

Square Dance Patter Calling

The Activator-Stream System

Lots of Choreo
with
Little brain work

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Lesson 0

Lesson zero seemed an appropriate title for the preface to this book, since every sequence in this book is a ***Practical Zero***, to be used within the **Activator-Stream** system of Patter calling.

For the novices, each square dancing segment is called a Tip. A segment of a Tip musically produced to sound like a song is called a Singing Call. The segment of the Tip where the caller simply calls to a piece of music without resolving *At Home* in 64 down beats, and/or without singing, is called the Patter. **The Activator-Stream** system of Patter calling is what this book will present.

A *module* is a set sequence of calls that takes the dancers from an identifiable position to another identifiable position. Usually, this is a *Zero Box*, where all the boys are facing their corner, *In Sequence*, with a girl on his right side, in *Column Style Boxes*. *Zero Boxes* refers to 4 people on 1 side of the square, each person having 1 person beside them & 1 person in front of them.

A *Column* is 2 boxes of 4 people when each dancer has 1 person beside them, & 3 people in front and/or behind them. *Zero Boxes* are much too confining for **Activator-Stream** system Patter calling.

The Activator-Stream system always starts with the boys facing their corner, *In Sequence*, in *Column Style Boxes*, but is *not* limited to having a girl on the boy's right side. This formation (a dancer's footprints in a Column Style Box without regard to gender, all dancers facing their corner, boys In

Sequence) is an **Activator Box**.

Call groupings that put the dancers in an **Activator Box** will be called **Starters**.

In Sequence means the boys are in the proper order, so if you knew how to “resolve” to a call that would take the dancers *Home*, they'd be in the proper order to all arrive *At Home* at the same time, without getting in each others' way.

The **Activator-Stream** system of Patter calling will give you more choreo with less brain work than any other Patter calling system available.

An **Activator** is a module with one or more variables contained within it, allowing for as few as 5 variations, and as many as 40 variations, within a single **Activator**. Modules only have one way to do each one.

A **Stream** is 2 or more *Activators*, maybe the same Activator twice (using a different fractional turn within the variable fraction portion), called sequentially before using a Get Out.

Don't think yet. Keep Reading.

All Activators starting as facing couples will be in an **Activator Box** (Column-style boxes, all dancers facing their corner, boys *In Sequence*, NOT requiring a girl on each boy's right side). Most will end in an **Activator Box**. Each modification will be noted.

Thanks to Butch Adams, Dave Harbour, Dave Guille, Arnold Gladson, and Nasser Shukayr. Their “eyes” have made this book immeasurably better.

You, the person who has opened this book, are a positive force in Square Dancing, because you have committed to improvement thru learning. The simple way the photos were set up is the way this author can always work on choreo, no matter where his calendar has taken him.

This author hopes internalizing this book will empower YOU to be a better square dance caller. Experience or ability level is not a stumbling block. This system can be internalized with much less brain work than any other known system of Patter calling.

This author also hopes YOU are the person who will internalize this system, and maybe the learning curve won't appear to be Mt. Everest anymore. It will take YOU to make this author's hopes come true.

Best of luck always to you.

Author's Note: This printing date is March 2011. It's the 4th printing, and it contains a rewrite of the chapter containing the Light Switch Principle. Any version of this book not containing the above statement does not have this update, and is entitled to a free chapter update directly from this author.

Lesson 1

Activator #1:

1. Starts with all dancers facing their corner in column-style boxes, men in proper sequence;
2. Step to either a right hand wave or a left hand wave;
3. End & adjacent Center turn any fraction (0, $\frac{1}{4}$, $\frac{1}{2}$, $\frac{3}{4}$, or 1 full turn equivalent, which will be discussed later in this book);
4. Centers Trade;
5. Centers Run;
6. Ferris Wheel;
7. Centers Pass Thru

All dancers are now facing their corner again, with the men in proper sequence.

If Activator #1 is being used as a singing call figure, you can call “Swing your Corner & Promenade Home”.

If Activator #1 is being used as a patter figure, you may continue with another Activator, or repeat the same Activator (with a different fractional beginning turn, hopefully), or use the **Always Get Out**, which may be universally applied at the conclusion of any Activator;

1. Star Thru;
2. Bend the Line;
3. Square Thru $\frac{3}{4}$
4. Allemande Left
5. Promenade Home

Of course, item 5 in the **Always Get Out** may say Right & Left Grand, Promenade Home.

