

CALLERS CORNER

A forum for the exchange of information
between Callers & Dancers

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FALL 2003

Welcome to all !!

An especially big welcome to all the NEW DANCERS that have joined us this year for the first time! This is an exciting time for everyone, dancers & Callers alike as we greet new friends and meet 'old' friends and get our dancing legs back under us again !

All of your EOSARDA Club Callers are back again for another year.... Hey, no retirements !! So, say a big hello to Paul Adams; Bob Cathcart; John Charman; Berry Chumbley; Brian Crawford; Doreen Donovan; Keith Hubbard; Graham Ingram; Pearl King; Alf Marin; Harold Moore; Winston Mount; Roger Moreau; Louis Seguin; Keith Watters and yours truly.

Also Welcome Caller Wendy VanderMeulen who started her own Basic Club this past year... *Wendy's Elegant Eights!* Congratulations Wendy, & good luck for 2003 !!

Hey, and don't forget those budding 'new' Callers out there that are honing their craft and giving you some new faces & voices to dance to... Ivan Barron & Bob Summers. And..... keep your eyes out.... we also have some 'new-new' Callers that you may well see behind the mike this year !!

As I have said previously, if you have any questions that you'd like to ask any of the Callers, then talk to your own Club Caller first. However, if you haven't had the time or opportunity, then you can send them directly to me, either by email at: askthecaller@squaresandrounds.com or by "snail mail" to the Square Times Editor, who'll pass it along.

All questions will be answered and those that would be of interest to all will be published in this column, with anonymity ensured unless you request otherwise.

Don't be shy & have a great dance season !!

Geoff

ASK THE CALLER

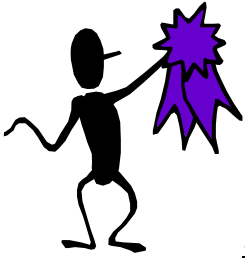


I received a question last April that has not yet been answered in this column, so, as this is the first issue of Square Time for this season, the answer will serve nicely as "good-to-know" information for all our newest dancers and a 'timely reminder' to all our experienced folks!!

Question :- "There must surely be 'do's and don'ts" pertaining to square-dancing etiquette. Could you comment on these?"

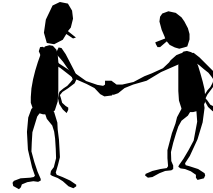
There are quite a number of "do's & don'ts" out there and while some clubs have their 'own' list, many are 'common' throughout the square dance community. Rather than write them myself, I've scoured the 'many' sources and assembled them below. This is not a conclusive list nor set of 'hard & fast rules' but certainly a list of 'good things' to keep in mind which should help you to enjoy your dancing even more. Please feel free to send along any that you think I may have missed.

Keep in mind that Square Dancing is all about having FUN !! The fun of well executed calls; the fun of a good laugh if your square does break down; the fun of a social activity in a friendly atmosphere of mutual respect and cooperation. To keep square dancing FUN, we must all consider some 'guidelines'..... some "do's and don'ts". After all, square dancing is a group activity and these courtesies are practised by square dancers the world over !



SQUARE DANCE ETIQUETTE

1. **BE ON TIME** . In square dancing, one late (or leaving early) couple or person may mean that three other couples or seven people must sit out. In planning an evening's program, the caller leans heavily on the first and last tips to pace his/her dance. By leaving the dance before it's over, you may be telling the other dancers and caller that you did not have a good time. The "wind-down" tip is just as important as the first or middle tips. Plan to spend the complete evening when you come.
2. **DO FORM SQUARES QUICKLY** - As soon as the music starts, get on the floor and start forming squares. In most clubs, for each new tip dancers form new sets by squaring up randomly. So first of all, a universal rule of square dancing is to join the **VERY FIRST SQUARE** you come to. It's considered rude, unfriendly and discourteous to pass by a forming square to look for "greener pastures". Which also means that you can't pick your corner, opposite, etc. You **CAN** pick your partner by asking someone to dance before you approach the square. If your square is not full, raise your hand with as many fingers extended as couples are needed. *Note though: If two or three couples are squared up and do not have a hand up, it indicates that they are waiting for someone who has promised to dance with them. Do not try to square up with them without asking.* It is also considered bad manners to walk through the middle of one square to get to another. **STAY PUT!** - Once in a square, under no circumstances abandon it.. (Exception is a medical emergency).



3. **BE A FRIENDLY DANCER** - "Friendship is square dancing's greatest reward.". Do not arrange squares more than once in an evening. In fact, it is best not arrange a square at all. Make it a point to dance with as many different dancers as possible each evening. It has been said that "Square dancing is friendship set to music so, take the opportunity to get acquainted with others. Friendliness is part of good manners. Square dancing promotes friendliness since it offers endless opportunities for more friendships to develop. If you are not continually making new friends you are not getting the most from square dancing. Friendliness comes from within yourself and can best be described as your interest in others. So, don't start re-arranging the square to fit in your friends or favourites. Take a chance and dance with new people ... you never know who you'll meet across the square. And somewhere else it reads :"*Thou shalt strive to dance in different squares, that those with two left hands or less experience shalt benefit from thy talent and thy help.*".. think about it !!
4. **BE A COURTEOUS DANCER** - Once the square is formed and before the calling starts, take a look at the other seven people. Acknowledge friends if you haven't seen them prior to this particular square: you can nod, smile, wave, or give them a hug (when in a square, it's called a "yellow rock"). And... if you see someone that you don't know, always introduce yourself and your partner!! Be sure to thank everyone for dancing with you after the tip. Refrain from using those extra twirls and kicks that interfere with others in your square, especially when dancing with new dancers.

