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- What is the difference between Learn Mode and Dance Mode?  
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We Urgently Need Beginners

For square dancing to grow, we need extreme user-friendliness toward beginner dancers.

Why do we need new dancers?

All activities and organizations need new people for growth. The number of square dancers has dwindled each year for decades. Here’s why: it’s far easier to lose a dancer than to bring in a replacement. Losing an experienced dancer is instantaneous. Training a replacement to comfortably dance at club level takes more than a year.

We desperately need a way to bring in new dancers faster than we lose existing dancers. We have needed that for decades.

In 2020, Covid-19 shut down square dancing completely. After months away from square dancing, many existing dancers will never return.

When we restart after Covid-19, our need for new dancers will be greater and more urgent than ever. If we can focus on making square dancing an ideal activity for new dancers, we can grow like never before. Let’s consider the Covid-19 shutdown, and the upcoming restart, as a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for tremendous growth.

Why can’t we do what we’ve always done in the past?

The age-old methods bring in few, if any, new dancers. New dancers can begin square dancing just once per year when (and if) you start a beginner group. It takes more than a year for a new dancer to reach a comfortable club level. The combination of limited product availability, and a huge commitment to a long training period, makes it very difficult for you to build up a nice-size group of dancers.

Decades ago, when square dancing was booming, beginner lessons lasted just a few weeks. You could start several beginner groups each year. Beginners could reach club level in a reasonable timeframe.

Over the decades, square dancing’s entry barrier rose higher and higher. Classes became longer and class starts grew less frequent. We can all plainly observe that the number of dancers has dwindled.

The age-old methods do not work. We need a different approach which is friendlier toward new dancers.

What is the Dance Program Escalator?

Today’s square dance scene involves constant teaching so that dancers can continuously move up to the next level. Dancers are always in Learn Mode and never in Dance Mode. Next year’s new dancers will never get to dance with this year’s new dancers, because the two groups will always be on different steps of the Dance Program Escalator (i.e. B1-B2-M-P-A1-A2-C1-C2-etc.), the undesirable, counter-productive Escalator of Levels.
We Urgently Need Beginners

What is the difference between Learn Mode and Dance Mode?

In the old-style training model, new dancers start out in Learn Mode. Each call is explained; then, a walk-thru. For several weeks, new dancers require a distinct pause before and after each call. Therefore, Learn Mode consists of “stop-and-go” dancing, which gets tedious. Stop-and-go makes dancing a lot more work and a lot less fun.

Eventually, dancers learn to do a particular call at full dance speed. Yet they are still in Learn Mode. As soon as they learn a call, they must immediately learn other new calls. Each new call is explained, walked, instructed, and then executed stop-and-go. Most dancing in Learn Mode is stop-and-go.

The few dancers who survive until the end of Mainstream class are pressured to immediately take a Plus class, then maybe a Wild West version of DBD, then A-1, and so forth. New dancers are perpetually in Learn Mode with stop and go dancing. It takes years to eventually get to true Dance Mode where you can flow through an entire fun dance at full speed, moving with the music. New dancers’ original goal was to finally get to dance with their friends who brought them into square dancing. But those original friends are no longer at beginner level. They moved on to dance in Learn Mode for a higher program.

SSD is vastly different. For starters, learning time is kept short. Dancers reach Dance Mode faster. Dancers are encouraged to stay in Dance Mode. This crop of new dancers can dance with the last crop of new dancers and next crop of new dancers. Instead of tedious stop-and-go, dancing is fun, flowing movement with “wind in your face”. We gain back our historically tremendous recruitment tools of “Friends Bring Friends” and “Friends Dance with Friends”.

For decades, square dance leaders wanted to teach people to dance.

But people just wanted to dance.

Let’s give people what they want. Let them dance!

What kind of square dancing would be easier to sell?

Square dancing is a leisure activity. A long training period is a huge entry barrier which keeps new customers out. For greater entry and success, we need a program that today’s busy people can enjoy after a few weeks (instead of a few years) of training.

A shorter training period gives you many immediate benefits. First, during a year’s time, you can easily start two, three or even four beginner groups. Think about how many new dancers you normally get from old-style once-a-year classes. SSD features multiple starts per year, so you’ll immediately double, triple or even quadruple your numbers by simply offering the product more often. Add in the amazing factors of “Friends Bring Friends” and “Friends Dance with Friends” and you gain a huge potential for growth.
What kind of shorter program can be easily learned by new dancers and also enjoyed by experienced dancers?

A good destination program must be small enough to learn in 12 weeks. It must also be large enough to provide an exciting and varied dance experience. These two goals (easy to learn, satisfying to dance) have always been a balancing act. In the past, we focused mostly on making square dancing more “interesting”. That focus cost us big-time, by building a huge entry barrier to new dancers.

Today’s callers who use SSD report that it offers a great balance between short training time (which favors new dancers) and a robust program with substance and variety (which favors experienced dancers).

When you consider the Covid-19 shutdown and the upcoming restart, our best bet is to emphasize a form of dancing which makes the activity very friendly to new dancers. SSD is that product.

How can we maximize “Friends Bring Friends” recruitment?

SSD is a fun yet meaningful dance program. Beginners can learn it (Standard Application) in 18 to 22 hours. Dancers are encouraged to dance that program, and to recruit their friends, with no pressure to move up to higher programs.

