

## What Level Argentine Tango Dancer Am I? (I.e., which level class should I go to?)

**During tango festivals students often attend workshops more advanced than they are.** Some of the basic reasons are:

1. Students overestimate their ability and mistakenly believe no one in class will notice.
2. Students mistakenly believe that they will learn faster.
3. Students think that more advanced dancers only need to learn advanced patterns.
4. Students want to only dance with “better” dancers.

**The problem is, students who do this fail to realize that:**

1. It hinders the instructors from completing their class objectives.
2. It frustrates and angers the students who have met the criteria and now have to struggle with students who have jumped their level of expertise.
3. It decreases the overall efficiency and effectiveness of the class.

**What level tango dancer you are depends on many factors including:**

1. Number of years you’ve been dancing tango.
2. Whether you are a leader or follower--learning to lead usually takes longer than learning to follow.
3. Quantity and quality of classes and workshops you’ve taken.
4. Quality and the focus of teachers you’ve studied with--e.g., learning and dancing “close embrace” is quite different than “open embrace”.
5. How long and how often you practice.
6. Who you dance and practice with.
7. Natural ability.
8. Other dance experience.

**Thus it is difficult to write a precise guideline to determine each student’s exact level of tango expertise.** However, with the intent of providing some guidance, and for the purpose of making each participant’s experience in their tango classes optimal, I offer the following broad guideline of minimum criteria.

Happy Tangoing,

*Clay Nelson*

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### Beginners

You are an "Absolute Beginner" and should only go to Beginner Classes if you have had zero experience in dancing authentic Argentine tango. This is true no matter how much general dance experience you have had—even if you are a grand champion ballroom dancer.

You are a "Beginner Plus" student and should still only go to Beginner Classes if you have been dancing Argentine tango for less than 1 year--i.e., about 200 hours of practice, lessons and dancing.

### You are ready to start or continue Intermediate Classes if...

You have been dancing Argentine tango for 1-5 years (approximate 200-1000 hours of practice, lessons and dancing) and only **AFTER** you have mastered the following:

- Can hear and stay on the beat of traditional Argentine tango as well as vals and milonga.
- Understand the difference between open and close embrace and can comfortably dance in both.
- If you are a leader, you can maintain line of dance and wait for the follower to complete her step before leading another.
- If you are a follower, you can collect and wait for the lead.
- You understand the concept of parallel and crossed feet and can lead or follow from one to the other.
- You can correctly and consistently execute the following steps solo and lead or follow a partner in time to the music while maintaining your own axis and balance:
  - o marking time
  - o walking forward and backward
  - o side steps
  - o check left turn
  - o cruzada
  - o back ocho
  - o forward ocho

### You are ready to start Advanced Classes if...

You have been dancing Argentine tango for 5 or more years (more than 1000 hours of practice, lessons and dancing) and only **AFTER** you have mastered the following:

- All of the steps and criteria listed above for Intermediate Tangoueros.
- Have the ability to lead/follow in close embrace from the chest only.
- Can dance comfortably in parallel or crossed feet to either side of your partner.
- Can interpret the musicality of tango, vals and milonga—dancing to the beat as well as the melody.
- Can also correctly and consistently execute the following steps solo and with a partner in time to the music while maintaining your own axis and balance:
  - o ocho cortados
  - o molinetes
  - o boleos
  - o ganchos