

Two-Couple Dancing as a Teaching Tool

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Overview

Two-couple dancing can be a regular part of every workshop or lesson program you teach. It is not just a “gimmick” or “workaround” when there are not enough dancers to fill a square. Two-couple dancing can be an integral part of a building-block teaching methodology. Showing dancers how to do calls in a smaller, more precise environment helps them visualize the execution more clearly, without the distraction of other dancers in the square.

Two-couple dancing is an excellent way to teach the timing of each call. Give the dancers enough time to execute the current call, while showing that the next call follows without hesitation. Keep the dancing smooth and continuous; dancers will appreciate the flow.

Two-couple dancing is an excellent way to introduce dancers to extended applications. Half-sashayed and left-handed variations are just two examples of extended applications. Simply calling a call from an unexpected formation sharpens the dancers’ awareness of the call and how it can be executed. For example: Spin the Top from facing couples may surprise some dancers at first, just as Square Thru from an ocean wave.

You can use two-couple dancing at every level from Basic – Part 1 on up. As the number of calls increase at higher programs, your ability to creatively mix them will increase.

Benefits to the dancers

- Short sequences. The sequences are short so there is little wasted time if the dancers break down.
- Repetition. Dancers repeat the same short sequences to build “muscle memory” for common calls.
- Quick identification of trouble spots. Callers can identify trouble areas quickly because they will be easy to spot. Dancers can isolate problems more quickly.
- Ability to introduce various positions. Teachers can easily introduce less common positions for calls and have the dancers learn them quicker.
- Develop reaction time. Dancers will develop quicker reaction time with the short subset of calls.

- Improve call execution timing. Teachers can review the timing it takes for each call to execute, and dancers can repeat the call until they meet the timing.
- Quicker sense of success. Dancers universally enjoy a feeling of accomplishment when they are successful at short drill dancing. Sometimes, these can be the most exciting tips of the evening!
- Dancers can practice at home. Dancers can meet with another couple in their home and practice two-couple recordings.

I once called a Party Night for non-square dancers where there were just 10 couples of enthusiastic people. Instead of forming squares, I called the first two tips as two-couple dances, using just the following calls: Pass Thru, U Turn Back, Ladies Chain, Circle Left/Right $\frac{1}{2}$ and $\frac{3}{4}$, Star Thru and California Twirl. The dancers really enjoyed it and started whooping it up after every sequence!

Getting Started

- Plan when you will do a two-couple tip. The skills and mental process are a little more demanding than in full squares, so plan them to the early side of the dance. (I start my workshops with two-couple dancing when dancers are the freshest).
- Arrange everyone the same way (i.e. heads). This makes it easier to follow the floor and see how everyone is doing. If at all possible, group newer dancers with more experienced dancers.
- Explain that there is no Allemande Left, no Right and Left Grand and no Promenade. Every sequence will end with the dancers at their home position. *Remind them that if they break down to get home immediately to start the next sequence.*
- Start with easy calls so dancers get a sense of how the workshop works. Watch the floor to see how dancers are responding to your calling. After each sequence, end with the same phrase, such as “You’re home”. This indicates to the dancers that they should be home, and if they’re not, they should get home quickly.
- As you add more calls and or variety, notice where the dancers are struggling. If they aren’t struggling with anything you’re calling, then review your notes to make sure you’ve covered your intended lesson plan.
- If you are new at sight calling, this is an excellent opportunity to hone your skills. There are fewer dancers to watch and fewer steps to get them home.
- Stay away from asymmetric choreography until you are fully comfortable with regular choreography.
- Remember: if anything seems difficult to dancers, they have either not been taught the definition or are not familiar with the position they are in. Both can be corrected by you. Unusual positioning can become easy through repetition and practice
- You can still be smooth with two couple dancing. If your calling becomes jerky and awkward, take time to think about what calls would be smooth after each call. If the dancers are jerky in their movements, either they’ve done the call incorrectly or you are calling with bad flow.
- As dancers become more comfortable with the calls, you can add variety and sharpen their skills by adding half-sashayed and left-handed movements.

- If dancers have a particular problem with a call, stop and workshop it. Make sure you are well-versed in the definition (having a copy of the definitions handy is always helpful). Repeat the definition to the dancers slowly, then help them apply the call to the formation.
- Don't try to use eight-dancer calls in two-couple sets. Stick to the calls that are truly two-couple. There is plenty of material for those calls.
- Don't overdo it. Keep the tips relatively short and skip the singing call. Let dancers enjoy it to the point where they're excited to do it again next week.
- Be sure to use the calls you workshopped in your next regular square.

Calls that can be used in Two-Couple sets

Basic – 1

Circle
Do Sa Do
Stars
Half Sashay
Rollaway
U Turn Back
2 Ladies Chain
Chain Down the Line
Lead Right/Left
Veer Left/Right
Bend the Line
Right and Left Thru
Star Thru
California Twirl
Square Thru

Basic – 2

Wheel Around
Box the Gnat
Partner Trade
Couples Trade
(named dancers) Trade
Step to a Wave
Pass the Ocean
Swing Thru/Left Swing Thru
Run/Cross Run
Wheel and Deal
Zoom
Flutterwheel
Reverse Flutterwheel
Sweep $\frac{1}{4}$
Touch $\frac{1}{4}$
Box Circulate

Mainstream

Turn Thru
Single Hinge/Couples Hinge
Cast Off $\frac{3}{4}$
Spin the Top
Walk and Dodge
Fold/Cross Fold
Slide Thru
Dixie Style to a Wave
Tag the Line / $\frac{1}{2}$ Tag / $\frac{3}{4}$ Tag
Scoot Back
Recycle

Plus Two-Couple List

Centers part: Load the Boat
Peel Off
Linear Cycle
(anything) and Roll
(anything) and Spread
Follow Your Neighbor
Fan the Top
Explode the Wave
Explode and (anything)
Peel the Top
Diamond Circulate
Single Circle to a Wave
Trade the Wave
Flip the Diamond
Cut the Diamond
Crossfire
Chase Right

Choreo Examples

Basic 1

Easy

Circle left 1/2, Star thru, Right and Left thru, Veer Left,
Chain Down the line, Pass Thru, California Twirl, You're Home!