Think back to when you were a new dancer. You were enthusiastic about the joy, friendship and excitement of square dancing. You loved dancing to lively music and being on the same team with other fun people. You would have gladly invited your non-dancing friends to try it, except you couldn’t. The beginner class you are in is already closed to new members. The next class starts a year later. After waiting a year, your enthusiasm declined, or you have already moved on to the next program.

What if a new class starts every 12 weeks, precisely when new dancers reach their peak of excitement? You’d have far more selling opportunities per year, and far more enthusiastic salespeople. We could once again enjoy a key selling feature which we lost over time: “Friends Bring Friends”.

Every survey of square dancers shows that the vast majority of us got started because a friend or acquaintance invited us. With a shorter and easier program, we can maximize the recruitment method which is by far the most effective: “Friends Bring Friends”.

While “Friends Bring Friends” will continue to bring you new dancers, a strong marketing program is always desirable. You can share marketing ideas, and find out what works for other leaders, in the Social Square Dancing group on Facebook.
History of SSD

To know where we are going, we must understand where we have been.

Who started SSD?

SSD was started by a “who’s who” of prominent callers and leaders. If we “name names”, we risk omitting some folks who made a contribution. It’s correct to say that SSD is a grassroots effort.

SSD is also the culmination of a movement which has been ongoing for decades. Most leaders recognize the need for a shorter, easier entry program to make square dancing more marketable to new dancers.

What is the difference between SSD and the CALLERLAB Basic Program?

Basic is a stepping stone. SSD is a destination.

The CALLERLAB Basic Program is the first step of the Dance Level Escalator. Except most of the time, we completely skip that step. After a new dancer learns Basic, they never get to actually dance and enjoy it. Instead, they immediately rush onward to learn Mainstream, then Plus, then Advanced One, and so forth. New dancers are pressured to learn more calls and move up the escalator. Basic is not a dance program. It’s a teach program. Basic is the first step of the escalator.

By comparison, SSD is an active, vibrant destination program where people happily dance with no pressure to move up to higher levels.

Another key difference: SSD is far more popular than CALLERLAB Basic. How many Basic dances or clubs are there anyway? Very few, if any! And even if any Basic dances exist, they are only a temporary stepping stone to higher levels. Every Basic dancer is expected to learn more calls.

By comparison, SSD dances are held at locations and clubs all over the map. SSD is a destination with no pressure to move up. You can bring your friends in a few weeks, instead of just one time per year.

What’s the difference between SSD and Target 2000?

Target 2000 tried to change existing CALLERLAB programs. SSD is a separate program which does not alter existing CALLERLAB programs in any way.

Back then (and still today), Mainstream has about 70 calls and Plus has about 30 calls. Many dance leaders felt that Mainstream was too large and Plus was too small. Mainstream took too long to learn. The relatively few survivors from a long Mainstream class immediately rushed into a Plus class. Target 2000 attempted to balance Mainstream and Plus. The idea was to make Mainstream smaller and Plus larger, so that each program would have about 50 calls.
History of SSD

A smaller Mainstream program would be easier to learn. Thus, more beginners would survive the class. A larger Plus program would be harder to learn. Thus, we could discourage brand-new Mainstream dancers from immediately rushing to Plus.

It was a great idea, with one huge drawback. Changing the existing CALLERLAB programs is almost impossible. Those programs are too firmly entrenched. Everyone wants change but no one wants to change. Any successful new idea must be a better mousetrap and also must not alter the existing mousetrap.

SSD is an easy-teach, fun-dance destination which can be reached by new dancers far more easily, and far more often (more beginner classes per year) than Mainstream.

What's the difference between SSD and Mainstream?

SSD is a sub-set of Mainstream. Mainstream has about 70 calls. SSD has about 50 of the most popular / most fun / easiest to learn Mainstream calls.

Here's another very important difference. Mainstream is a stepping stone on the Dance Program Escalator. Everyone who learns Mainstream is expected to eventually (and often, immediately) learn Plus. By contrast, SSD is a stand-alone destination program. People are welcome to dance SSD for as long as they want, with no pressure to move up.

SSD is aimed at people who want something that the existing CALLERLAB dance programs cannot give them. Think about the last time you started a beginner group. Only some of those people survived until the end of the class. SSD is aimed at the people who dropped out of Mainstream class, along with all of their friends they would have brought in. SSD lets us lose fewer and keep more new dancers.

Callers who use SSD report that most SSD dancers are happy to dance that program forever, and to bring their friends. Always remember that SSD is a new product aimed at a new (and bigger) audience than Mainstream.

Why was SSD created?

Square dancing needs a thriving entry program which is also a destination program and which does not even attempt to change the existing CALLERLAB dance programs. Fortunately, such a program has already been around for decades.

Each year, millions of people migrate to warmer climates for the winter. They’re known as “snowbirds” or “winter Texans” or “winter Arizonans” or “winter Floridians”, etc. For many decades, square dancing was and continues to be a popular recreational activity for temporary winter visitors. A winter dance program must absolutely be teachable during a 12-week winter season.

Over the years, winter square dance programs have been extremely successful. Some groups are huge, with hundreds of members.

If you said, “The SSD Program was born in the winter RV parks”, you’d be correct. Square dancing today needs a dance program which is quick and easy to learn, and also fun and
History of SSD

satisfying to dance. SSD borrowed heavily from the most successful program of this type. SSD achieves the delicate balance between the needs of both new and experienced dancers.

What do the letters S.S.D. mean?

