

# Moab Jam Guidelines

The Moab Jam is an annual event for exploring Contact Improvisation--a place to bring "the soft animal of your body", your wonder, your questions and your heart. Sweat, take risks, have excellent dances, engage in deep conversation, create, investigate, and be inspired by the beauty of the desert. Well known for rich dancing, creative friends, beautiful surroundings and bountiful opportunities to explore both on and off the dance floor, our goal is to create a warm, safe, and supportive environment where you are part of creating and enjoying the Jam. In order to support the dance and to help promote safety and enjoyment in the space, we have compiled some "guidelines".

**The MARC.** We are guests at the Moab Arts and Recreation Center, and have agreed to follow their rules for the space. We ask that participants take a look at posted rules for the MARC, and speak with the organizers if there are questions.

Sleeping or showering in the MARC is strictly off-limits. Please be considerate in the studios, use the kitchen with a cooperative spirit, and help keep the space clean.

**Respect for Local Norms.** Please be considerate to follow the local norms of this area of Utah. Behavior that we consider "normal" in our CI communities may be considered offensive in public spaces. We ask that you limit public displays of affection (referring to puppy piles on the sidewalk), change clothes in private (not in front of windows or in the lobby), and wear bathing suits when going swimming. (Some past Moab Jammers have been ticketed for not wearing suits.) Additionally, we are a large group at several community campgrounds—be aware of the impact your behavior might have on those not part of our group.

Modifying our behavior might feel awkward or inconvenient, but being respectful of others' comfort levels in their hometown is important.

**Jam Hosts.** The Moab Jam is organized and facilitated by Gretchen Spiro, J. Akiyama, Alicia Grayson, and Steve Homsher. We also have "Jam Hosts" to help support the dancing. The Jam Hosts are the "go-to people" for questions or concerns. You can ask them to help you with dancing skills, for suggestions of how to feel more included or how to emotionally navigate being in a large group experience, or to suggest requests for activities that you might want to have happen at the Jam. A list of the Jam Hosts is posted in the lobby of the MARC.

While the organizers and Jam Hosts are technically in charge of holding the space, the spirit of the Jam is truly contained and maintained by the community as a whole. We feel

gratitude for every dance and dancer that enriches our collective exploration!

***[The following is adapted from the Boulder CI lab guidelines]***

**Circles.** Participation in circles and announcement times creates group cohesion, personal safety, and deepens our dances. Group meeting times will be posted on the Jam schedule in the lobby.

These circles may be logistical, “mixers” to create cohesion and meet new folks, or include [brief] personal sharing. If you miss a group meeting, please check in with a friend for announcements you might have missed.

**Physical Safety.** Contact Improvisation inherently involves risks. Serious injury, though rare, is a possibility. By taking part in the Jam you acknowledge this fact and take responsibility for your own safety.

- Know the limits of your skill. While it's worthwhile to take mindful risks, don't put yourself in physical situations that your skill level does not support. You might find that doing a movement at half speed allows mind and body to cooperate better.
- Be aware of what is happening around you. Are there a lot of people in the room? Are people generally horizontal or vertical, moving fast or slow? Are there people on the floor near you? Stay mindful about what is going on in the dance space.
- At the Moab Jam, we rent two studios—if one studio feels too crowded for you to focus or move the way your dance is inspired, relocate to the other space.
- Do not allow your partner to manipulate you or push you beyond your abilities. Do not try to “keep up” with someone because you perceive that they have more skill than you. You can say “no” either with your words or with your body.

**Music.** Music can be an amazing addition to help support the dance. It can also be a hindrance. We ask that musicians be mindful of the impact their music has upon the entire space and everyone’s dance within it. When you make music you are basically introducing another dance partner into the space with which dancers must either contend or move.

**Sound and Talking.** Sound is a natural part of embodied movement and is welcome at the Jam. Talking as a means of deepening into the dance is also welcome in the space -- for instance, when asking your partner to pursue some interesting facet of movement or giving/receiving feedback. However, we request that general social chatter be done off the dance floor or in the lobby. Social talking, even when you are at the sides of the

space, pulls people out of the direct experience of the dance.

**Boundaries.** You have the right and responsibility to maintain your own boundaries in the dance. You have the right and responsibility to say "no" (or "yes") in the dance, to end a dance, or move away from a situation that doesn't suit you at any time. You don't have to apologize, accommodate, or explain. If you have trouble identifying or establishing boundaries in your dances, you have the responsibility to learn how to do this. If something happens in your dance that is troubling to you, please talk directly to your partner. If you need help, ask a Jam Host or another community member for support.

You also have the responsibility to understand how your dance, your energy, and your own sense of personal boundaries impacts your dance partners and the dance space around you. Practice listening to non-verbal cues and get verbal feedback if there is any confusion or ambiguity.

**Sexuality.** Because we are sexual primates, sexuality will always be present in some way, shape or form in CI and in this Jam. The question is not whether sexuality is present, but how it shows up, to what degree it shows up, and how is it held/expressed in the dance. For some, a distinction between "sensuality" and "sexuality" is helpful.

Different dancers have different tolerances and desires for sensuality in their dances. Do not initiate sensual dances unless you know your partner and know they would welcome sensuality in the dance.

Power imbalances and gender oppression are real phenomena and can make it difficult for people to speak up when they feel threatened or make them confused about what they are actually feeling during a dance. While this can happen to men and women, it can be especially true for women. A good rule to follow about sexual/sensual energy in a dance: when in doubt, don't escalate the energy.

The Moab Jam is not a place for overt sexual behavior. If you witness a dance that makes you uncomfortable, you may choose to share your discomfort directly with the dancers, or to check out your perceptions with another person in the community. It may turn out that you are projecting/misinterpreting, or you may be naming unacceptable behavior.

Unwanted sexual advances and touching are NEVER acceptable and anyone experiencing this should stop the dance, tell their partner "no," or share their experience with a Jam Host or anyone else in the dance space that can help.

**Feedback.** A great way to get what you want from your experience at Jam is to give and receive verbal feedback whenever you feel called to. While non-verbal feedback is inherent to the form of CI, spoken words can deepen our understanding of each other and create satisfying connections. Give/ask for feedback in your own way, or these ideas to get you going:

What I really liked about our dance was \_\_\_\_\_.

Something that was challenging for me was \_\_\_\_\_.

My request is \_\_\_\_\_.

**Children.** While the Moab Jam is primarily for adult dancers, we attempt to make this event family-friendly. We welcome children to share the camping experience with the group, and there may be times that they are welcome in the dance space. We ask that you bring children into the main studios only when the space is not too full, and only if your children can contribute in a way that is not disruptive/distracting to others who are dancing. The Moab Jam is a physically unpredictable environment and parents need to be responsible for the safety of their children at all times. If you find yourself being distracted or worried about children in the space, please speak immediately to the parents who will likely appreciate your honesty. The smaller downstairs studios are a good place for children to explore movement and wild energy.

*The Moab Jam acknowledges the Boulder Contact Improvisation Lab for the creation of the above guidelines which have been modified for the needs of the Moab Jam. For more information about the Boulder CI Lab Guidelines see their website:  
<http://sites.google.com/site/bouldercilab/>*

Enjoy the Moab Jam!