

Teaching Modern Western Square Dancing Using the Sicilian Circle (By Daryl Clendenin)

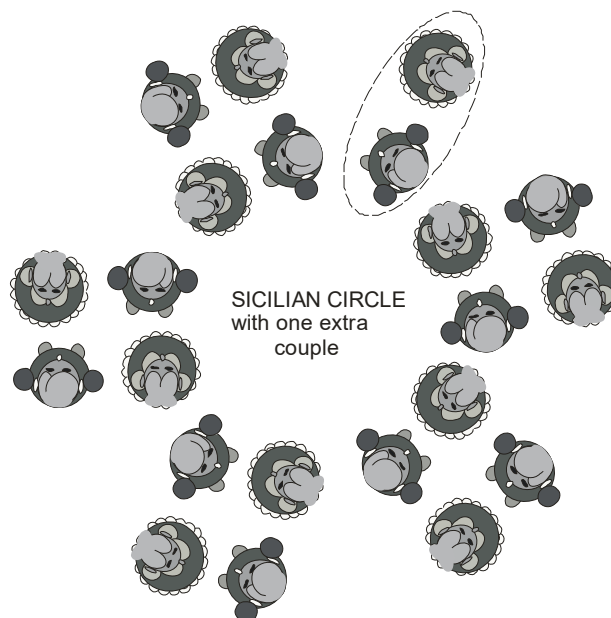
One of the most important things we do as callers is teach new dancers. The following is intended to give the new caller an easy to follow plan for teaching new dancers.

Through my years of calling and more importantly teaching, the fastest, easiest teaching method I have found uses what we call the "Sicilian Circle." For groups of six couples or more the Sicilian circle is a wonderful way to introduce many of the movements. By using this method I have found the time I need to teach a full set of lessons is cut by about a third. Teaching most of the moves can be done in the Sicilian Circle (SC) while actual dancing will be done in Squares.

THE SICILIAN CIRCLE (A GREAT TEACHING TOOL) Recommended for 6 or more couples.

The Sicilian Circle is a circle of facing couples half clock-wise and the other half counter clock-wise. It is a great way to teach any moves that require only two couples.

Here is the advantage of the Sicilian Circle. The graphic below is showing eleven couples. in squares, three of the couples would be sitting out waiting for a fourth. But, with the Sicilian Circle all but one of the couples is on the floor and active. As soon as the caller calls PASS THRU, ON TO THE NEXT, the couple not facing another couple will be active and a new couple is idle. All three couples get to dance and drill that's being taught without waiting for a twelfth couple to make the third square.



The Sicilian Circle (SC) Works Best Because:

- 1. No one sits out. All couples are on the floor during the teaching. Three couples no longer have to wait for a fourth couple in order to join the dance.**
- 2. The couples are continually mixing which eliminates the possibility of weaker couples being together throughout a whole tip.**
- 3. Two couples working together is less confusing than four couples.**
- 4. About 80% of the moves involve only two couples and can be drilled more effectively in the SC.**
- 5. By doing demonstrations in the center of the circle, everyone can see it better.**
- 6. It's not a matter of Sides (or Heads) watching while the others are dancing. The two couple dancing has everyone moving at the same time.**
- 7. I recommend that anything that can be taught in the SC, be done in it and then added to the material that you call in squares.**
- 8. It's also a great way for a newer caller to learn to control the movement of the dancers and eventually to sight resolve with two couples.**
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- 13. By doing demonstrations in the center of the circle, everyone can see it better.**
- 14. It's not a matter of Sides (or Heads) watching while the others are dancing. The two couple dancing has everyone moving at the same time.**
- 15. It's also a great way for a newer caller to learn to control the movement of the dancers and resolve with two couples.**
- 16. I recommend that anything that can be taught in the SC, be done in it and then added to the material you call in squares.**

BASIC MOVES THAT CAN EASILY BE TAUGHT IN THE SICILIAN CIRCLE

Any move that only requires two couples to perform can be taught in the Sicilian Circle.

