



## Working With Squares and Rounds

Ever wonder why one dance seemed fun filled and energetic and another seemed to drag on forever? More often the difference is due to communication. Officers and dance leaders can either work collectively to provide a great dance experience or can work separately, likely pulling it apart. A great dance does not happen intuitively.

Music and complexity of choreography create a mood that affects the ebb and flow of the entire event. When callers and cuers are working alternately, it is important to communicate and observe the work of each other. Great dance leaders instinctively blend their styles to complement each other's dance form to increase the overall dance experience. Working as a unit, they can craft a dance program that provides maximum enjoyment by all. If the opposite occurs, the event can feel choppy; stop and go; as if being a part of a tug of war match rather than a dance; or worse yet, a funeral dirge.

The following guidelines are offered to support the success of dance events that offer both squares and rounds.

### Prior to the Dance Event

1. Determine ahead of time what equipment is required, who supplies it, and when it must be provided. Stipulate needs in a contract, especially if a turntable is required.
2. Before the event, communicate any special needs or space required such as table arrangement, steps, lighting, decorations, or computer stands. Ensure they do not inhibit any leader's performance.
3. If the club officers have not previously provided you a written agenda for the dance (who does what and when), then please request such PRIOR to the dance so that the format for the evening is very clear to both leaders.

### Prior to Starting the Dance Program

1. Arrive early to set up equipment and introduce yourself to all the leaders and officers involved.
2. Coordinate with the dance officers:
  - a) How the program is to be scheduled and maintained.
  - b) Square Dance level and Round Dance phases expected.
  - c) Expected lengths of breaks between dances.
  - d) If a food break is to occur and what is expected during such a break.
  - e) If announcements and prize drawings are going to be made and when.
  - f) Whether or not workshops are expected.
  - g) If a particular dance theme should be followed.
3. Allow time for the other leader to set up if necessary.
4. Discuss any special quirks regarding the sound equipment with all dance leaders.
5. Understand how your equipment works and how it is to be connected before it's time to start.
6. If a sound check is needed, share signals to communicate if some change is necessary.
7. Provide your own microphone. Don't expect to use one belonging to another leader.
8. Share programming intent with the other leaders.

### During the Dance Program

1. Don't set up equipment or change things while the other leader is working.
2. Walk the floor perimeter while the other is working to assure there is proper balance between voice and music.
3. If an input jack must be changed, turn off the microphone to avoid loud static or pops.
4. If plugs or settings need to be changed between leaders, be courteous and return them as found or replace them after you are finished.
5. Be careful and consistent with volume control, plugs, or settings.
6. Create a good rapport with the other leaders. Use proper showmanship techniques.
7. Be polite, move off stage when the other is working.
8. If folks wish to have a conversation or sign books, please be courteous and move away from the staging area to allow the other leader to work without distraction or noise.

9. Don't taunt or distract other leaders while they are working.
10. When working alternately, provide similar music or rhythms to assure flow when transitioning between dance forms.
11. Try to avoid music that would cause the room to become silent.
12. Offer a variety of music styles that awaken the spirit.
13. Be attentive to the others needs. Offer assistance if necessary.
14. Be a team with your fellow dance leaders. People enjoy friendly interchange between leaders.
15. Smile! Be friendly. Enjoy what you are doing.
16. Set a goal to elevate the enjoyment of the dancers to be greater than their expectations upon their entering the building.

#### At the End of the Dance Program

1. Using the microphone, thank the other leader(s) for their work.
2. Offer to assist the other leader(s) with taking down the equipment.
3. Don't pack up your equipment or decorations while the other leader(s) are working.
4. Thank the dancers, officers, club, and visiting dance leaders for attending.

#### Leaving the Building

1. Don't leave until the entire Dance Program is finished. If you must leave, then formally excuse yourself with good reason.
2. Stay after the dance to shake hands with everyone and thank them for attending.
3. Privately, be sure to thank the club leader(s) for inviting you to work for them.

#### Other Thoughts

Round Dance leaders should encourage their dancers to learn to Square Dance, and vice versa. It has been said that Square Dancing makes better Round Dancers, and Round Dancing makes better Square Dancers. Our dance activity has enjoyed a well balanced program of entertainment by combining both square and round dancing for many years. This union provides added value to both dance forms that is enjoyed by many.

People come to a dance carrying both good and bad experiences of the day with them. The collective group psychology results in some level of, or lack of, enthusiasm. The Caller-Cuer team should have a goal of raising that level or collective attitude by at least one notch, thus giving the dancers a relief from the day, or an increased entertainment value causing them to leave feeling better than when they came in. This is created by the tone or enthusiasm of the leader-team. We have that control if we choose to utilize it.

If by chance both the Caller and Cuer have, or are willing to have, fun personalities, it is a great thing for them to interact with one another in front of the audience. We are entertainers, and we should seek to entertain - as a TEAM. However, caution should be exercised in this area due to the potential for misunderstandings which might result in hurt feelings.

Callers are usually the prime reason for people's attendance at a square dance. Good callers will have a program (written or unwritten) that they will execute over the evening. It is appropriate for the caller to share that concept with the cuer. And it is appropriate for the cuer to try to match or compliment that program. For example, a cuer should never put on a slow waltz immediately after a high-energy square dance tip. Talking together will maximize the resultant success.

The individual who is supplying the sound system should arrive early enough for the first performer to be able to start his/her program on time. The other performer should always have a full set of equipment available in case the supplier is unexpectedly delayed.

The best equipment should be used to get the best quality of sound for the dancers. Neither leader should bring poor quality equipment to the dance, and if one has better equipment than the other, please agree to use the better set.

When there are personality conflicts between you and the other leader, make contact with that leader on a separate occasion, and see if you can resolve your differences. If a solution can't be reached, call the club leadership and request that they not book the two of you together again, without disclosing the reason.

For Cuers: If rounds are done first, try to get the crowd upbeat for the caller by choosing appropriate upbeat music just before the caller takes over.

#### Conclusion

Keep these guidelines in mind the next time you share a program with another dance leader. If followed, they could provide you with more bookings, simply by being a part of a truly enriched dancing experience that others will want repeated!