

TEACHING TECHNIQUES

(Compiled by Dottie Welch for use at Leader Workshops, most recent revision in 2007)

TEACHING TECHNIQUES -- PREPARATION:

1. CHOOSING THE MOVE

- Be aware of possible confusion with others taught at about the same time.
- Are the dancers confident with all the parts?
- Can an earlier move be used as a transfer aid?
Help dancers transfer knowledge from a known move to a similar one.
- Will an earlier move cause confusion?
Moves with similar names and starting positions but unrelated actions can interfere with each other.
- Will this move aid mastery of another already learned?

2. ANALYZE THE MOVE

- Know the definition and styling both in words and in your own dancing of it.
- Know the possible starting and ending formations.
- Know which hands must be free before the move and which are in use at the end.
- Know several moves that comfortably precede and follow.
- Decide which starting formation and arrangement will be easiest to teach.
- Know the Standard (most commonly used) Formations and Arrangements.
- Know the number of beats required to complete the move.

3. PREPARE THE ACTUAL TEACH

- Decide on a concise description of the action that utilizes the official definition.
- Be prepared with other ways to explain the actions if your first is unclear to some.
- Plan to present the move in as many different ways as possible so that people with different learning styles will experience at least one that is appropriate.
- Try to find some way to relate the move to something they know.
- Decide on concise, quick cues to help at first.
- To minimize problems, try to anticipate difficult spots and common errors.
- Be prepared to teach correct styling although you may wish to emphasize that later during a re-teach or review. If demonstrating, always use correct styling.

4. PREPARE CHOREOGRAPHY

- Plan several drill figures that use a variety of preceding and following moves but a minimum of changes in the new move.
- Plan drills for each variation of the move that you expect them to be able to dance.
- Concentrate on one idea at a time.
- Avoid too many new moves in sequence.

5. PREPARE SINGING CALL FIGURES

- First create an easy figure that uses the move from the easiest position.
- If possible, include a filler that can be omitted until the dancers' timing is correct.
- Prepare other singing figures for further drill.

TEACHING TECHNIQUES -- PRESENTATION:

1. DANCER PREPARATION

- Some warm-up time is a must.
- Review any necessary foundations for the new move.
- Readiness and concentration peak usually during the third tip.
- Avoid big challenges late in the evening.

2. THE MUSIC

- Non-invasive, and with a steady beat.
- Fast enough to dance comfortably, which implies close to standard tempo.
- Avoid using your favorite record too often.
- Remember that the dancers should always be moving to the music.
- Keep talking time to a minimum, much can be taught while they are dancing.

3. THE TEACH

- Start with something so easy that it is almost impossible to fail.
- Make sure that music is an integral part of the experience.
- Give cues or calls in time to the music.
- Use your planned teach, adjusting as dancer response requires.
 - Demonstrate the action or paint word pictures (for visual learners)
 - Describe the action step by step (for auditory learners)
 - Tell them how it feels (for tactile learners)
 - Clearly indicate where the move begins and ends
- Keep an eye on the clock (10 to 15 minutes on the floor).
- Point out which part of the move should currently receive their concentration.

4. THE PRACTICE

- Error free practice is critical.
- Avoid letting a dancer repeat an incorrect action.
- Encourage them to become more efficient until they achieve standard timing.
- Repetition is necessary for mastery but it must be interesting and fun.
- Plan choreography that drills the new move with interesting variations in the other moves being used.
- Be aware of the degree of difficulty of the new move and the other moves.
- Work from the simple to the more complex building on the previous material.
- Use the move in the Singing Call if drill during the patter indicates success is likely.

5. THE FOLLOWUP

- Re-teach the move the next week.
- Review the move the third week and re-teach if necessary.
- Continue to use the move each week, cueing less as they become more confident.
- Keep a record of successful teaching experiences.
- Do more homework if you are less than satisfied.
- Have available a written description and diagram if appropriate.
- Explain to interested dancers how to use pawns when reviewing at home.

TEACHING TECHNIQUES -- IMAGE

1. PROJECT CONFIDENCE

- Be confident and in control.
- Instill confidence in the dancer.
- Assume that they all want to succeed.
- Make it obvious that you expect them to be able to dance it.
- Communicate to each individual by being aware of each individual.

2. ESTABLISH TRUST

- Be aware of uncertainties.
- Give encouragement.
- Be positive in corrections.
- Be patient.
- Avoid scolding or embarrassing anyone.
- When an error occurs, provide more information to help them correct the error.
- If they are having trouble, take the blame yourself, apologize and assume that you haven't explained well enough.
- Avoid statements about difficulty.

3. MAKE IT ENJOYABLE

- Be enthusiastic.
- Have fun but never at a dancer's expense.
- Ease off if the frustration level is rising.
- Reward with sincere and honest praise.
- Let them laugh when something funny happens.

4. ACCEPT COMMENTS AND CRITICISM GRACEFULLY

- Remember that making mistakes is part of the learning process for both learner and teacher.
- Encourage questions by always treating questions with respect.

