



CREATING ALTERNATE FIGURES FOR SINGING CALLS Betsy Gotta, CALLERLAB Convention 2008

Singing Calls are easy, you just practice the figure which comes with the record and sing the song. Right! That works if the figure supplied works, times well, and is suited to the group that you are calling for. What does the caller do if (s)he wants to use the music, but the figure on the other cut is for Plus and the dancers dance Mainstream. How does a caller prepare to use singing calls for beginner parties or during lessons?

To be able to use the same music no matter what the situation, the caller must be able to change the figure to suit the need. The easiest way is to research different singing call patterns from books, other callers, or the internet. Then you practice the music with more than one figure.

Most modern singing calls are composed of seven repetitions of music of 64 beats each. Therefore, the figures are interchangeable. Some figures will dance to some music better than others, so you should practice different figures to see which ones are comfortable. Sometimes new dancers or older dancers will move slower, so properly timed figures will not work. You can write some which are less than 64 beats to help compensate and allow the dancers (and you) to keep with the music.

The CALLERLAB timing sheets are the tools which allow you to write your own singing call figures. Let's take a look at a sample figure which uses the Mainstream calls Cloverleaf and Pass the Ocean (from an unusual formation).

Heads Star Thru - 6 beats (from static square)
Double Pass Thru - 4
Cloverleaf - 8
Centers Pass Thru - 2
Right and Left Thru - 6
Pass the Ocean - 4
Girls Trade - 4
Recycle - 4
Slide Thru - 4
Corner Swing - 6
Promenade (Full Around) - 16

This figure adds up to 64 beats including the full promenade. One possible problem is that the Corner Swing is at home, so many modern dancers will not do the full Promenade. Therefore, we can change the square around so that the Promenade is only 1/2 and still make the figure time out.

Heads Promenade 1/2 while the Sides Right and Left Thru - 8 (Note: This flips the square and each call takes the same 8 beats.)

Sides Slide Thru - 4 (they are already in the center)

Double Pass Thru - 4

Cloverleaf - 8

Centers Pass Thru - 2

Right and Left Thru - 6

Pass the Ocean - 4

Girls Trade - 4

Recycle - 4

Slide Thru - 4

Corner Swing - 8

Promenade - 8 (Dancers are across the square from home)

By using the CALLERLAB timing sheets and your checkers, you can work through the available singing call figures and find patterns to suit every situation. Remember, the figures available with the records, in books, and on the internet may not time as well as you might like.

After you have worked out the figures with the timing sheet, use the alternate figure in a singing call at a dance. Watch to see if the dancers respond well and if they are rushing to complete the call or are standing at home. The extra work will be rewarded with the freedom to use any singing call you want at any time.