SSD started a few years ago as “Sustainable Square Dancing”. Shortly after SSD began, CALLERLAB did what they always do. They formed a committee to study and test the new idea. The study came back with good news. Clubs using SSD were able to grow their groups with great results.

Now it’s time to introduce this experimental program to a wider audience. “Wider audience” means “all callers and dancers outside of the SSD Committee”. The SSD Committee has already had the product for a few years.

Recently, the SSD Committee voted to change the name from “Sustainable Square Dancing” to “Social Square Dancing”. Let’s agree that the SSD Committee is the proper place to shape the program. We have no need to worry about why they wanted to change the name from Sustainable to Social. The name changed because a majority of leaders voted for the name change.

From the very beginning of SSD, it was common to use just the acronym “SSD”. That common term remains the same. The general plan is to promote SSD as Sustainable Square Dancing to callers and leaders (who care a great deal about sustainability), and to promote it as Social Square Dancing to dancers and prospective beginners (who care a great deal about sociability).

If SSD is from CALLERLAB, why can’t I find it on the CALLERLAB website?

It’s there. It’s just buried underneath a mountain of other things CALLERLAB has done for the past five decades. CALLERLAB documents decades of square dance history. SSD is just the latest chapter.

Search is your friend!

If you want general knowledge about SSD from many different sources:

The CALLERLAB Knowledge website has extremely good info on almost any square dancing topic. Go to http://callerlabknowledge.org and search for ssddoc. The very first result is “SSD Documentation and Support Materials”, a collection linking to documents and materials from many different sources. Here’s the direct link: http://callerlabknowledge.org/?s=ssddoc.

If you want specific info about current items of business in the CALLERLAB SSD Committee:

The regular CALLERLAB website has current documents for active committees. Go to http://callerlab.org and search for SSD. The search results will contain all current
History of SSD

CALLERLAB documents mentioning SSD, including the *Teaching Guide*, press releases, Committee Brief, etc.

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<th>Who uses SSD?</th>
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<tr>
<td>Callers and dancers all over the world! The <strong>Social Square Dancing</strong> group on Facebook has over 500 members, and the number increases every week. More and more leaders discover SSD every day. You might wonder why there is no published list of SSD leaders. Here’s why: SSD is growing very <strong>quickly</strong>. Any roster of SSD groups would be out of date before you could even read it. The best answer to “Who uses SSD?” is “People who have <strong>found a better way</strong> for square dancing to <strong>thrive</strong>!”</td>
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The SSD List of Calls

Not too big, not too small, but just right.

If square dancing is a grassroots activity, why do we need a list of calls?

When we all use the same list of calls, we gain huge advantages:

A. Dancer Portability: SSD dancers can dance with any SSD group, anywhere in the world.
B. Knowledge Sharing: an SSD Guidebook can be (and in fact, has been) published, for all to use.
C. Resource Sharing: square dance music companies can release (and in fact, have released) singing calls specifically for the SSD movement.
D. Experience Sharing: SSD groups can share success stories and help each other succeed.

Why can’t SSD use an existing list? Why do we need a new list?

The SSD program requires a list of fun, popular calls which are easy to learn and satisfying to dance. The program needs ample resources (e.g., recommended teaching order, guide book, singing call figures, patter modules, etc.) for callers to use. The SSD list has all these things and more. It also has a history of success.

Much thought went into the SSD list and teaching order. When you compare the SSD list with the CALLERLAB Mainstream list, you’ll find that some of the least popular and/or hardest to learn Mainstream calls are not on the SSD list. The SSD list is designed to be short on teaching time and long on dance-ability. The program is designed to be taught (Standard Application) in 18 to 22 hours. It will build a whole new generation of dancers at a fun and exciting level which can be learned in a reasonable timeframe.

Where can I get a copy of the SSD list?

It’s in the SSD Guide: http://callerlabknowledge.org/?s=ssdguide

Why should I follow the SSD list exactly, instead of my own variation of it?

We’re all in this together. When we all use the same list, everyone benefits from each other’s collective wisdom, experience and success. By using a common list, you gain a valuable guidebook, choreographic material, singing call figures, expert advice, ideas you can use from other groups, and more.
The SSD List of Calls

### What if my favorite call is not on the SSD list?

Please feel free to use your favorite call, or any call you wish, after you give a quick and entertaining teach to that night's group.

SSD is aimed more at Dance Mode than Teach Mode. If you choose to use extra calls, it's a great idea to select a call which is easy for you to teach and also fun for your customers to learn.

### What if I think the SSD list should be bigger or smaller?

You are not alone! Feel free to use any calls you wish, with your own group. Simply give your customers a quick and entertaining teach before you use a call that is new to them.

SSD is a grassroots effort. You are very welcome to get involved with the Facebook Group and/or the CALLERLAB SSD Committee. Come up with an idea. Convince others that your proposal is solid and your reasoning is sound. If you invent a better mousetrap, the entire SSD movement will move in the direction of your success story! It's exciting and satisfying when your idea helps shape history!

We hope the benefits of having a tested, popular, well-designed program will outweigh any desire to become a maverick. SSD uses proven methods which have brought great success so far. You benefit from everyone else's experience. And everyone else hopes to benefit from your successes. We're all in this together.
Starting Your SSD Program

*The hardest part of a journey is taking the first step.*

### How do I get started?

Start by drumming up a group of beginner dancers. Then provide a place where they can enjoy **dancing** with **no** pressure to move up to higher programs. It has always been challenging to round up a group of beginners. Thankfully, it is **far** easier to recruit people into a 12-week training program than it is to bring people onto the Dance Program Escalator (where the training period never really ends).

