anonymous, but it will be more difficult to substantiate the complaint or assist you in addressing the problem.

## *Booking ahead - cont.*

already booked, the nice thing to do is ask them in return, later in the evening. If someone asks you several times and you are always booked, then book a dance with them too, to ensure that you will get to dance together. Otherwise, being booked simply becomes an excuse not to dance with them, and that makes people feel bad.

**To Conclude:** knowing when and how to say *no* is a very delicate line to walk. We want to preserve the social etiquette of being open and welcoming to everyone. We do not want cliques and elitism to reduce our sense of community, so we encourage these guidelines:

- Don't turn someone down just because you don't consider them date material, or because they're not in your age bracket. Grace them with the gift of your company for 10-minutes.
- Stretch your horizons. Dance in a different line now and then.
- Make a point to dance at least two dances in the first half with beginners to help make them feel welcome.
- At the same time, you can protect yourself from someone who is truly offensive or makes you feel unsafe. Be confident, be kind, be mature.

For more information on how to give constructive feedback or confront someone with a concern, ask a board member, or someone with a "Community Care" button. And see Leaflet #2, with more scenarios on how to say no, and why you said no, in various situations.

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## Old Farmer's Ball Policies & Etiquette

### Leaflet # 1:

- **Behavior Policy**
- **What is inappropriate & how do you know**
- **When It's OK to say No**
- **Booking Ahead**



**Ensuring a  
Safe and Fun Experience  
for Everyone!**

## What is inappropriate, and how do you know?

Some dancers, especially newer dancers, have occasionally experienced a feeling of being uncomfortable (or “creeped out”) by someone else.

Everyone’s feelings are legitimate, and we want everyone to feel safe and comfortable at the OFB.

At the same time, communication is a two-way street -- it includes what is actually said (either out loud or with body language), what is interpreted, and what response is given.

Different people have different thresholds of tolerance for different behaviors, so a move or comment or look that is offensive to you may be well received by others. Most of the time, the offender does not realize he/she is making someone uncomfortable. Let them know!!

For new dancers, be aware:

- Direct eye contact and friendly flirtation are a traditional part of contra dancing. If it feels uncomfortable to you, it may be that your comfort zone hasn’t adjusted to contra culture.
- Friendly “contra” flirtation ends when the dance ends. If it continues beyond the dance, that may indeed be inappropriate.
- Contra dancing is physical and may feel intimate, but it should never be intrusive. There is no occasion for touching “private parts,” except an occasional accidental brush. If you feel the victim of too many “accidents,” it is indeed inappropriate.

## When it’s OK to Say No

Many of us were taught by our mothers or church ladies or teachers that it’s wrong to say “no” when someone asks you to dance. If you turn someone down for a dance, then you should sit that one out and not dance with anyone else.

This is a valuable rule of etiquette, aimed at avoiding popularity games and not hurting anyone’s feelings.

However, if someone TRULY makes you uncomfortable, it is OK to turn them down and still accept a dance with someone else. Discomfort includes not only feeling “creeped out,” but also feeling at risk of injury, or being offended -- by poor hygiene or bad manners.



In that case, it is best to do it with kindness, but clarity. Making excuses puts you back in the original rule of etiquette – if you say *no* because you’re resting, then you should indeed be resting! Giving an excuse – *“I’m sitting this one out; I’ve got a cramp in my foot; I have a partner lined up ...”* -- implies that in other circumstances, you’d be glad to dance with that person, so it leaves the door open to them to ask again.

If you don’t want to dance with that person EVER, the thing to do is to say no, period. But do it kindly:  
*“No, thank you.”*  
*“Thanks, but I’d rather not.”*  
*“Thanks, but I don’t think so. Please ask someone else.”*

If someone turns you down this way, accept that it means they don’t want to dance with you. Brush it off and ask someone else. If you can buck up your self-esteem and take some constructive criticism, ask them if you have ever offended them:

*“I respect your wish not to dance with me, and I won’t ask you again, but I’d just like to say, if I’ve ever done anything to offend you, I’d really like to know so that I can 1) apologize, and 2) make sure not to do it again.”*

This is the best way to ensure that you haven’t inadvertently been perceived as offensive, and it also helps prevent others from saying *no* out of elitism – that’s what our mothers were trying to teach us in the first place.

If you decline to dance with someone, you need to be prepared to answer these questions. Remember, it is ok to say no only if the asker truly make you feel uncomfortable, at risk, or offended. So if they call you on it, you need to be able to say what makes you uncomfortable:

- *“I’m sorry to have to tell you this, but in the past when we’ve danced, I’ve felt like you’re hitting on me, and it feels creepy.”*
- *“I feel like you’re always staring at my chest and it makes me uncomfortable, so I’d just rather not dance with you. Sorry.”*
- *“Well, to tell you the truth, in the past when we’ve danced, my shoulder hurt for three days afterward.”*

## Booking ahead:

Official etiquette is that booking ahead is rude to others. It violates the rule of saying no only when someone truly makes you uncomfortable. It promotes cliquishness and elitism, and is unwelcoming to newcomers. At the same time, booking ahead now and then to ensure that you get to dance with someone special is usually accepted and not judged harshly.

However, booking ahead for every dance in the evening is highly discouraged. Everyone has more than 12 friends, and if everyone booked ahead with only their favorite friends, new dancers would never break into the scene. That is the definition of a clique! We encourage everyone to keep themselves open to the joy of spontaneity, finding a new partner only after the current dance has ended, and making a point to mix throughout the room. This is what builds a strong and welcoming community. A good rule of thumb is to only book ahead 2 or 3 times in an evening, if at all.

If someone asks to dance but you are

*Continued on back*