Medium

Do sa do, Circle L 3/4, Pass Thru, U-Turn Back, Star Thru,
California Twirl

Veer Left, Veer Right, U-Turn Back, Star Thru, California Twirl,
Right and Left Thru, 2 Ladies Chain, Circle Right $\frac{3}{4}$, You're Home!

Hard

2 Ladies Chain, Half Sashay, Circle Left $\frac{3}{4}$, Pass Thru,
U-Turn Back, Veer Right, California Twirl, Chain Down the Line, You're
Home!

Pass thru, U-Turn Back, Star Thru, U-Turn Back, Square Thru 3,
Half Sashay, Face In, You're Home!

Basic 2

Easy

Square Thru 2, Partner Trade, Right and Left Thru, Veer Left,
Girls Trade, Bend the Line, Reverse Flutter, Pass the Ocean,
Swing Thru, Boys Run, Wheel and Deal, Sweep $\frac{1}{4}$, You're Home!

Medium

Right and Left Thru, Half Sashay, Pass Thru, Partner Trade,
Touch 1/4, Boys Run, Reverse flutter, Pass the Ocean, Girls Trade,
Step back, You're Home!

Pass the Ocean, Swing Thru, Boys Run, Wheel and Deal,
Touch 1/4, Box Circulate, Boys Run, Left Touch 1/4,
Box Circulate, Face In, You're Home!

Hard

Pass the Thru, Wheel Around, Flutterwheel, Lead Right,
Boys Run, Box Circulate, Girls Run, Partner Trade,
Left Swing Thru, Boys Cross Run, Girls Trade and U-Turn Back, Bend the
Line, You're Home!

Box the Gnat, Square Thru, Partner Trade, Pass the Ocean,
Swing Thru, Boys Cross Run, Left Swing Thru, Girls Run,
Wheel and Deal, You're Home!

Pass the Ocean, Left Swing Thru, Boys Run, Bend the Line, Touch ¼,
Box Circulate, Zoom, Girls Run, Reverse Flutterwheel, Sweep a Quarter,
Half Sashay, You're Home!

Mainstream

Easy

Pass the Ocean, Swing Thru, Spin the Top, Right and Left Thru,
Star Thru, Slide Thru, You're Home!

Square Thru 3, U-Turn Back, Touch 1/4, Boys Run, Slide Thru, Right
and Left Thru, Dixie Style to a Wave, Boys Cross Run, Recycle, Boy
Walk/Girl Dodge, Boys Run, Slide Thru, You're Home!

Medium

Swing Thru, Girls Turn Back, Wheel and Deal,
Girl Walk/Boy Dodge, Hinge, Boys Trade, Recycle, Veer Right, Left
1/2 Tag, Box Circulate, Girls Run, You're Home!

Hard

Turn thru, Partner Trade, Spin the Top, Boys Cross Run,
Left Swing Thru, Recycle, Left Do Sa Do, Left Swing Thru,
Boys Cross Fold, Slide Thru, You're Home!

Left Touch $\frac{1}{4}$, Scoot Back, Hinge, Boys Trade, Girls Run, Girls Trade, Cast Off $\frac{3}{4}$, Dixie Style to a Wave, $\frac{1}{2}$ Tag, Face In, You're Home!

Left Touch $\frac{1}{4}$, Walk and Dodge, Wheel Around, Dixie Style, Swing Thru, Girls Trade, Recycle, Left Spin the Top, Girls Run, Girls Trade, Wheel Around, Boys Trade, All Cast Off $\frac{3}{4}$, Box Circulate twice, You're Home!

Plus

Easy

Touch $\frac{1}{4}$, Follow Your Neighbor, Left Swing Thru, Trade the Wave, Boys Run, Wheel and Deal, You're Home!

Pass the Ocean, Explode the Wave, Chase Right, Hinge, Fan the Top, Boys Run, Wheel and Deal, You're Home!

Medium

Lead Right, Chase Right, Hinge, Girls Trade, Boys Fold, Peel the Top, Linear Cycle, Reverse Flutter, Box the Gnat, You're Home!

Right and Left Thru, Half Sashay, Centers Part: Load the Boat, Partner Trade and Roll, Square Thru 2, Partner Trade and Roll, You're Home!

Hard

Fan the Top, Swing Thru $1\frac{1}{2}$, Explode and Right and Left Thru, Half Sashay $1\frac{1}{2}$, Double Pass Thru, Boys Turn Back, Single Circle to a Wave, Boys run, You're Home!

Spin the Top, Hinge, Box Circulate, Peel Off, Boys Hinge, Diamond Circulate, Flip the Diamond and Roll, Slide Thru, Crossfire, Girls Run, Touch $\frac{1}{4}$ and Roll, You're Home!

Pass the Ocean, Swing Thru, Pass the Ocean, Cast Off $\frac{3}{4}$, Peel the Top, Linear Cycle and Veer Right, Boys Run and Roll, Girls Hinge, Scoot Back, Boys Face Left, Cut the Diamond, Cast Off $\frac{3}{4}$, Boy Walk Girl Dodge, Walk and Dodge, U Turn Back, You're Home!