

TEN EFFECTIVE TEACHING TIPS FOR SQUARE DANCING

1. Develop a **lesson plan** in advance, but remain flexible. Dancers learn at different rates, however, it is usually best to progress from the simple to the complex and from the known to the unknown. Good teaching requires that goals be established for the short-term as well as the long-term.
2. Square Dancing is a **recreation**. It is the responsibility of the caller to make it enjoyable by using a pleasant tone of voice along with clear, concise commands.
3. To learn promptly one must understand the **definition** of a call. The caller should be prepared to describe dance movements using picture words and meaningful comparisons.
4. Emphasize basic footwork for new dancers should be a **smooth**, gliding walk timed to the music. Dancers should be relaxed, listen carefully and execute the movements promptly. Adding extra movements may add pleasure to the dance, but first dancers should become well acquainted with the basic dance steps.
5. Be sure **inactive dancers** understand they do not change the direction faced unless the movement calls for an automatic counterpart action or the caller directs them to do something else.
6. The **“walk-through”** is a valuable teaching tool since people learn more quickly when they are involved. Later on practical application can be used as a means to check understanding and retention.
7. Encourage dancers to **take hands** after each call. This makes everyone aware of their position and helps with the next call. Taking hands with others also contributes to the success of the square by keeping it smaller.
8. Combine and vary movements so that dancers enjoy performing to the music. **Success** is a great motivator.
9. If dancers are out of place and cannot perform a movement, instruct them to form normal **facing lines**. This is an opportunity to get dancing again since many callers will bring dancers back to facing lines several times before doing another left allemande.
10. **Accentuate the Positive** – it’s important to tell dancers often, “You’re looking great or you’re doing fine.”

This document was prepared by Tom Mohney for the 40th CALLERLAB Convention session titled: “Teaching Outside the Box.” Presenters for the session held on Monday, March 25, 2013, were Bob Elling, Betsy Gotta and Tom Mohney.