With the Covid-19 shutdown, and the upcoming restart, everyone will be on the same page to focus on **new** dancers to **rebuild** our groups. Get involved with the Social Square Dancing Group on Facebook, where you can pick up ideas from hundreds of other like-minded leaders.

### Where do I find beginner dancers?

Gathering enough people for a successful square dance beginner group has **always** been a challenge.

Think about how hard it is to get people to commit to a **year** of learning 70 to 100 difficult calls. SSD is definitely an **easier** sell. People commit to just 12 weeks of learning just 50 calls.

Consider how many people start a year-long Mainstream/Plus class, and how very **few** survive until graduation. SSD has far **fewer** dropouts because the class is **shorter**, more **fun** and usually **larger**.

It’s still a chore to scare up a beginner group. Thankfully, with SSD it’s a far **easier** chore.

Here’s the best part: once your program gets rolling: the “Friends Bring Friends” concept kicks in. SSD lets you start a beginner group more often. Your group size builds much **faster**.

Remember to invite **former** square dancers! Surveys show that most former dancers dropped out because it was just too **much** (to learn, remember, commit, etc.) Former beginners can be a **great** source of people for your new SSD program.

### How often should I start an SSD class?

SSD is designed to be taught in 12 weeks. You can start a new beginner group one, two, three or **four** times a year. Multiple starts per year give you a **huge** advantage. Old-style programs start beginners just **once** per year. With SSD, starting **multiple** times per year, you can **double** or **triple** or **quadruple** your annual growth.

You do not **have** to start multiple times per year. Some leaders like to start several times a year in the **beginning**, to **build up** their numbers. Once they get **ahead** in the game, they can relax the pace and have fewer starts. The choice is always **yours**.
Starting Your SSD Program

In addition to bigger numbers, SSD gives you a huge gain in enthusiasm. When classes last an entire year, your new graduates (your main sales people) are weary and jaded. With SSD, your star sales reps, at the 12-week mark, are at the exact peak of enthusiasm and excitement.

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<tr>
<th>How many weeks should my SSD class last?</th>
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SSD is designed to be taught (Standard Application) in 18 to 22 hours. The exact format is up to you. You can do 2 hours per week for 10 weeks or 1.5 hours per week for 12 weeks. Some leaders have even reported good results with “twice-a-week” (two 90-minute sessions per week) for 6 weeks.

Many other formats are possible. The good news is that with a short cycle time, you can tweak your program every few months, until you have a fine-tuned solution which works great for you.

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<th>What is the structure of an individual SSD session?</th>
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The SSD guide covers this topic in depth. One popular format has an hour and a half of beginners followed by an hour and a half of SSD dancing, on the same evening. This is just one common format. Other formats have been used successfully.

A successful program provides the two things your dancers need:

1. A place to learn the program.
2. A place to comfortably dance the program with no pressure to move up.

Old-style programs often fail because beginners must endure Learn Mode for a year or longer. Dancers can only dance stop-and-go. SSD emphasizes Dance Mode. This gets people excited about dancing and bringing their friends. People bring their friends not for the learning but for the dancing! SSD lets you give people a great dance after a short training period.

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<tr>
<th>Where can I get a copy of the SSD Guide Book?</th>
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Free download from CALLERLAB Knowledge website: http://callerlabknowledge.org/?s=ssdguide

The SSD Guide has suggested lesson plans for each and every week of your new SSD group! You don’t have to do your homework. It’s already been done for you!
Who will promote SSD to dancers?

SSD is designed to take full advantage of “Friends Bring Friends”. SSD keeps the training cycle short, frequent, easy and fun. Today’s beginners become tomorrow’s best sales agents.

How did you get into square dancing? For most of us, the answer is simply “Friends Bring Friends”. Do you remember how excited you were when you first started square dancing? After the first few weeks of beginner sessions, you were hooked! You would have gladly brought your friends, except it was a whole year until the start of the next class. SSD lets new dancers bring their friends several times a year, instead of just once a year.

Who will promote SSD to callers?

SSD is Social Square Dancing. The word “Social” implies that it spreads via “Friends Bring Friends”. Just like SSD dancers sell the program to other dancers, SSD callers sell the program to other callers.

When callers discover that SSD groups are thriving while old-style year-long-class groups are languishing, you get instant promotion. You will hear a lot about SSD as square dancing starts back up.

SSD has its own Facebook Group named “Social Square Dancing”. Search for it on Facebook and then request to join the group. As of this writing, the group has over 500 members, and the number increases each week.

CALLERLAB keeps callers informed about new developments and success stories in the world of square dancing. CALLERLAB is on board with SSD and recommends it as a great way to start up again after the Covid-19 shutdown.

How do I get my club to offer the SSD program for new dancers?

We will soon have a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to permanently improve square dancing by focusing on SSD. Covid-19 stopped all square dancing and devastated the membership rosters of existing clubs. Even if your club danced at a very high level before the shutdown, they will need to ease back into dancing once we restart. Since everyone needs to dance an easier level anyway, we might as well provide a sustainable product for new customers.

We need to start thinking of beginners as actual dancers, actual customers, and actual users of our product. For far too long, we thought of people as customers only after they graduated from a year of class.

