

# Dancing with Beginning Leaders

*by Jeanne DeGeyter*

Beginning leaders have much to learn (just as beginning followers have much to learn). But whether you are a beginning follower or an experienced follower, the best way to help beginning leaders learn to “lead,” is to “follow.”

Sounds too simple, doesn't it? But if you simply follow the move, as it was “lead,” rather than executing the move you think he “meant to lead,” or compensating for mistakes, the leader has better feedback. He uses this information to adjust and improve his lead.

A few TIPS to keep in mind:

- **NEVER OFFER UNSOLICITED CRITICISM** or teach on the social floor or in class (unless you are the teacher). If you simply follow the lead, you are not criticizing, but providing helpful feedback.
- **FOLLOW** to the best of your ability. **WAIT** for the lead and stay connected. **DON'T EVER ANTICIPATE**—even if you absolutely know what is next. (This is a challenge in class, isn't it?)
- **BE AWARE** of your own following and notice how you might have better followed. Be conscious of your frame & connection, including proper arm connection, and correct foot placement.
- **PAY ATTENTION** to your partner—not others on the floor (no matter how tempting). Follow his frame—watching the area just below the center of the clavicles provides the best indication of the next movement.
- **COMPLIMENT** leaders on successful executions of more difficult moves. If you notice improvement, praise him!!!
- **A SMILE AND EYE CONTACT** eases tension, and might result in more dances from that partner and others. Always **THANK** your partner—no matter what!!!
- And if a leader ever gives you “that look” and says, “You didn't follow that right,” simply look him right in the eyes, **SMILE**, and say, “Really?”