



If you've never heard of English Country Dancing, you're in good company, because many people are unfamiliar with it. But if you've watched *Pride and Prejudice* on TV, or *Sense and Sensibility* or *Emma* at the movies, you have indeed seen it. But fear not - English Country Dancing (**ECD**) is not the obscure relic you might think it to be! While this traditional form of dance has been around for several hundred years, it's still thriving today. English Country Dancing is enjoyed all over the United States.

Why Do People Love ECD?

For many, it's the music - hauntingly beautiful tunes that make the heart swell. Some dance tunes are taken from old ballads and political satire; others come from classical music and operas. This gives ECD music tremendous variety; sometimes sweet and melodic, sometimes melancholy, and sometimes absolutely driven with a pulsating beat. Others love ECD for the grace and elegance with which you glide as you dance. At times, you simply get swept away as you become one with the music. Many people love the beautiful patterns that you create as you dance. Through it all, there's an indefinable quality to ECD that makes it energizing, mesmerizing, and just plain fun. We dance in the style of English Country Dancing and many of the contemporary music and dances are written by Americans.

ECD Is Not Hard to Learn

If you can walk and know the difference between your left and right hands, you already have much of the basic knowledge you'll need. As we do it in the United States, most of the movements are based simply on a walking or skipping step. There is no intricate footwork. Dancers move in a number of specific "figures," sometimes holding hands, sometimes by themselves. Each dance is prompted by a caller, so that each figure and movement is called in time to the music; you don't need to rely on your memory alone to know what to do.

Beginners Are Welcome and Encouraged at all Regular and Local Dances

Partners are not necessary; you can come by yourself and be assured of dancing throughout the evening because the tradition is to change partners for each dance. Local dances are social and friendly, and the atmosphere is informal. No special clothing is needed, other than clean, soft-soled shoes or sneakers.

This description was modified by Peg Hesley after Alan Winston from text written by Linda Repasky, who dances in Amherst, Massachusetts.