Here's a variation for the **Always Get Out**:

1. Star Thru;
2. Outfacers Partner Trade
3. Square Thru $\frac{3}{4}$;
4. Allemande Left;
5. Promenade Home

The Always Get Out is only meant as a quick out. Depending on the dancer positions after the Star Thru, the Bend the Line may not flow well. So only use the Always Get Out as a quick, dancer success oriented get out, when it is badly needed, or for demonstration purposes to other callers.

A square can break down simply because one dancer is mildly unfamiliar with the Activator version you are using at that moment, so continuing with the Stream you wanted to call might not be the best path to take. So the Always Get Out means you are only 3 calls away from an Allemande Left at the end of any Activator.

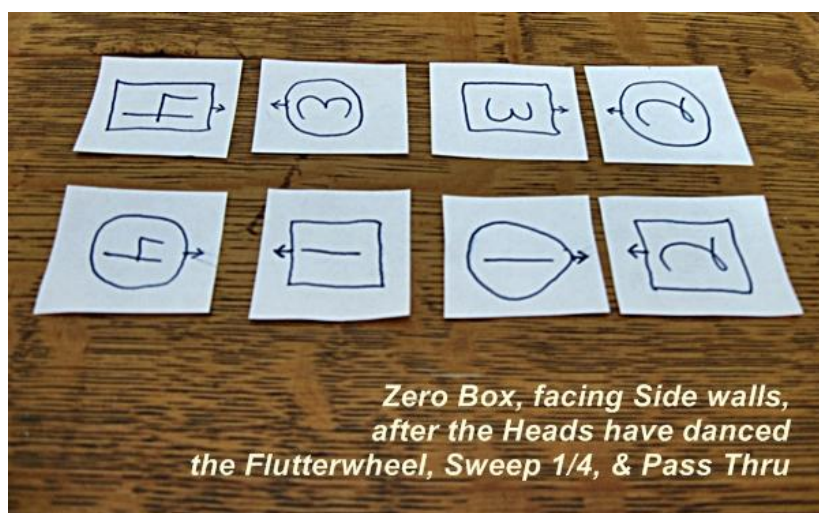
Some of the Activator variations may increase the difficulty in the minds of the dancers, especially the left handed versions. So while it's always best to risk a little to avoid being boring, it is also always advisable to be gentle.

Beginning from a Squared Set, you'll need a **Starter**, which will put all the dancers facing their corner, men in proper sequence, in column-style boxes (as opposed to Wave style boxes).

For simplicity in the following example, we'll use a generic Get In/Starter to a Zero Box, the "Column Style Box" in which all dancers are facing their corner, men in proper sequence, man-left-lady-right couple positioning, outside couples being partnered with their original partner, and the center couples being partnered with their original opposite.

Here's the Starter:

1. Heads (or Sides) Flutterwheel & Sweep $\frac{1}{4}$;
2. Centers Pass Thru



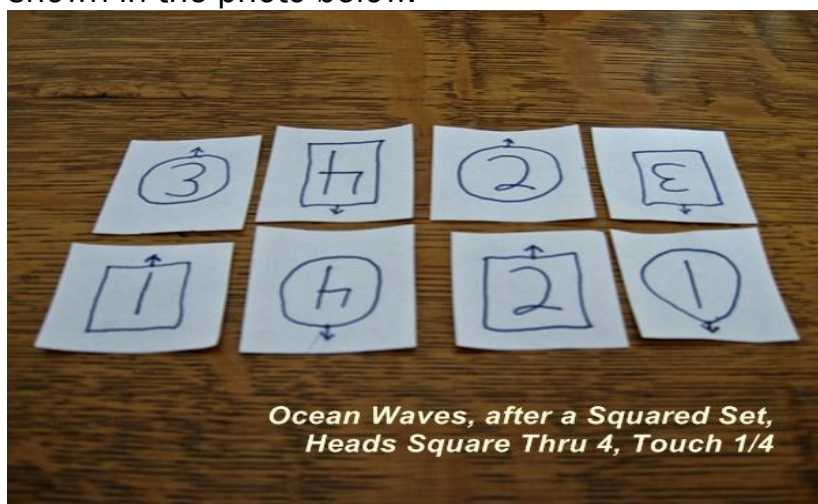
When the last call of the *Starter* is a Pass Thru, you may begin the Activator with either hand.

Beginning with a left handed call may be unfamiliar to the dancers, so be gentle.