5. SET A GOOD EXAMPLE

- Dress as you expect them to dress.
- Act as you hope they will act.
- When dancing, dance with correct styling and proper timing.
- Smile and enjoy yourself so they will smile and enjoy themselves.
- Always remember this is a recreation pursued by the dancers for pleasure.

REFERENCES:

The Caller Text, The Art and Science of Calling Square Dances, Compiled by Bob Osgood, Organized by Bill Peters, published by The Sets in Order American Square Dance Society, 1985

Teaching Techniques, by Jerry Reed, produced by Callerlab

EXAMPLE: TEACHING SQUARE THRU

The next move is Square Thru.
This is a four person move and we will begin with the heads working in a box in the middle of the set.

[4 watching see a demonstration.]
[Classify the move according to number, place and formation.]

Each of the dancers in the box will be walking along the sides of a square.

[Helps associate the name with the action.]

From this position men will be moving clockwise and girls counterclockwise. Each time you meet another dancer, you will pull by using alternating hands.

[Gives a global picture.]

Heads take note who your corner is. You will be facing them when the move is complete.

[Sets up a known ending.]

Heads with the opposite dancer right hand pull by making sure to let go just as your shoulders pass. That is Square Thru One.

[If they don't let go, then they may be pulled into a turn out.]

Heads turn in $\frac{1}{4}$ towards the active dancer beside you and with the person you are now facing (who happens to be your original partner) left hand pull by.
That completes Square Thru Two or Half Square Thru.

[Teaching "turn in and pull by" discourages an extra turn at the end and makes it easier to teach the fractional parts.]

Heads turn in $\frac{1}{4}$ towards the centre again (men are turning right, girls are turning left each time) and with the person you are now facing pull by with your right hand (notice that you are alternating hands). That completes Square Thru Three or Square Thru $\frac{3}{4}$. (You should now be facing out toward the head walls.)

[This helps the tactile learner.]
[Always make sure dancers know where the move ends.]

Now complete Square Thru Four by turning in once more and pulling by with the left hand.
This is also called Square Thru (without a number stated).

[Informs dancers of variations in terminology.]

You should all be facing your corner.
Bow to your corner and back out at home.

[A simple get out increases the chance of success.]

Square Thru should feel like a small wrong way Grand Right and Left with squared off corners. Imagine driving around the block.

[This information is for the tactile learner.]

Sides Square Thru Four (repeat the explanation),
Bow to corner, Square Up

[Aim for a simple get out to increase the success rate.]

DRILLS FOR SQUARE THRU: (Note that the timing for Square Thru Four is 8 steps)

Heads Square Thru Four, (explain that you now have two boxes), Everybody Square Thru Four, Bend the Line, Square Thru Three, Left Allemande, Square Up

Sides Square Thru, Right and Left Thru, Star Thru, Lines Go up and Back, Each Four Square Thru, Outsides Courtesy Turn, Centres Square Thru 3, Left Allemande, Square Up

Heads Square Thru Three, Separate Around 1 to a Line, Star Thru, Centres Pass Thru, All Square Thru Four, Bend the line, Circle Left, Ladies Centre Men Sashay, Left Allemande

Heads Square Thru Two, Split Two around one and make a line, Pass Thru, U Turn Back, Square Thru Three, Bend the Line, Square Thru Two, Outsides Separate to home, Centres Right and Left Thru and back away at home

NON-STANDARD DRILLS FOR LATER WHEN STANDARD POSITION IS MASTERED:

Head Ladies Chain, Sides Pass Thru & Separate Around One to a Line, Circle Left, Girls go up and back, Girls Square Thru Four, Swing Thru, Centres Run, Bend the Line, Circle Left, Men go up and back, Men Square Thru Four, Star Thru, California Twirl, Promenade

Heads Square Thru Three, Separate around one and make a line, all Square Thru Four, Trade By, Pass Thru, Centres Box the Gnat, all Grand Right and Left

Heads Pass Thru and Separate around two to a line, Square Thru 4, Grand Right & Left

Heads Left Square Thru Four, Make a Left Hand Star, Heads Star Right, Left Allemande

SINGING CALL FIGURES FOR SQUARE THRU: [may omit moves in square brackets]

[Heads go up and back], Heads Square Thru Four, Dosado, Pass Thru, Allemande Left, [Grand Right and Left], [Swing] and Promenade

Heads Square Thru Four, [Dosado], all Square Thru Four
[Bend the Line, Go up and Back, Square Thru Three], Swing, Promenade

Heads Promenade Half, Lead Right and Circle to a Line, Right and Left Thru, Go Up and Back, Square Thru Four, Swing and Promenade

Heads Square Thru, Make a Right Hand Star, Heads Star Left, [Square Thru], Swing, P.

Heads Square Thru Three, Separate Around One to a Line, Go up and Back, Outsides Star Thru, Centres Square Thru 4, All Right and Left Thru, Swing, Promenade

Four Ladies Chain $\frac{3}{4}$, Heads Promenade $\frac{3}{4}$, Sides Square Thru $\frac{3}{4}$, Circle Four $\frac{3}{4}$, All Square Thru $\frac{3}{4}$, Swing, Promenade