Ask your club if they are interested in providing a dance experience for people who do not dance, yet would be interested in learning how only if it’s easy and fun. Explain that other recreational choices allow people to participate fully after a very short training
Starting Your SSD Program

period. SSD has a **12-week** training period which is a **vast** improvement on the old-style **year-long**-class model.

SSD does not change **any** existing CALLERLAB Program. If your club is already successful with Mainstream, Plus and beyond, keep on doing what you’re doing. If your club could use **more** dancers and **more** sustainability, consider the SSD program. You’ll be in good company. Every day, more and more leaders turn to SSD as a **fantastic** way to bring in **more** new dancers more **often**, and to keep them dancing longer.

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<tr>
<th>What if I just don’t like SSD and I prefer to teach the same programs I’ve taught for years?</th>
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<tr>
<td>Square dancing is a social and leisure activity. People do it because they <strong>enjoy</strong> it. This applies to callers as well as dancers. Find something you <strong>enjoy</strong> and have a <strong>blast</strong>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SSD does not change <strong>any</strong> CALLERLAB Program in any way. You always have a choice. Please use any method you wish for growing your dancer population. SSD is specifically designed to address today’s marketplace. Other callers have had <strong>success</strong> with SSD. If you choose SSD, you’ll be in <strong>good</strong> company. Each day, more and more leaders turn to SSD as the <strong>only</strong> viable way to <strong>rebuild</strong> square dancing.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Should I teach the calls from all formations and arrangements?</th>
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<tr>
<td>Short answer: <strong>NO</strong>!</td>
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<tr>
<td>Longer answer: In the past, CALLERLAB recommended teaching from many formations and/or arrangements. Let’s think about how <strong>other</strong> leisure activities teach beginners.</td>
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<td>Snow-skiing: Do you <strong>start</strong> with the <strong>toughest</strong> double-black diamond run, even if you’re a brand-new beginner?</td>
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<td>Running: Do brand-new beginners <strong>start</strong> by running a <strong>marathon</strong>?</td>
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<td>Roller skating: Do you <strong>start</strong> by skating <strong>backwards</strong> on one foot while <strong>juggling</strong>?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Leisure activities start at an <strong>easy</strong> level. Then, if you <strong>want</strong> to, advance to a higher level. Over time, beginners <strong>may</strong> choose to learn more. But there needs to be a dividing line between “<strong>Learn Mode</strong>” and “<strong>Dance Mode</strong>”. That line needs to occur <strong>sooner</strong> rather than <strong>later</strong>.</td>
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<tr>
<td>In today’s fast-paced world, a <strong>year</strong> of training is <strong>far too long</strong>. It’s <strong>folly</strong> to expect beginners to know the same <strong>intricacies</strong> which took many <strong>years</strong> for experienced dancers to learn. It makes <strong>far</strong> more sense for beginner square dancers to dance at a <strong>fun</strong> and <strong>easy</strong> beginner level. With SSD, this level can be <strong>easily</strong> reached after a <strong>short</strong> and <strong>fun</strong> 12-week training period.</td>
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After 12 fun weeks of Learn Mode, SSD dancers get to enjoy the best part: **Dance Mode**! Existing dancers and leaders might find it difficult to accept that SSD is a **full destination** dance program. SSD dancers are encouraged to dance at SSD dances, **forever**, with **no pressure** to move up to higher levels.

This “no pressure” approach is completely **different** from how we’ve always done things in the **past**. In old-style “year-of-class” programs, the very minute dancers finish a program, they are pressured to take the **next** class. They **never** get to dance and **enjoy** the level they learned.

The CALLERLAB foundation surveyed **former** dancers, to find out **why** they **quit** square dancing. The most common reason for dropping out is because they felt pressure to learn and do **too much**. For a new dancer, no matter how much they learn, it **never** seems to be **enough**. They are always hounded to learn **more, more, more**; this pressure pushes people out of square dancing forever. **Non**-dancers have every **right** to expect square dancing to be a **fun** leisure activity with **no pressure**.

For many years, we wanted to continually **teach** people more calls and positions. But people just want to **dance**. SSD lets them dance, with **no pressure** to move up. Plus clubs can offer a Plus class one time each year for those who **choose** to move on. Every M/Plus club could have the SSD concept replace their current, non-productive and probably a bit nostalgic, new dancer class. Focus on building SSD first, as an integral part of your club, before even thinking about having a Plus class. Patience is a virtue!

**How can I keep dancers entertained long-term, using only 50 calls?**

Start with a positive **attitude**. SSD dancers all over the map are **happy** to dance the SSD program. If other callers can do it, then so can **you**. Good news: **plenty** of help is available.

The SSD Guide contains **hundreds** of well-researched, smooth, flowing, danceable routines. You don’t have to do your homework, because it’s **already** been done for **you**. The routines are arranged and color-coded by their intended audience:

- **SA** (Standard Application) – for all dancers, beginners and experienced alike.
- **SAV** (Standard Application with Variety) – to provide a **tiny** bit of extra spice for experienced dancers.
- **EA** (Extended Applications) – to **occasionally** challenge your dancers and give them deeper knowledge and understanding.

