

## **NEW DANCER LESSONS**

### 1) Advertising New Dancer Lessons.

Advertise lessons as “Dance” lessons and do not list them as Square Dance Lessons. We need to be able to entice people to attend these lessons and it seems that “Square Dance Lessons” are a turn-off to some of those that we are trying to recruit. Use lawn signs as a means of advertising. Banners strung over streets of the city where the lessons are being held are sometimes an effective advertising tool.

### 2) The First Lesson.

The first lesson should be a dance. Since the lessons were advertised as “Dance Lessons”, introduction to other forms of dance such as Line Dancing; Round Dancing and Contra. Should the students decide that they would rather concentrate on one of the other forms of dance, we have still added them to our activity.

### 3) Prior to the start of the lesson, use a meal to entice the students.

After you have identified new students, set up a meal prior to the start of the lesson to get the students into a mode of conversing with the club members and other students. Have the club members provide the meal as a “Pot Luck” and the club to provide the table ware. This does not have to be done for each lesson, but space them out during the tenure of the lessons to keep the interest level up and the club involved.

### 4) Breaks during the lesson.

We believe that 25 to 30 minute segments are the optimum time for lessons. You do not want to overload the students and you want to allow them time to talk to club members and new students. Square Dancing is definitely a “social” activity and you want to encourage that interaction. We have discovered that placing chairs in a circle, rather than in a straight line, encourages conversation. If someone is experiencing difficulty with a certain move, it helps to be able to talk about it and discover that someone else is experiencing the same frustration. We have tried lessons with and without coffee, soft drinks and snacks. Our experience has been that furnishing coffee, soft drinks and snacks is a plus to the lessons. Have the “Angels” make an effort to visit with a different couple/single during each break.

### 5) Include “New Dancers” into Club activities.

Include the “New Dancers” (students) into club social activities as soon as possible. This accomplishes two things. First, the students will meet more of the club members as at the start of their involvement, they tend to meet only the “Angels” who attend the classes. Secondly, it helps the students to take “Club Ownership” at an early stage. You will have a better chance of recruiting these students into your club.

### 6) New Dancers!

We hope that you will notice that we refer to these students as New Dancers. We have heard the term “Beginners” since we started dancing and it still does not sit well with us. Once a student steps on the floor and is greeted by the Caller, they are dancers and the fact that they are taking lessons makes them “New Dancers.”

7) Angels.

Angels are an important part of lessons for “New Dancers.” However, there is a fine line between helping and hindering. In our local area it seems the “weaker” club dancers are the ones who will volunteer to Angel classes. This is good because they become stronger dancers after attending the lessons for the second year. However, this can also hinder the progress of a class if these dancers are not confident enough to know the calls and complete them without hesitation. If this is the case in your area, encourage some of the “stronger” dancers in your club to be Angels for the current class. This will definitely assist the students and the instructor.

8) New Dancer Dances.

We don't know if your area has New Dancer Dances or New Dancer Jamborees. If they do, please encourage all of your students to attend as many of these dances as they can. In our area we start New Dancer Classes in September and toward the end of November, our clubs start hosting New Dancer Dances. There is at least one and usually two New Dancers' Dances each weekend. Our club members attend these dances with the students. We try to use car caravans with the students to help them feel more comfortable with attending a dance with a different caller than the one whose voice they are used to hearing. A different voice can be overwhelming for a New Dancer.

These are just a few of our ideas and things that we have found to be successful in the recruitment and retaining of New Dancer students. We all know the loyalty that develops between students and their instructors. We still remember our instructor with very fond memories and if he was still calling today, we would be attending his dances as often as possible.

Square Dancing is still, and always will be, a social activity. As long as we keep it social and make it fun for the dancers, we will be able to recruit and retain New Dancers. Recruitment is the responsibility of everyone in our activity. In some areas the callers say that it is the responsibility of the dancers to recruit New Dancer students. We agree with that, but we feel that the caller is also responsible to recruit New Dancer students. We need to remove the competition of trying to get all the New Dancers to join our club. The number 1 priority is to get them involved in this activity that we all love.

We have handouts of this presentation if anyone wants one after the seminar is completed. Thank you for your attention.