



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

(JULY 2020)



******* S T A R T *******

Reviving Square Dancing in the Wake of COVID-19 Guidelines for CALLERLAB Members (June 2020)

Dancers and callers love square dancing and miss the fellowship, social engagement, and shared community that the COVID-19 pandemic took away from us. We now need to regroup and start planning on how to positively move forward following this extended period of isolation. To this end, CALLERLAB wishes to provide its Members with the following guidelines to use as we approach reopening square dancing.

Staying Connected:

Before restrictions are lifted, CALLERLAB Members can collaborate and share ideas for keeping the square dance community connected and interactive. Many CALLERLAB Members are using creative approaches for engaging dancers and staying in touch with them. This includes:

1. Zoom meetings so club members can check in with each other
2. Virtual dances, one-couple and two-couple online dancing events
3. Sharing videos of square dancing
4. Sharing square dance word searches, crosswords, and other puzzles
5. Checking in with dancers to let them know we will get through this and dance again

Callers can brainstorm many other ideas in their individual areas.

Conditions for Resuming Square Dancing:

CALLERLAB recognizes that local guidelines will dictate how reopening will actually take place in various locations. In some places reopening may occur relatively soon, while in others the easing of restrictions will take place much more slowly. As we plan to reopen square dancing we must respect local guidelines and requirements. Therefore:

1. First and foremost, be aware that your personal health and well-being, and that of your dancers, is of the utmost importance.
2. Carefully follow all federal, state/provincial, and local government regulations that are in place in your immediate area.
3. Communicate and cooperate with local square dance groups and organizations regarding plans.
4. Above all, use good judgment and common sense.

Strategic Plan for Returning to Dancing:

CALLERLAB is providing the following guidelines for Members to use in developing a local strategic plan to get dancing up and running quickly. Callers should work with regional associations and clubs in understanding how and when their area is opening up and use that information to plan and prepare for the resumption of square dancing.

This will include:

1. Startup Planning:

- a. Communicate with dancers regarding the startup calendar including times and dates.
- b. Ensure that halls are available and ready to accept dancers.
- c. Coordinate all aspects of the required physical distancing requirements for your location.

2. Hygiene Considerations:

- a. CALLERLAB Members are encouraged to work with their local clubs to put recommended local hygienic practices into place. This includes honoring local government guidelines and those developed by regional and national square dance organizations, such as the USDA.
- b. Hygienic guidelines are readily available from many square dance organizations, and may include:
 - i. Sign in and payment procedures.
 - ii. Wearing protective gear such as masks or shields.
 - iii. Cleansing hands by appropriate washing or using certified antivirus sanitizers.
 - iv. Not sharing food.
 - v. Using personal beverage containers.
 - vi. Respecting local physical distancing guidelines to the greatest degree possible given the nature of the activity.
 - vii. Other protective options.
- c. Everyone involved needs to collaborate to make appropriate hygienic practices a priority.

3. Caller Considerations:

As we return to calling, callers may:

- a. Elect to wear protective hygienic gear based on local guidelines and regulations. If wearing a mask makes it difficult to be heard or understood, set up the hall to allow significantly extra physical distancing from any dancers while calling.
- b. Consider not sharing the stage and personally making all announcements unless a club officer has a separate microphone and can physically distance on stage.
- c. Elect to carry their own antivirus hand sanitizer while calling.

- d. Consider using a shorter program or modified choreography to support dancers in being successful and having fun as they come up to speed following this long break from dancing.
- e. Consult with club leaders or dancers regarding limiting dancer mixing and contact by assigning squares for the evening or using variations such as two-couple choreography.
- f. Focus on high energy, successful, and fun dancing.
- g. When the time comes where new folks feel comfortable trying the activity, consider aiming for a shorter entry list. Some possible options are the Community Dance Program, part or all of the Basic Program, or Social Square Dancing (SSD).
- h. Remember that our primary goals include promoting social interaction, enjoying dancing together, and ensuring that dancers are successful and come away with smiles on their faces.

4. Fiscal Considerations:

- a. Dancers may be fiscally stressed from decreases in income due to Covid-19.
- b. Local restrictions on the number of people who may gather in a specified space might spread the cost-base over fewer participants.
- c. There may be significant changes in hall rental fees as locations try to make up for lost revenue and increased cleaning costs.

As we navigate these uncharted times it is more important than ever to share our ideas, stories, and experiences to help us successfully address the challenges we face. Callers and dancers are urged to share their stories via the CALLERLAB Square Dance KnowledgeBase. For information on how to contribute material, visit the site (<http://knowledge.callerlab.org>) or send an e-mail to info@callerlab.org.

These guidelines were written in June 2020. As the reopening process evolves, there may be a need for modifications or additions. They are a starting point for Members of CALLERLAB to use as they work with clubs and dancers in developing local plans allowing us to “Square Up” once more.

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We thank you for the coverage you have given us in the past and for your continued support in the future.

THE CALLERLAB BOARD OF GOVERNORS