There will always be a dichotomy between **new** dancers and **experienced** dancers. Successful SSD programs often teach or workshop something, in a **fun** and **flowing** and very **danceable** way, on the 2nd or 3rd tip of a dance. This **equalizes** the floor. Both new and experienced dancers get to enjoy something a **little** different. **You** can then use that
variation for the rest of the evening. Everyone enjoys the variety together. Nobody is left behind. The SSD Guide contains several examples you can put to immediate use.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>May I teach my favorite call, even if not on the SSD list, to my own group of dancers?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes, because you’ll develop a quick, fun and effective teach for each additional call you use. You are always welcome to use any additional call you choose. Just teach it first; and not just an ordinary “teach”. Remember, they’re now out of Learn Mode and into Dance Mode. For any new call you introduce, give them a good, effective, fun and successful teach.</td>
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Variety is the spice of life. But too much spice ruins the dish. Numerous surveys show that people drop out of square dancing because it’s too hard and complex, and not due to lack of variety. Keep it fun, flowing and exciting.

Also remember that SSD is designed to be experienced in “Dance Mode” instead of “Learn Mode”. At all times, make your program lean heavily away from what most callers want (to teach people to dance) and lean heavily toward what most customers want (to dance).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>If I teach my favorite call to my group, can other SSD dancers still visit and dance with us?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes, you may use any call you wish. Just give a short, flowing and effective teach first. If you teach a new call early in the dance, you can then use the call for the rest of that evening.</td>
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<th>How do I get my club to allow dancers to remain at SSD with no pressure to move up?</th>
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<tr>
<td>If your club supported the idea of offering a fun and easy product to people who do not square dance, the next step is to persuade your club to offer a place for these same new dancers to dance at an easy and fun level, with no pressure to move up. This benefits your club because it maximizes “Friends Bring Friends” marketing. Focus on building SSD first, as an integral part of your club, before even thinking about having a Plus class. Patience is a virtue!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If your club prefers the old, broken model (where new dancers are in Learn Mode forever, and it takes years until a scant few survivors eventually reach club level), they are free to keep using the existing programs. But why would they? Square dancing needs to rebuild. Why not rebuild using a model which improves your chances to win?

SSD is completely separate from, and does not alter, any existing CALLERLAB Program. Nobody expects a Plus club to drop their club level down to SSD. Instead, we expect many existing Plus clubs will want to offer a new product, a Social Square Dance program, to a
SSD Dancing

brand-new target audience. The new audience can dance either on a separate night or on the regular club night at an earlier session.

Some clubs will be very tempted to cherry-pick the SSD group and bring everyone up to Plus and beyond as quickly as possible. We must resist that urge, because cherry-picking is how we got into our current predicament. SSD is a better mousetrap. Instead of a year of stop-and-go dancing during class, people get a full and exciting dance experience after just 12 weeks. Instead of dropping out because it’s too hard, people stay in because it’s too fun. Instead of waiting a year to bring their friends, people can bring their friends every few weeks. Instead of your top recruiters (recent graduates) being completely exhausted after a year of constant Learn Mode, your recent graduates are in fun Dance Mode and still at the peak of excitement, enthusiasm and persuasiveness.

It is important to explain to your club that “someone else’s SSD group” is absolutely not a prime hunting ground for students to fill your Plus class. Focus on the customer. Either you offer a product (SSD) suitable for a new generation of dancers, or you offer a product suitable only for survivors of the old-style year-long-class model. (Some clubs may choose to offer both products to both audiences.)

If your club supports the concept of bringing in new dancers, then they should also support the idea of providing a place for those same new dancers to comfortably dance at a fun and exciting level which can be easily reached and enjoyed, with no pressure to move up.

Can my SSD group visit other clubs which dance Mainstream or Plus?

With proper preparation, yes!

We’ve had this same situation for decades: one club starts a class in September and another club starts in January. How can we let everyone dance together? The answer has not changed. Simply contact the leader of the other club. Provide a list of calls your group knows.

With SSD, this will be easier than ever before, because when square dancing resumes, the focus will be on recruiting, teaching and rebuilding. By the time an old-style Mainstream class finally graduates, SSD will have churned out several consecutive beginner groups. SSD produces far more people than old-style once-a-year classes. After the restart, most beginners will be in the SSD program. (During the first year after the restart, all new dancers will be SSD, because the old-style crop is harvested only after a year of class). Therefore, it will be easy to cater to SSD dancers, because they will be the majority.

With SSD, it’s more important than ever to cater to new dancers. New dancers are your best sales people. Give them a fun, exciting dance where they can succeed and have fun, and they’ll help you build up an even bigger crowd. Success creates more success and more fun.
Where can SSD dancers find other SSD dance groups?

Use the internet! The Facebook Group “Social Square Dancing” has over 500 members, and this number grows every week. SSD groups can be found all over the map, even before the Covid shutdown. After we restart, SSD will be even more prevalent. Most leaders will view the restart as a golden opportunity to offer square dancing to a brand new target audience. There are already a lot of SSD groups. There will soon be a lot more, as more and more leaders realize that SSD helps them win.

Should National Square Dance Conventions have a separate hall for SSD?

Yes, we all want an immediate cure which will fill the halls at conventions. Whether or not our wish is realistic, SSD is our best chance to fulfill it, given enough time.

Whenever SSD dancers start coming to Conventions, we must recognize that SSD dancers can dance only in the SSD hall. All other dancers at the Convention can also dance in the SSD hall. SSD will be the “common ground” which ties all Convention attendees together. When a Convention eventually has an SSD hall, it needs to be the biggest, center-stage, prime-time hall.

Currently, the biggest hall (Live Band) at Nationals dances Mainstream. Anyone at the Convention can dance in that hall. (And only about 35 different calls are used in that hall, which is another topic entirely.) At future National Conventions, the biggest hall (Live Band) should be SSD, for the exact same reasons why that same biggest hall is Mainstream today: so that everyone can dance together at the big event.

