

TIPS FOR ADVANCED DANCERS by Ed Foote

Many of the accepted practices of Advanced dancing are not stated by the definitions of the calls. The suggestions listed below are accepted by most Advanced dancers.

GENERAL RULES

1. If you don't know the definition, you don't know the call. You should be able to say the definition to yourself in words for all the Advanced calls. If you ever get lost doing a call, being able to say the definition will often keep you dancing.
2. Understand the definitions of calls. Many people think they know an Advanced call when in reality they have merely memorized one position. You should be aware of the fact that all the Advanced calls can be done from various positions, and make an effort to know these positions. Don't anticipate that if a call is used, it will always be called the same way. Be prepared to do it by definition.
3. You are expected to be able to do Mainstream and Plus calls from a variety of positions. This requirement is part of Advanced dancing, and various-position use of these calls should be expected at every Advanced dance. Mainstream and Plus are the foundation programs of our activity - if you try to build Advanced on a weak foundation, everything will collapse. If you have difficulty with Mainstream and Plus from various positions, ask your caller to provide practice in this regard or get tapes specifically designed to give this type of practice.
4. Hands must be taken immediately after every call - within 1/2 second after the call ends. In addition, elbows must be bent to keep the set tight. This is especially important for calls which involve stars, such as Chain Reaction, Fractional Tops and Motivate. Even though Advanced dancers have heard the rule of taking hands, they often forget in the excitement of doing the calls, and this forgetfulness results in needless breakdowns. Don't forget! Hint: If you have one hand joined, you are an end; if you have two hands joined, you are a center.
5. Always achieve a position - don't be a floater. Some Advanced dancers drift around the set, holding back from the proper ending position or being 1/8 turn off. After a series of calls, one or two floaters can cause a set to break down. Be decisive, achieve a position. Don't expect to be pulled into place. If you get lost and someone points to the spot where you belong, move fast! If you are constantly lost, go back and learn the definitions.
6. Keep your eyes active, be aware of what is happening in the set. Watch the formations as they change; most dancers try to do so in their minds without also concentrating on the floor action. This results in tunnel vision; ie. dancers staring straight ahead and not seeing what is going on around them. Develop panoramic vision. Keep your eyes moving and do not stare at the floor. Keep turning your head so you can see the big picture. Where possible, make eye contact with dancers with whom you are about to work.
7. Maintain mental discipline. Always keep your mind working while dancing; keep listening to the caller, visualize what the entire set is doing - not just what you are doing.
8. Keep yourself under control. If you do not know a call or cannot do it from a certain position, don't take off in a random direction. Instead, listen for the caller talking you thru the call, and look for help from others in the set. Dancers who panic when they hear something and can not think immediately what to do are out of control.

Point-to Point Diamonds. Remember that a diamond is not a star, only two dancers have hand holds and these are the centers. You must keep thinking about the center location on all calls which occur in the diamond. Some dancers establish the diamond correctly, but then forget who has hands (the centers) during subsequent calls. This causes them to break down on a final Cut or Flip the Diamond.

A-1 CALLS

Cycle and Wheel. Always look at the facing direction of the ends, because this tells you ahead of time how you will finish. Why? Because the call is related to Wheel & Deal, as follows:

On a Wheel & Deal, if the ends are facing opposite directions, the ending position is always facing couples. Same thing is true on Cycle & Wheel.

On a Wheel & Deal, if the ends are facing the same direction, the right-side couple goes first - ie. finishes in front of the left-side couple. Same thing is true on Cycle & Wheel. How do you know who the right-side couple is on Cycle & Wheel, if the ends are facing the same direction? Pretend everyone in the line is facing that direction and it is readily apparent.

Explode the Line. Centers must take a giant step forward, not a baby step. Ends: rock back 1/2 step before facing in - this avoids collision with the centers and enables the pull by to be done smoothly.

Fractional Tops. The star must form in the center every time. Each of the center four dancers must have a hand in the star, or the set is close to a breakdown.