BASICS:

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| 1. Courtesy Turn | 17. Runs, (boys, girls, ends, centers) |
| 2. Two Ladies Chain | 18. Trades (boys, girls, ends, centers) |
| 3. Right & Left Thru | 19. Wheel & Deal |
| 4. Square Thru 1 Through 5 | 20. Swing Thru / Left Swing Thru |
| 5. Right Hand and Left Hand Stars | 21. Sweep $\frac{1}{4}$ |
| 6. U Turn Back | 22. Touch $\frac{1}{4}$ |
| 7. Pass Thru | 23. Circulates (boys, girls, ends, centers) |
| 8. Star Thru | 24. Dive Thru |
| 9. Veer Left and Right | 25. Zoom |
| 10. Move On To The Next | 26. Split Two Around One |
| 11. California Twirl | 27. Rollaway, Half Shashay |
| 12. Box The Gnat | 28. Ladies In Men Sashay |
| 13. Ocean Wave | 29. Bend The Line |
| 14. Pass The Ocean | 30. Wheel Around |
| 16. Allemande Thar Family | 31. Flutter Wheel & Rev. |

First moves to be taught in the Large Circle:

Circle Left & Right

Allemande left

Right & Left Grand

Promenade

Rollaway

Converting from the Large Circle to the Sicilian Circle:

From the large circle facing in, you can convert to the SC by pointing to the two couples nearest you and directing them to "hold on to your partner and turn to face the couple alongside of you." Then pointing to the couples on either side of them repeat etc. till all the couples are facing another couple. You might have an uneven number of couples. Not a problem, you can either add an angel couple (or have an angel couple step out) or even dance with an unequal number of couples. As you have the dancers move on to the next couple, you will have a new inactive couple. Each inactive will only have to stand idle for a few seconds.

First Moves to be taught in the (SC):

Wheel Around: Helps in quickly setting up the Sicilian Circles.

Pass Thru, On To Next : Quick change of working couples.

Circle Four Full & Halfway: One changes facing direction 180 degrees and the other zeroes.

Square Thru 3 & 5: Both have dancers moving on to the next after the last hand. This helps discourage the tendency to turn or courtesy turn.

Dosado: Because it's Square Dancing

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9. Veer Left and Right
10. Move On To The Next
11. California Twirl
12. Box The Gnat
13. Ocean Wave
14. Pass The Ocean
16. Allemande Thar Family
17. Runs, (boys, girls, ends, centers and cross-runs).
18. Trades (boys, girls, ends, centers and couples).
19. Wheel & Deal
20. Swing Thru / Left Swing Thru
21. Sweep 1/4
22. Touch 1/4
23. Circulates (boys, girls, ends, centers).
24. Dive Thru
25. Zoom
26. Split Two Around One
27. Rollaway, Half Sashay
28. Ladies In Men Sashay
29. Bend The Line
30. Wheel Around
31. Flutter Wheel & Rev.

Mainstream In the Sicilian Circle:

1. Turn Thru
2. Walk & Dodge
3. Slide Thru
4. Folds / Cross-Folds
5. Dixie Style To A Wave
6. Tag The Line
(In, Out, Right, Left) Half Tag
7. Scoot Back
8. Single Hinge / Coupes Hinge
9. Recycle
10. Centers In
11. Castoff $\frac{3}{4}$
12. Pass To The Center
13. Spin The Top

PASS THRU:

Probably the easiest move that we have to teach. The new dancers will almost do it automatically. It is important though that you remind them to pass right shoulders as they do their PASS THRU.

Drill:

PASS THRU, WHEEL AROUND, PASS THRU, WHEEL AROUND, PASS THRU, WHEEL AROUND,.....

MOVE ON TO THE NEXT:

This is pretty much self-explanatory and means simply that you proceed forward to the next nearest couple.