How does the CALLERLAB recommendation “that calls be taught from more than a single position (formation and arrangement)” fit in with SSD?

SSD does not change any existing CALLERLAB Program.

SSD packages square dancing into a new, user-friendly product. SSD is designed to be taught, standard application, in just 18 to 22 hours. This lets new dancers get what they want, sooner. After just 18 to 22 hours, new dancers are out of Learn Mode (mostly stop-and-go dancing) and into Dance Mode with fun and energy and smooth flow.

SSD is more than a list of calls. It’s a philosophy of giving people what they want. As callers, we want to teach people to dance. But dancers just want to dance. SSD lets them dance, sooner than ever before. Also, SSD puts the focus on Dance Mode with dancer success rates of 99.9% or higher.

By design, most SSD dancing is good, smooth, standard applications choreography, in flowing Dance Mode (instead of stop-and-go Learn Mode). You can introduce other usages and even brand-new calls, in small doses: one workshop tip per SSD dance.
SSD Dancing

SSD classifies choreography into three groups by difficulty:

- **SA = Standard Applications:**
  - Familiar formations and arrangements.
  - High success rate for new dancers.
- **SAV = Standard Applications with Variety:**
  - Different but not difficult.
  - Still easy for new dancers to succeed.
- **EA = Extended Applications**
  - Practically everything else.
  - A little mix of EA can provide a great dancing experience.
  - Remember: a little bit goes a long way!

You don’t have to do your homework, because it has already been done for you. The SSD Guide contains hundreds of smooth, flowing, interesting figures. Each figure is clearly labeled and color-coded into one of the three difficulty groups: SA; SAV; and EA.

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**I heard that SSD focuses on symmetry. What is symmetry?**

For decades, we mainly entertained dancers by teaching new calls and new usages (formations and arrangements) for existing calls. This approach has huge disadvantages: dancers are constantly in Learn Mode and the dancing becomes tedious stop-and-go.

SSD focuses on smooth, flowing Dance Mode. To provide variety, SSD uses the concept of symmetry. Once dancers know a smooth flowing dance pattern, they enjoy that pattern, and are successful with the same dance pattern from the opposite angle or flow.

Here’s an example of symmetry: Flutterwheel and Reverse Flutterwheel. In Flutterwheel, the right-hand dancer starts the action, and everyone moves clockwise. In Reverse Flutterwheel, the left-hand dancer starts, and everyone moves counter-clockwise.

Separately, Flutterwheel and Reverse Flutterwheel are each great calls. But together, the combination is far greater than the sum of the parts. If we call only Flutterwheel all the time, dancers would always flow clockwise. But we don’t call Flutterwheel all the time. We blend in Reverse Flutterwheel so that dancers get the best of both worlds. They flow clockwise and counter-clockwise the right-hand dancer starts and the left-hand dancer starts. They use the right hand and the left hand. That’s symmetry!

Think about swinging on a swing. The whole point is to go back and forth and back and forth. It’s pleasurable. If you went just one direction on a swing, such as just back and back and back, or just forth and forth and forth, it would not provide any pleasure at all. It’s the same with square dancing. Symmetry gives people the pleasure of true dancing instead of just movement.
SSD Dancing

Symmetry is even more pleasurable when applied to entire dance patterns. After dancers are comfortable with:

“Swing Thru, Boys Run, Ferris Wheel”.

They also enjoy the same pattern with symmetry:

“Left Swing Thru, Girls Run, Ferris Wheel (uphill)”.

Each pattern is great as a stand-alone event. But the combination of the two patterns together provides symmetry and contrasting flow to create the true pleasure of dancing.

The SSD Teaching Guide will provide countless examples of well-designed, smooth, flowing symmetry. You don't have to do your homework because it has already been done for you.

Instead of constantly learning new calls in tedious stop-and-go Learn Mode, SSD dancers find smooth, flowing symmetry in Dance Mode far more interesting and satisfying.

Look for more symmetry educational material to come out soon!
How To Keep Your SSD Program Strong

*An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.*

**Where can I find ideas and success stories?**

CALLERLAB’s *SSD Guide* contains full information on how to start and maintain your own SSD group. The Social Square Dancing group on Facebook is an active forum with over 500 members. The CALLERLAB KnowledgeBase has a collection of SSD documents and materials from many different sources:


**Where do I find dance material which uses only SSD calls?**

CALLERLAB’s *SSD Guide* contains hundreds of ready-to-use, fun and flowing dances for you to call. You don’t have to do your homework, because it’s already been done for you. The material is arranged and color-coded for three different audiences:

- **SA** (Standard Application) – for all dancers, even beginners.
- **SAV** (Standard Application with Variety) – a tiny bit of extra spice while still in Dance Mode.
- **EA** (Extended Applications) – to occasionally challenge your dancers and give them deeper knowledge and understanding.

Many square dance music producers have released and will continue to release singing calls for SSD.

**Which is more important: What I call, or how I call it?**

*How* you call it! Square dancing is a form of *entertainment*. If the caller is *fun* and *energetic*, it’s much easier for the dancers to have a *fun* and *exciting* good time.

Decades ago, when we had millions of square dancers, callers would *never* try to change the figure of a patter or singing call. Thus, every caller had the *same* choreography. The *only* difference between callers was how *smooth* and *entertaining* you could deliver the *same* material that *every* caller had. Square dancing *grew* like crazy, back when the *only* focus was *how* to make it dance better.