5. **BE A GOOD LISTENER** - Once a tip is underway, refrain from talking. Sometimes it is difficult to hear and your talking may very well prevent someone else from hearing a call.. Listen to the caller. Do not talk when the caller is talking or calling. Not only is it rude, but all dancers may need the information offered. Talking during the course of square dancing is distracting to you and especially others. It makes it difficult for others in the square to "catch" the instructions and hear the music. Remember 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. Pointing or a hand motion is always the better way to direct someone that is going in the wrong direction! Listen quietly during all instructions from the caller. If you know the call being explained, resist the temptation to explain it to others in your square. Let your fellow dancer hear all the professional instruction that they have come to hear. It is also extremely rude to talk while announcements are being made. Try to quiet anyone speaking to you. Give the speaker the same consideration you would want if you were speaking!

6. **BE A CONSIDERATE DANCER** - *an 'ANGEL' not a devil !!* - There is no acceptable excuse for rough handling of fellow dancers...period! No one steps into a square to make a fool of themselves, so figure that mistakes really are *just* that – mistakes – and not intentional attempts to break down a square. You experienced dancers out there: remember your first dance and how scared you were that someone would yell at you? Allow others the space to make the same kind of goofs you did. Not every square has to be step-for-step perfect to be fun. Grabbing people to put them in the correct position is unacceptable and it's an unusual dancer who likes to be pushed around. If a dancer appears not to know where he or she should be going then point to the correct position or whisper in their ear (**NO yelling, pushing, pulling, grabbing!**). And if they don't get there, if the square breaks down, have a laugh about it. Remember that the next mistake may be your

own, so do NOT be critical of others. This can ruin everyone's fun and WE ALL make mistakes... right ? If more help is required.... talk to your Caller !!

7. **BE THANKFUL** - When you applaud at the end of a tip, you are thanking the Caller and the other dancers in your square as well as applauding yourself also for a good job well done.. However, in addition to the "applause", you should personally speak to and thank the Caller before leaving the dance. If you are a visitor you should also make a point of speaking with a club officer (executive run clubs).
8. **BE CONSIDERATE OF YOURSELF** - For some, square dancing can be a strenuous exercise. If you feel you are unable to dance, sit out. Sometimes it's best to remove yourself from the dance area and return after the tip has started. Often you can learn a great deal just by watching and listening. Be considerate. If another dancer is watching and listening, don't insist upon talking.



9. **BE CONSIDERATE OF OTHERS #1** - Personal cleanliness is important in square dancing. Always shower or bathe before attending. Use your deodorant, cologne or perfume and, don't forget to use something to sweeten your breath (mouth wash, chewing gum, etc.) Avoid eating garlic or other offenders before attending a dance.
10. **BE CONSIDERATE OF OTHERS #2** - Don't come dancing if you have been drinking or under the influence of drugs, be they legal or not. Square Dancing requires your best mental and physical alertness. Your coordination must be at its very best. Should you be suspected of being "under the influence" you will probably be asked to leave.

11. **BE CONSIDERATE OF OTHERS #3** -

Male dancers please wear long sleeves. No one will deny they are warm; however, most will admit they don't enjoy grabbing a sweaty arm. Ladies should avoid wearing excessive jewellery.... It can hurt !! Also, ALL should be mindful that it is 'hand contact' ... ie: **NO SQUEEZING** but firm palm to palm contact, with no thumbs or fingers held or intertwined!

12. **BE CONSIDERATE OF OTHERS #4** -

Wear your club badge so that your name and your club will be well known to all!

13. **BE CONSIDERATE OF OTHERS #5** -

Don't dance over your own level of dance, unless invited. If you attempt to dance over your head without being invited you will only embarrass yourself and may upset the remainder of the square. If you haven't completed a Mainstream lesson then don't expect to dance with those who have unless you are explicitly invited. If you've not learned to dance the 'announced' level, then sit out that tip.

14. **ENJOY YOURSELF--HAVE FUN:** Come to the dance expecting to have a good time and you'll have it !!



WHAT THE CALLER SEES !!



Square Gridlock ?

The needle goes down, the Caller says "Square Up" and the dancers start forming squares. But wait a minute, those same 4 couples danced together in the last tip didn't they? And the one before that, & the one before that... in fact, they've been dancing together with each other all night long !!

How often have you seen that happen? What's going on here... and why?

Referred to as 'square gridlock', it's also known as 'stacked squares', 're-arranged squares' or 'pre-set squares'. Call it what you will, but you also need to know that it is seriously 'frowned upon' by the other dancers in the hall - regardless of the reason ! If the Caller sees 'gridlock' happening, we'll deliberately break it up by some means or other (such as heads pass thru & promenade to a different square). But, the more squares on the floor, the less likely the Caller will notice it. However, be assured that the other dancers WILL !

Sure I understand the desire and the right to dance with anyone you wish, and that we all like to have success in our squares but that's NOT what it's all about now really is it? (also see #3 above). Even in workshops where your 'focus' is learning something new, don't lose focus on what square dancing is all about... Fun & Friendship!! I'm suggesting that for the good of the activity, yourselves & your club that you limit pre-set squares to 1 or 2 tips at the most.

How is *square gridlock* seen by the other dancers ? Not kindly at all ! Remarks such as: "*not very friendly people are they?*"; "*what a cliquish group?*"; "*what's the rest of their club like... the same?*" " *I guess we're not with the in-crowd?*"; "*I wouldn't want to dance with them*" **and more**. Well folks, this certainly does not 'add' to anyone's enjoyment of this great activity does it? So, **HOW DO YOU WANT YOURSELF & YOUR CLUB TO BE SEEN BY OTHER DANCERS? THINK ABOUT IT !!**