PASS THRU, MOVE ON TO THE NEXT, PASS THRU, MOVE ON TO THE NEXT, DOSADO ALL THE WAY AROUND. LOOK AT THEM. PASS THRU MOVE ON TO THE NEXT, PASS THRU, WHEEL AROUND, PASS THRU, MOVE ON TO THE NEXT, DOSADO ALL THE WAY AROUND, PASS THRU, WHEEL AROUND Repeat until all are following the commands.

CIRCLE FOUR (FULL)

Join hands in a four dancer circle and **CIRCLE TO THE LEFT** till you are back where you started.

PASS THRU MOVE ON TO THE NEXT, CIRCLE UP FOUR A FULL TURN AROUND, FACE THAT TWO AND PASS THRU, MOVE ON TO THE NEXT. Repeat, repeat, repeat.

CIRCLE FOUR (HALF)

This is a good place to introduce their first fraction. Explain to them that they will join hands in a small circle, **CIRCLE TO THE LEFT** till they are facing the wall that's behind them.

(For the caller: This is another useful equivalent for a RIGHT & LEFT THRU.)

PASS THRU, MOVE ON TO THE NEXT. PASS THRU & WHEEL AROUND, DOSADO ALL THE WAY AROUND, LOOK RIGHT AT THEM. CIRCLE UP FOUR HALFWAY AROUND. PASS THRU, MOVE ON TO THE NEXT, PASS THRU & WHEEL AROUND, DOSADO ALL THE WAY AROUND, LOOK RIGHT AT THEM. CIRCLE UP FOUR HALFWAY AROUND. PASS THRU, MOVE ON TO THE NEXT,..... repeat, repeat ..

Square Thru 3 & 5

This is a really great place to teach the Square Thru 3&5. It works so well in the SC (Sicilian circle) because 3 & 5 will leave them ready to Move On To The Next couple naturally. By teaching the Square Thrus before any Courtesy Turns it helps eliminate some (unfortunately not all) of the tendency to do the superfluous turning.

Square Thru is better demonstrated before you expect the new dancers to do it. In the center of the SC (with a trusted angel couple) slowly walk through the move explaining as you go. Informing the new dancers that it is a good idea to be reaching for the next hand before they release the previous one. This gives them the idea and direction that they need to turn. It also teaches them to take fewer steps and less space for execution. You will need to put great emphasis on the fact that they are supposed to let go and finish back to back with the last person in the Square Thru.

“SQUARE THRU THREE. Count One, Two, Three, pull by and stand back to back with number three”

“SQUARE THRU FIVE. Count One, Two, Three, Four Five, pull by and stand back to back with number five.”

Now, while in the SC walk them slowly through Square Thru 3 & 5. After each one have them Move On To The Next. This helps instill in them the idea that they will be moving forward with no turn after the last hand of the Square Thru. You can also move the couples on to other couples by having them Pass Thru On To The Next. This keeps them mixing around the floor. That way any slower couples don't remain grouped.

(For the Caller: Square Thru five equals a Pass Thru. Circle Four Halfway and Square Thru Three also equals a Pass Thru).

PASS THRU, MOVE ON TO THE NEXT TWO, CIRCLE UP FOUR (HALFWAY AROUND), FACE THAT TWO AND SQUARE THRU THREE QUARTERS, THREE HANDS, PULL BY AND MOVE ON TO THE NEXT. SQUARE THRU FIVE HANDS, MOVE ON TO THE NEXT, PASS THRU, WHEEL AROUND, SQUARE THRU THREE, MOVE ON TO THE NEXT... (Repeat, repeat, repeat).

Converting from SC to Squares

PASS THRU, MOVE ON TO THE NEXT, CIRCLE UP FOUR, PICK UP FOUR AND CIRCLE UP EIGHT. PICK A SPOT AND CALL IT HOME.

(Use or excuse angels to make even squares including all beginners.)