Think about opera singers. *Some* singers are *more* acclaimed than others. But they *all* sing the exact *same* musical notes. It’s not *what* they sing. It’s *how* they sing it. The same is true in square dance calling. *How* you call is *far* more important than *what* you call. Keep it *fun, smooth* and *exciting*!
How To Keep Your SSD Program Strong

What happens if my club insists on continuing to teach SSD dancers all the way through Mainstream or Plus?

This would give other nearby SSD groups a serious competitive advantage over your group.

**Dance Mode** is the big drawing card of square dancing. Dance Mode is fun, flowing, smooth, exciting, and energetic. By comparison, Learn Mode is a chore. Learn Mode is mostly stop-and-go.

SSD lets people reach **Dance Mode** much faster. This keeps people excited and enthusiastic. “Friends Bring Friends” becomes your biggest recruitment technique.

Why would you give up all of those advantages?

SSD was originally called “Sustainable Square Dancing”. What does sustainable mean?

SSD is designed to be sustainable. Sustainability requires responsibility.

It’s okay to go into a forest and cut down a few trees to build your house, as long as you harvest responsibly so that the forest can regenerate the trees you took. It’s not okay to clear-cut a forest until nothing remains.

It’s okay to go to a great fishing lake and catch a few fish. All forms of fishing have daily limits and size restrictions. You throw back the smaller ones (the ones not yet ready to harvest) so they can replenish the resource.

Sustainable square dancing is exactly the same. In any sustainable endeavor, the resource is something to enjoy today, and more importantly, a living breathing system which grows more of the resource each and every year.

SSD gives us a wonderful opportunity to practice and improve our leadership skills. SSD is specifically designed to be easy and fun to learn, while also providing enough fun and variety for dancers to enjoy year after year. Compare this to Mainstream and Plus, where it takes more than a year for beginners to reach club level. And once they reach club level, they are immediately pressured to take even more classes and learn even more variations.

We need to sell dancing, not classing. SSD can succeed only if we offer an easy and fun dance program that people enjoy. Encourage dancers to bring their friends to the next beginner group. Square dancing’s numbers have declined constantly for many decades. A better product can reverse that trend.

According to a famous quote, “Build a **better mousetrap**, and the world will beat a path to your door”. The square dance scene needs a **better mousetrap**, and SSD is it.
How To Keep Your SSD Program Strong

How do I encourage people to bring their friends to the next SSD beginner class?

Word-of-mouth advertising is very powerful. Surveys show that it’s the single most powerful recruitment technique for square dancing. Word of mouth can happen on its own. Yet we get far better results if we ask (and remind) people to bring their friends to the next beginner group.

What do I do when a nearby caller tries to recruit my SSD dancers?

Anyone who tries to recruit your group into an old-style “year-of-class” program faces an uphill battle. SSD appeals to a different target audience than Mainstream/Plus. SSD enthusiasts enjoy the fun and excitement of SSD. They probably won’t enjoy Mainstream and Plus as much. SSD dancers enjoy the smooth, flowing action of Dance Mode. Most old-style programs are in stop-and-go Learn Mode for a year or longer.

We find that after dancers experience a smooth, flowing, fun and exciting SSD dance with great timing and styling, they won’t enjoy (or even tolerate) the tedious stop-and-go and constant pressure of a year of Learn Mode. SSD is simply a more fun product.

As leaders in a leisure activity, we must focus on our customers’ enjoyment. Entertain your dancers. Give them a good dance. Include other social activities (birthday celebrations, occasional non-dance events) so that people are attracted by the social aspects in addition to the physical dance aspects. The very best way to prevent your dancers from being siphoned off is to convince them that your group is a lot more fun.

Still, we as leaders are sometimes forced to politely yet firmly keep the wolves at bay. You definitely have the right to ask other groups to grow and harvest their own crop. If you were a farmer, you would plant your own crop, tend to it, grow it and eventually harvest it. You’d keep some of the best seeds for next year’s crop. It’s the same in square dancing.

You would never go to a neighbor’s farm, dig up their nearly ready to harvest crop, take it back to your farm, and then harvest their crop as if you had grown it yourself. Let’s all do the right thing, and encourage others to do the right thing also. Sustainability is important, not just in square dancing, but in everything we do. When we all act sustainably, we can all enjoy the fruits of our own and each other’s labors.

You will know for sure that your program is successful when other leaders drop by to try to poach your dancers. To prepare for the inevitable, we can learn from Contra dance groups. If you go to a local contra dance and try to recruit their dancers into your square dance program, you will be unsuccessful.

First, Contra dancers truly enjoy what they do. They love dancing to live music, with no classes required, with brand-new beginners welcome every night, at a lively and energetic pace, in constant Dance Mode. They get what they want from Contra, and they cannot get what they want from square dancing’s year-long constant Teach mode.
How To Keep Your SSD Program Strong

Secondly, and perhaps more importantly, if you try to poach dancers from a contra group, they will quickly tell you, in no uncertain terms, that such efforts are not welcome.

Still, your primary defense is to provide your customers with a fun, exciting, flowing and friendly dance.

My question is not answered in this FAQ.
Where can I ask additional questions?

The Facebook Group “Social Square Dancing” has over 500 members and is a virtual "Who’s Who" of today’s square dance leadership. You can ask questions and get answers from experienced SSD enthusiasts who sincerely want you and your group to succeed.