Mix. The ends must do a perfect sideways slide into the center for the final Trade. They must not turn their bodies at all until they touch an arm. If they start to turn their bodies before touching an arm, they are likely to finish facing the wrong direction on completion of the Trade. This is especially so when the original ends are facing the same direction.

Pair Off. The rule is: Turn your back on the center of the set. Don't try to relate this call to your partner - always relate to the center of the set.

Pass In/Out vs. Quarter In/Out. The rule is: All ins and outs always relate to the center of the set unless you hear the word "Quarter"; if you hear "Quarter", the in or out relates to your partner or designated group of four (such as a diamond).

Wheel Thru. The right-side dancers must Quarter Right in place - they must never step forward; if they do, they body-block the left-side dancers out of position. The only exception to this rule is from a static square - here the right-side dancers must step forward. Because many callers call Wheel Thru only from a static square, dancers think the exception is really the rule, and this causes problems when Wheel Thru is called from other formations. The same rule applies to the left-side dancers for Left Wheel Thru.

In Roll Circulate/Out Roll Circulate. Two rules to follow: (1) the designated dancers (ends facing in or out) should raise a hand to indicate they have been designated. The others will see this upraised hand, and this will help them roll quickly toward that position. (2) If you are in the center of the wave, don't assume the designated dancer will remember to raise a hand; turn your head sideways in both directions before you move to see which direction you should go. This action keeps you under control.

Motivate. (1) Be sure all 4 hands touch in the center star. (2) The two dancers coming to the star from the ends of the wave must be sure to form the star - they are the controlling dancers. (3) Be sure that all 4 hands hold the star for the full half-turn.

Recycle (facing couples). The person who is adjacent to you at the start will also be adjacent when the call is completed.

Single Wheel. Two things to remember: (1) This call tends to spread out the set. Be extra conscious of taking hands after doing this call. (2) If Single Wheel is done from two dancers facing opposite directions, be sure to drop hands with that dancer at completion and take hands with your new partner. If hand contact is maintained with the dancer in front, you are likely to break down on several calls which could be called next.

Slip/Slide/Swing/Slither. Rules for smooth dancing: (1) If Slide follows Slip, or if Slither follows Swing: stop your turning motion on the first call just short of completion so you can blend into the next call. These combinations dance roughly only if everyone does each individual call and comes to a complete stop before doing the next call. On all calls in square dancing we blend from one call to the next for smoothness. Do it smoothly here - think **blend**.

(2) The reason dancers tend to stop after each individual call, which causes roughness, is because they are saying each call out loud. Some dancers learn these calls by saying them out loud, but eventually this verbalizing of the calls should be dropped for reason of smoothness.

Spin the Windmill. The Circulators must be precise - know ahead of time where your two Circulates will put you. Don't assume you will always end in a line with the centers - you may not. Circulators who just take off and assume they will take hands with the centers somewhere on the other side of the set are out of control.

Hint to remember: If the outsides go **in**, they finish facing in; if the outsides go **out**, they finish facing out.

Split Counter Rotate. For smooth dancing, do not drag the other person along. Merely maintain fingertip contact.

Swing and Mix. The initial Swing 1/2 must be completed - this will almost force the new centers to do their Cross Run correctly. This call breaks down when the Swing 1/2 is stopped short - now the new centers tend to float on the Cross Run and will often finish facing the wrong direction.

Trade Circulate (from waves). Always point to the person with whom you are working, both as a Trader or as a Circulator. Establish eye contact. Even though you may feel confident enough in the call to not need eye contact, the other person may need your help, thereby averting a possible breakdown of the set.

Always pass right shoulders on this call, regardless of whether the call starts from a right-hand or left-hand wave. This requirement is vital if Trade Circulate 1-1/2 is called.

Trail Off/Peel and Trail. These calls will always end in some kind of line of four. This line will always be established 1/2 way between the original leader/trailer formation. Always look for this ending line of four in doing these calls.