

TIPS FOR BETTER DANCING by Ed Foote

Dancers who follow these rules find they dance more, stand less, and in general have a more enjoyable dancing experience.

1. **Take hands with those standing beside you immediately** after the completion of any figure. This will help you to see the formation you are in (line, wave, etc.) to do the next call. Hands should be joined within 1/2 second after the completion of any call. Failure to join hands after a call will often result in sloppy lines or waves, which will cause the square to break down trying to do the next call.
2. **Believe the caller**, no matter what he says. Often dancers will stop cold if a caller tells them to do something and they do not know why he told them to do it.
3. If the caller calls a call you have never heard, do not give up and quit. In the vast majority of cases the caller will tell you how to do the call after he has said the name.
4. Do not wander around. Stay put until someone either guides you into place or tells you to go to a certain point. If you want to help someone who is lost, try to avoid talking and instead use hand signals. A very effective method is to point to the spot they should be in. If you talk, this may cause you and others in the square to miss hearing the next call.
5. Whenever you pass thru with someone, always pass right shoulders, never left shoulders.
7. If you are positive you have done a call correctly, do not let someone who is unsure of the call make you change your position. This will keep the square going.
8. Do not rush thru a call. Many people seem so worried they will not make it through that they are pushing all the time. This disturbs others in the square. It is better to relax and move to the beat of the music.
9. If a set consists of two strong couples and two weak couples, the strong couples should be across from each other when squared up, never adjacent. This will give each weak person a strong corner, and will provide each side of the square with strong dancers when doing figures.
10. If your square breaks down get to facing lines. Do this by squaring back up and then have the head couples slide to the right to form normal facing lines of four. (facing side walls). When the caller gives the cue your square can now pick up and you are dancing again. You may not wind up with your original partner or corner, but you are dancing and that is the name of the game.
11. **Try to understand the definition** of the call rather than just memorizing a position. If you understand the definition, you will be able to do the call from any position; but if you have only memorized one position, you will be lost if the call is used from any other position. When a call is presented, it is often taught by telling the boys to do something and the girls to do something else. However, the definition of a call almost never involves a person's sex, but rather is written for the outsides to do something and the insides to do something else or the left-hand person does one thing and the right hand person does something else, etc. The definition is what you want to remember, not the particular teaching set up that was used. If after a call is taught you are not sure of the correct definition, ask the caller to explain it without using the terms "boys" or "girls".
12. Please don't talk while the caller is explaining something. You may not need the help but others may. If a caller is walking the floor thru a call, don't get ahead of the caller's prompting even if you know what is going on. It is inconsiderate and you deprive the other dancers of a good understanding of the call.
13. Keep the set small. Touching hands immediately after each call is one way to accomplish this. Large sets break down much more often than small ones.
14. Always have your set lined up with the walls.

Remember, all things considered, there are two primary reasons for squares breaking down:

1. Failure to take hands with adjacent dancers at the completion of every call to form good lines or waves.
2. Failure to listen to or believe the caller.