So if we begin Activator #1 with a Touch $\frac{1}{4}$, a right handed call, it would be called like this:

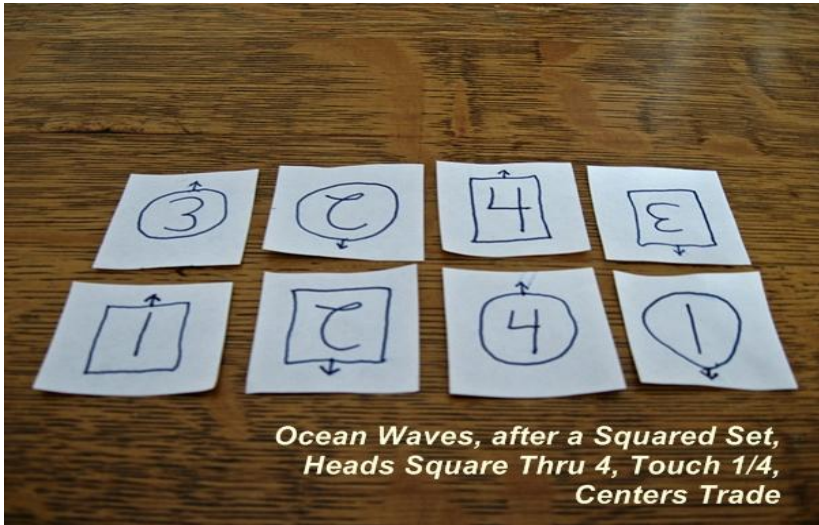
1. Touch $\frac{1}{4}$;
2. Centers Trade;
3. Centers Run;
4. Ferris Wheel;
5. Centers Pass Thru

The photo below states Heads Square Thru 4 as the *Starter*, which requires a right hand fractional beginning for Activator #1, due to the alternate hand principle. Positionally, it is the same as the Flutterwheel, Sweep $\frac{1}{4}$, and Pass Thru . The fractional start of this example of Activator #1 is shown in the photo below.

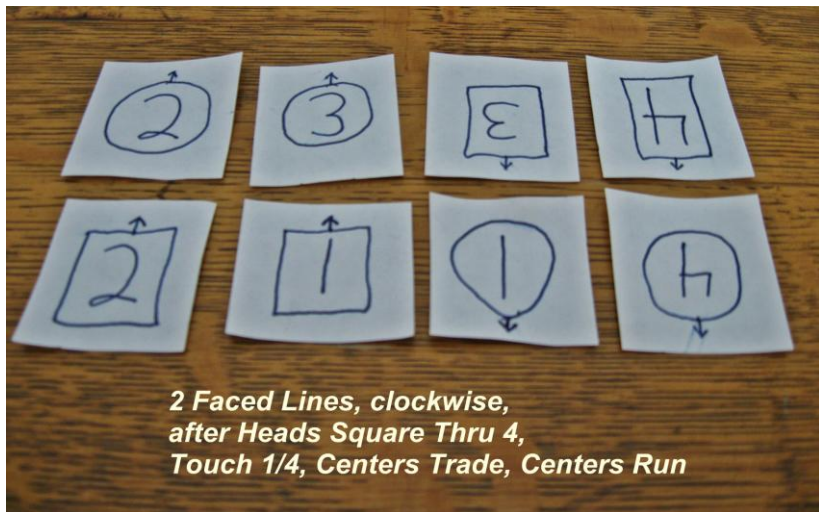


The above example has the dancers holding hands in an Ocean Wave after the Touch $\frac{1}{4}$, so the Centers can Trade. Many dancers are unfamiliar with a Centers Trade from this position, since they've only danced a Scootback or Walk & Dodge from this position, so their minds only see a box, not a wave. So after the Touch $\frac{1}{4}$, you might have to say "check a wave".

