

## TIPS FOR BETTER DANCING

Dancers who follow these guidelines will 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 see the formation you are in (line, wave, etc.,) to do the next call.
  - A. **Hands should be joined within 1/2 second after 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.
  - B. **Elbows must be bent when hands are joined.** If arms are outstretched when hands are touching, the set is much too large to operate smoothly.
  
2. **HOW TO AVOID BREAKING DOWN.**
  - A. **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. This results in the needless breakdown of the square. Forget worrying about the “why” and just do as the caller says. If a dancer refuses to execute a given command, he has no one to blame but himself when this causes his square to break down.
  - B. **If the caller gives 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, especially if it is not one of the “Basic Mainstream” calls. Even if you have never heard a call, if it is not complicated, there is no reason for you not being able to do the call if the caller talks you through it.
  - C. **If you want to help someone who is lost, 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 caller give the next call.
  - D. **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.
  - E. 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 calls.

If you and another couple visit a dance where the level is higher than you are used to and if you dance together be sure to square up across from each other. Likewise, if two new graduates dance in your square, be sure that you and the other strong couple square up across from each other.
  - F. **Keep your head raised.** This lets you see what is going on. Many people dance looking down at the floor and thus are out of touch with the set as a whole.
  - G. **Keep the set small.** Large sets break down much more often than small sets. One way to keep the set small is to touch hands immediately after every call.

- H. **Always have your set lined up with the walls.** Often a set will become slightly off-set from being lined up with the walls. Solution: Take it upon yourself to make slight adjustments on the next two or three calls to get the set aligned with walls. One person can cause the whole set to adjust, so you be this person.

### **3. IF YOU BECOME COMPLETELY LOST**

- A. **Do not turn around.** This will make it difficult for someone behind you to help you recover. It is much easier to guide someone into place by guiding them from the back.
- B. **Turn your head** in all directions to see where you should go and if someone says to turn around or, you see that you should turn around, then do it. Otherwise, retain your facing direction and let someone guide you into place.
- C. **Do not wander around.** Stay put until someone either guides you into place or tells you to go to a certain point. Do not be surprised that you get this help, expect that you will get it and be ready to respond quickly.
4. **IF YOU SQUARE BREAKS DOWN, GET IN 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 with each girl to the right of a man. Now watch the other squares. Often the caller will get the squares back to facing lines a couple times before finally getting to a left allemande, when he does get them to facing lines, your square can now pick up the next call 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.
5. **HOW TO DANCE PROPER SHOULDERS.** Whenever you pass through with someone, always pass right shoulders, never left. Only exception is from a left hand wave, there you will step straight ahead.

### **6. HOW TO LEARN PROPERLY**

- A. **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 and you are not sure of the correct **definition**, ask the caller to explain it without using the terms "boys" or "girls".

- B. **Please don't talk while the caller is explaining something.** You may not need the help but others may and you don't help the square by distracting people.

If a caller is walking the floor through a call, don't get ahead of the caller's prompting even if you know what is going on. This isn't smart, rather it is inconsiderate of fellow dancers that may need this help. If you deprive these dancers of a good understanding of the call, they may break the square down later and you'll be standing right along with them.