

CRITICISMS SOMETIMES MADE OF ADVANCED AND CHALLENGE DANCING

We know that those not involved in square dancing often criticize the activity simply because they are not informed about it. Somewhere along the line they have received misinformation. The same is true with criticism of Advanced and Challenge dancing - most of the criticism is caused by a lack of knowledge. The best reply is to educate the person with accurate information. Here are the most common criticisms of Advanced and Challenge and the appropriate reply.

Criticism: Advanced and Challenge dancers have to learn hundreds of calls. I can't do that.

Reply: The Advanced Basic List, as recognized by Callerlab, contains about 70 calls. This is about the same as the Mainstream Basics List taught in Beginners' Class. You found you could learn the Mainstream Basics by your attendance once a week in Beginners' Class, and likewise you could easily learn the Advanced Basics in a weekly Advanced class.

Criticism: Advanced and Challenge dancers have to dance four nights a week to keep up.

Reply: Once a week is all that is necessary. The vast majority of Advanced and Basic Challenge (C-1) dancers only dance this level once a week. Some people go more often, just as some people go to more than one Mainstream dance during a week, but this is their decision and it is not required to keep up. In fact, many people dancing Extended Challenge (C-2) only choose to go once a week, and they can keep up also.

Criticism: I've watched Advanced and Challenge dancers. They don't have any fun because they are not smiling.

Reply: How many round dancers do you see smile? You rarely see them smile either, but would you claim they are not having fun? Of course not. They are simply concentrating on what they are doing. We know they are enjoying themselves or they would not be participating in their activity. Same thing for Advanced and Challenge dancers.

Criticism: Advanced and Challenge dances are speeded up. The caller calls faster and it is no longer dancing.

Reply: Advanced and Challenge dance programs are called at the same speed as any other program. However, if someone is not experienced in these programs, the dance will seem fast. Any dance which is at a higher program than one is accustomed to will seem fast, because more reaction time is needed to respond to the calls. This is true for the beginner coming into Mainstream dances, for Plus dancers coming into Advanced, or for Advanced dancers coming into Challenge. For those who know the material, the tempo is just right; for those who are unsure or who do not use proper positioning, the tempo may seem fast. The important thing to remember is that no matter what program you are talking about, until a person becomes comfortable with that program it will seem fast.

It should be pointed out that sometimes dancers listening to a caller who is calling Advanced will think the caller is calling fast when he is really not. This is because of directional calling for many of the figures; the caller first uses the name of the call, then adds directional words to help the dancers. These added words create a feeling of speed to the listener who is not familiar with Advanced.

Criticism: What good is it to learn these calls - I'll have no place to dance them?

Reply: You can dance them to your local caller who taught you, as well as dancing at other clubs in the area. Advanced has become so popular that most areas of the country have several clubs available. Groups which have no caller and are dancing to tapes will often bring in several callers a year. In addition, most festivals and conventions have Advanced dancing on the program, and many have Challenge. There are numerous Advanced and Challenge weekends throughout the country, and several full dance vacations at these levels are held at square dance resorts and campgrounds.