Now, the Centers Trade;

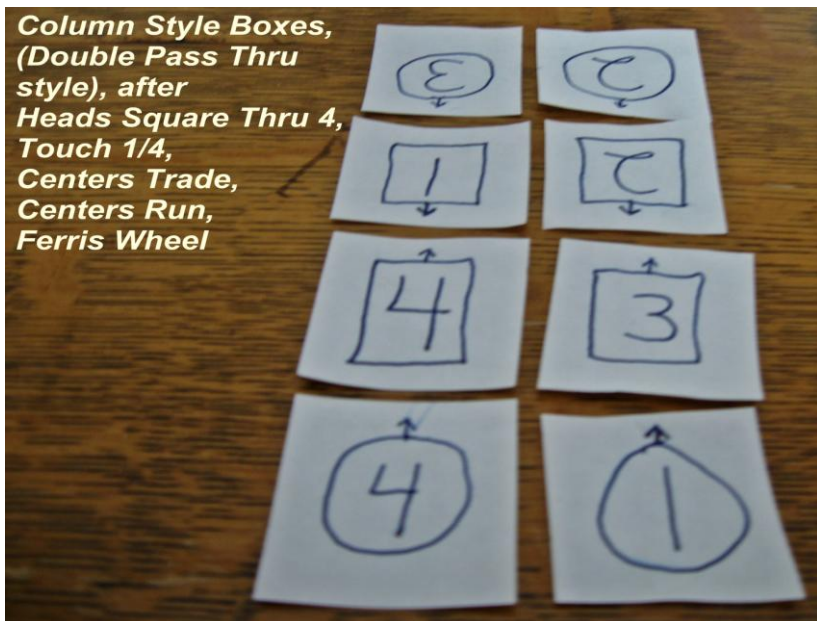


Now Centers Run;



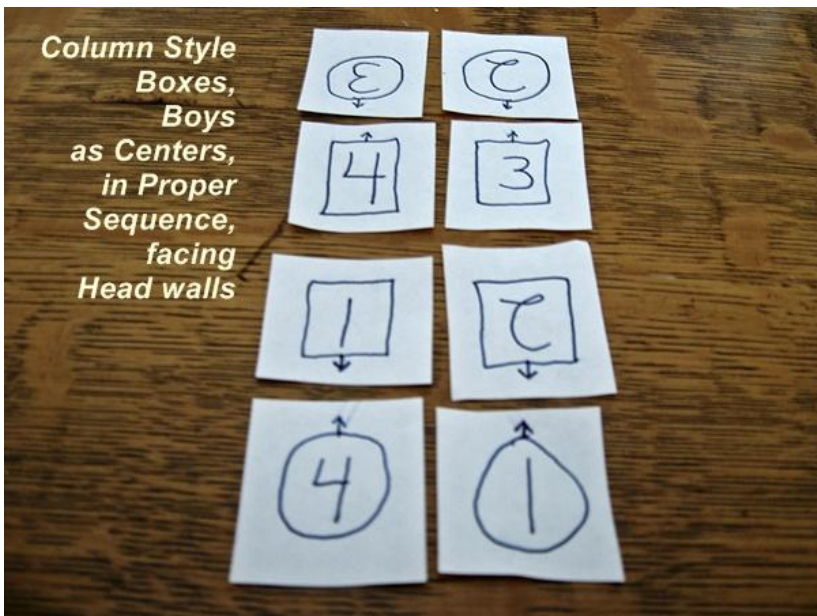
Then Ferris Wheel (next page);

**Column Style Boxes,
(Double Pass Thru
style), after
Heads Square Thru 4,
Touch 1/4,
Centers Trade,
Centers Run,
Ferris Wheel**



In the above example, the Ferris Wheel is in the usual clockwise direction. It's very different to the dancers because all the boys are now in the center.

Now, Centers Pass Thru, ending the first use of Activator #1. The photo caption below describes the ending position, which is a facing *Column-Style Box*. Next Page.



(The above Column-Style Boxes are *facing* boxes).

Author's opinion: In the minds of many dancers, variety is fun, while DBD is difficult. So be gentle. (DBD is Dancing By Definition, a term used to describe multi position dancing).

Take a good look at the ending position of this Activator #1 example. To the dancers, it will look completely different from where this example began, a Zero Box. Instead of returning to a Standard Couple arrangement, we have column-style facing boxes, with the boys in the center and the girls on the outside.

To you, the informed caller, you are now ready to continue with another Activator, or maybe the same one using a different fractional beginning. If you use Activator #1 again, with a different

fractional beginning, most of the dancers won't know you are using the same Activator again, because your ending position will appear different from the starting position.

