

ROSECOURT · PHOENIX ARGENTINE TANGO

Tango & Milonga Terms & Etiquette

A short, friendly welcome to the Phoenix tango floor — the words you'll hear and the small courtesies that keep a milonga kind. New to the Valley, new to tango, or visiting from abroad? This is for you. Come find us.

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START HERE

New here? Welcome.

A **milonga** is a social tango evening, and it runs on a gentle rhythm of its own. Music plays in **tandas** — sets of three or four songs. You invite a partner with the **cabeceo** (a glance and a nod, from across the room), dance the whole tanda together, and when the **cortina** — a little burst of non-tango music — plays, you thank each other and the floor resets. Everyone travels the same way around the room, counter-clockwise, in the **ronda**.

You don't need a partner, fancy shoes, or any experience. You need to show up and be kind. The rest is learnable.

If you're brand new, watch a tanda or two first — that's completely normal. Ask anyone running the room; tango people love welcoming newcomers. And remember: a declined cabeceo isn't personal. It just means "not this song."

Terms you'll hear

Milonga

(1) A social tango dance — the event itself. (2) A faster, playful tango rhythm. Context tells you which.

Tanda

A set of 3–4 songs played together. You dance a whole tanda with one partner, then part ways.

Cortina

A short snippet of non-tango music between tandas — the 'curtain.' It clears the floor so partners can change.

Cabeceo

The traditional invitation: catch someone's eye across the room and offer a small nod. Accepted with a nod back.

Mirada

The look that makes a cabeceo possible — an open, available gaze that says 'I'd like to dance.'

Ronda

The line of dance: everyone travels counter-clockwise around the floor, in lanes. Respecting the ronda keeps the floor safe.

Abrazo

The embrace. It can be close (chest-to-chest) or open (a little space) — both are welcome; follow your partner's comfort.

Códigos

The unwritten customs of the milonga — the small courtesies below that keep the room kind and the floor flowing.

Líder / Seguidor

Leader / follower — the two roles. Either can be danced by anyone; both are active, listening partners.

Floorcraft

The skill of navigating without collisions — small steps when crowded, awareness of the couples around you.

Vals

Tango waltz, in lilting 3/4 time. A tanda of vals feels lighter and more circular.

Práctica

An informal practice session — lower-key than a milonga, a friendly place to try things and ask questions.

How we keep the floor kind

DO

- Use the cabeceo — invite (and accept) with eye contact and a nod. It lets anyone decline gracefully, unseen.
- Dance the whole tanda, then thank your partner and walk them back toward where you met.
- Travel with the ronda — counter-clockwise, in your lane, smaller steps when the floor is full.
- Talk between songs, dance during them. Save the conversation for the cortina.
- Come fresh: clean shirt, light on scent, breath mints. Close embrace is, well, close.

GENTLY, DON'T

- Don't cut across the floor or pass the couple ahead — weave back into your lane instead.
- Don't give unsolicited corrections. A milonga is a social floor, not a lesson.
- Don't take a 'no' personally, and never pressure — a missed cabeceo is just a missed cabeceo.
- Don't worry about being new. Everyone on this floor started exactly where you are.

Good floorcraft is just kindness at speed — small steps, soft eyes, and care for the couples around you.

SUNDAYS IN THE VALLEY

Where to dance this week

**12:30–2:00
PM**

David Liu's Class

Mesa · 1905 E. Hackamore St · \$5 · all levels

The traditional start to a Phoenix tango Sunday.

2:00 PM

Sharon Alworth's Class

Bethany Lutheran Church, Scottsdale · all levels

Structured technique: fundamentals, embrace, navigation.

3:00 PM

Bethany Milonga

Bethany Lutheran Church, Scottsdale

The community Sunday milonga — come dance or just watch.

Schedules can shift — confirm the week's class, room, and milonga on phoenixtango.com, or just ask the organizer. When in doubt, come early and say hello.