



Program-Related Subjects for New Mainstream Dancers

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This teaching checklist contains information that will benefit the new dancer. It is recommended by the CALLERLAB Mainstream Committee that this information be covered during the course of mainstream lessons.

There is nothing magic about the timing of this information. Often, the topic will be spontaneous as an opportunity arises. The objective is to weave this information into a set of lessons. Caller instructors are encouraged to avoid “long lectures”, instead presenting a bit of information at every lesson.

Caller instructors are encouraged to provide the newest version of “The Illustrated Mainstream Movements of Square Dancing” handbook to new dancers. This handbook provides definitions of the calls and illustrations of the maneuvers. The information can be very helpful to both new and experienced dancers. The first ten items are the 10 “Ground Rules” which are taken from this handbook. This handbook has been endorsed by CALLERLAB. Ten Ground Rules are reprinted with permission from Palomino Records.

| Mainstream Program-Related Subjects | Taught & Reinforced | | |
|--|---------------------|--|--|
| 1. Be a good listener. | | | |
| 2. Get into squares quickly. | | | |
| 3. Be a courteous dancer. | | | |
| 4. Be on time for class and club. | | | |
| 5. Be a thoughtful dancer. | | | |
| 6. Be a cooperative dancer. | | | |
| 7. Take it easy. | | | |
| 8. Be a friendly dancer. | | | |
| 9. You're never through learning. | | | |
| 10. Enjoy yourself – have fun.. | | | |
| Emergency Call for Medical Aid – ECMA If a medical emergency arises in your square, one person should go to the aid of the stricken dancer while the other six link hands and form a stretched-out circle around the fallen dancer. Their upraised hands are a signal to the caller to seek help for that square. Other dancers in the area should step away from the ring and help clear a path to the door. | | | |
| Lost Squares If a square breaks down, the fastest way to resume dancing is to form normal (he/she/he/she) facing lines and watch for the rest of the floor to reach this formation. The caller will recognize when the broken square is in lines, and will assist them by taking the rest of the floor to lines and then calling “Everybody Go Forward and Back” before the next call. Dancers must learn that this movement allows them to resume dancing, but they may not end up with their own partner at the end of the sequence. They should be instructed to finish the sequence with their “new” partner and corner and “fix” partners & corners as they return to home. Dancers form lines by the following: 1. Return to home position as soon as possible. 2. Then the head ladies will take their corner's hand and head couples will back out to form lines at the sides of the square. 3. On the caller's command, "EVERYBODY go forward and back", they enter into the dance pattern. | | | |
| Styling Every sport has recognized positions that protect the arms, shoulders, knees, hips and other joints. In square dancing, we call this styling. An emphasis on styling will lead to smoother dancing and timing. It will also protect the dancers from injury. Dancers should be taught to dance upright and independently. They should not jerk, pull or push the other dancers, but move in a free & easy motion around each other, with handholds used only for balance. Encourage a palm-to-palm touch. The CALLERLAB Mainstream definitions and “The Illustrated Mainstream Movements of Square Dancing” handbook, endorsed by CALLERLAB, has styling & timing notations for all of the calls. It is important to focus on the recommended hand and arm positions to protect dancers from injury. | | | |
| Club Dance Customs Explain the basics of club dancing in your area. This might include admission fees, split the pot or raffles, banner customs, banner raids, participation awards (travel badges, friendship badges, etc), dance program levels, round or line dancing, and other topics. | | | |
| Club Organization Explain the organization of your area – the local federations of clubs, state organization, major dances sponsored by these groups, and national conventions and other dancing events. | | | |

The 10 Ground Rules of Square Dancing

(from "The Illustrated Mainstream Movements of Square Dancing")

1. **Be a good listener.** Think of the caller as the *quarterback* in this game of square dancing. He calls the plays by giving you the dance signals for the movements he wants you to dance. Two beats later you do what he has called. You can't be talking or thinking of something else and count on reacting correctly. Not only does talking during a square dance distract you but it also makes it difficult for other in the square to "catch" then instructions and to hear the music. Remember, too, that there is room for only one teacher at a time. You can help others *best* by being in the correct place at the correct time.
2. **Get into squares quickly.** When the caller announces "sets in order" for the next tip, join the squares nearest to you that needs a couple. If you're looking for a square let the caller know where you are by raising your hand as you move across the floor. If you need a couple to fill out a square, raise your hand with one finger indicated, two fingers for two couples, etc.
3. **Be a courteous dancer.** Good, standard rules of courtesy are always appreciated. Asking a partner for a dance and then saying "thank you" to all those in the set at the end of a tip is a natural, courteous reaction. In squares dancing there are a few *specials* to look out for. It's considered bad manners to pass a square needing dancers in order to fill another. And, even more important, beware of the unpardonable sin: Never leave a square once you have joined it until the tip is over. (If you must leave in an emergency, find a substitute to fill your spot.)
4. **Be on time for class and club.** Tardiness may be stylish in some activities but in square dancing one late couple may mean that three couples must sit out. In planning an evening's program the caller leans heavily on the first and last tips to pace his dance. If you're late, or if you leave early, you are not taking full advantage of the evening the caller has prepared.
5. **Be a thoughtful dancer.** Personal cleanliness is important in any activity where folks exercise vigorously in close contact with each other. For that reason, a good deodorant and an effective mouthwash are among square dancers' best friends. Because the enjoyment of the other people in a square depends upon your and your coordination, *don't drink* before or during a square dance. Be at your absolute dancing and thinking best!
6. **Be a cooperative dancer.** It might be said that square dancing is an activity where everyone is responsible for everyone else's happiness. A square is not made up of eight individuals working independently but rather is one unit with no individual "star". The real pleasure comes when each person does his share in making the square run smoothly.
7. **Take it easy.** Don't overdo. Square dancing can be a strenuous exercise, particularly when you're getting started. If you get tired, sit down. Don't let anyone talk you into dancing if you should stop and breathe a little bit. You can still learn a great deal by watching and listening.
8. **Be a friendly dancer.** "Friendship is Square dancing's Greatest Reward." You are the host in square dancing. As a matter of fact, everyone is. Take the opportunity to get acquainted with others in the square and make it a point each evening to dance with as many different dancers as possible. It has been wisely said that "Square dancing is Friendship Set to Music."
9. **You're never through learning.** You'll find there is always something new that you can learn or some part of your dancing which can be improved upon. Mistakes are a normal part of dancing. The important thing is to find out what you did that was wrong and then try to get it straight in your mind before the movement is called again. When the opportunity present itself, don't hesitate to ask your caller questions if there's something you don't understand. You may be the only one to ask but chances are a number of the others, too shy to raise their hands, will be grateful to you.
10. **Enjoy yourself – have fun.** Pleasure is contagious. You'll be surprised how much your smile will pep up the entire square. Come to a square dance *expecting* a good time and you'll have it. If having a good time to you means making noise, be sure to time your vocal enthusiasm when it won't distract the others in the square from hearing the calls. The end of each dance is a good time to let off steam. Just remember that when you clap at the end of a square you have enjoyed, you're applauding the caller, certainly, and you're saying "thank you" to the others in the square, that's true. But, you're also applauding you, for it is *you* who did the job and it is *you* who experienced that wonderful sense of accomplishment that comes with being a square dancer.

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