Let's say you have the confidence of the dancers now, so you want to try a Left Touch $\frac{1}{4}$, and begin Activator #1 again, creating a Stream of 2 consecutive Activators. You would continue like this:

1. Left Touch $\frac{1}{4}$ (in this case, say "girls connect");
2. Centers Trade (in this case, you could say "girls connect & Trade");
3. Centers Run (in this case, you could say "girls Run Left");
4. Ferris Wheel;
5. Centers Pass Thru

The Ferris Wheel in this example was progressing counter clockwise, sometimes described as "uphill". The dancers were as Standard couples, so the ending arrangement is a Zero Box.

If you want to begin Activator #1 with a right hand Ocean Wave $\frac{1}{2}$ turn, you can replace the right hand $\frac{1}{2}$ turn & Centers Trade with *Swing Thru*. So Activator #1 would be called as:

1. Swing Thru ($\frac{1}{2}$ Right + Centers Trade);
2. Centers Run;
3. Ferris Wheel;
4. Centers Pass Thru

If you want to begin Activator #1 with a left hand Ocean Wave $\frac{1}{2}$ turn, you can replace the *left hand*

$\frac{1}{2}$ turn & Centers Trade with Left Swing Thru. So Activator would be called as:

1. Left Swing Thru (Step to a Left Wave first);
2. Centers Run;
3. Ferris Wheel;
4. Centers Pass Thru

These word changes, when your choice of fraction permits it, allow your choreo delivery to sound different, as well as look different.

If you want to begin Activator #1 with a right $\frac{3}{4}$ fraction, you have two convenient choices:

1. Touch $\frac{1}{4}$ & Scootback; or
2. Step to an Ocean Wave & Cast Off $\frac{3}{4}$

Note: Make sure you continue with Centers Trade, Centers Run, etc. of Activator #1.

Dancers may stumble at first with either of these options. After a Touch $\frac{1}{4}$ & Scootback, they almost always hear Boys Run, or Hinge. Either way, some dancers will not see an Ocean Wave after a Scootback. They only see a Box. So after the Scootback, you need to say something like, "...and check a Wave". Even so, some will Hinge to make the only Ocean Wave they see in their minds. So if this happens, immediately revert to this variation of the Always Get Out:

1. Boys Run;
2. Bend the Line (better say Up To The Middle & Back);
3. Square Thru $\frac{3}{4}$;

4. Allemande Left;
5. Promenade Home

The “Step to an Ocean Wave & Cast Off $\frac{3}{4}$ ” option is even more problematic. Most people have no concept of what Zero means. They think it means nothing. This is a common misconception. In Modern Western Square Dancing as we know it, the Zero position is the direction the dancers are currently facing.

When this author teaches Cast Off $\frac{3}{4}$, he first tells the dancers he's going to ask them a trick question. After telling them we're going to learn Cast Off $\frac{3}{4}$, the trick question is, “What is the number of the wall you are currently facing?”.

Almost all dancers say 1. This author's answer is, “Those of you who said ZERO are correct. We are going to TURN 1, TURN 2, and TURN 3”. After this explanation, if the dancers haven't learned Cast Off $\frac{3}{4}$ before this teach, they almost never have Cast Off problems again, making Spin the Top and other Spin calls much easier to learn.

Author's opinion: This author ALWAYS teaches Cast Off $\frac{3}{4}$ from Ocean Waves first, before other Cast Off variations are taught. It provides for a great deal of interesting choreography that's not difficult, if the dancers can Cast Off $\frac{3}{4}$ from Ocean Waves.

These dancers are taught to have the Centers ALWAYS turn forward, as the End turns in parity with the Center, as they both turn forward around their joined hands, as if they are “joined at the hip”.

Later, after a Double Pass Thru & Centers In, they are once again taught to have the Centers ALWAYS turn forward around the end, and this time have the Ends BACK UP, as they turn in parity around their joined hands, as if “joined at the hip”.

If the dancers can now Cast Off $\frac{3}{4}$ “and check a new Wave” correctly, you could now call, from a Squared Set:

1. Heads (or Sides) Left Square Thru 4;
2. Step to a Left Wave;
3. Left Cast off $\frac{3}{4}$;
4. Centers Trade;
5. Centers Run;
6. Ferris Wheel;
7. Centers Pass Thru

This variation should be used with great caution, due to the left handed beginning, and the Left Cast Off $\frac{3}{4}$. The Ferris Wheel will be counter clockwise, or “uphill”, and the boys are coming into the center, for the Centers Pass Thru.

This completes Activator #1.

The ending position of this example, boys in the center and the girls on the outside (or vice versa), all dancers facing their corner in proper sequence, provides for some clever get outs, which will be described in a later lesson.