

The following is

An Overview of Mental Image Choreography

Mental Image choreography refers to a method of choreographic management. The degree of spontaneity that it affords you as a caller in creating sequences as you go along, is somewhere between modular calling and sight calling. Unlike sight calling, however, you do not have to memorize who started with whom, nor do you have to locate and manipulate these moving targets, in a dancing square, to resolve.

Unlike modules, you do not have to memorize groupings of calls, and be restricted to calling sequences committed to memory. Here is an overview of one mental image technique. First, let's dispel the myth that you must follow eight dancers in your mind and then sight call them back to partners and corners (or even the four dancers a sight caller follows). Although being able to do this would accomplish what we want, it would be terribly difficult, if not impossible for most of us.

Just like a sight caller or a module caller, you must know what formation the square is in at all times, e.g. do we have lines, waves, etc. and you must know the arrangement of the formation, i.e. are couples normal, half sashayed, or same sex, etc.

In addition, you must follow the location of one ***and only one*** key dancer through the changing formations. The number one man is frequently chosen as the key dancer, but any of the eight dancers will do. Following the position of this key dancer does not usually add an additional burden, but actually makes following the formation/arrangement easier.

Unfortunately, as you must realize, just following an active dancer is not enough to allow you to resolve, but here's where the mental image technique really begins. As long as you do not exchange partners or flip flop the square, when you move the active dancer to where (s)he would be in a zero box (i.e. have heads Square Thru [assuming the active dancer is a head]), then all seven of the other dancers will also be ready to do an Allemande Left.

The key term above is "do not exchange partners." About 2/3s of the calls we commonly use do not exchange partners. (These are called O-type calls or Os. Ones that do are called X-type calls or Xs.) The clue is to know which ones do, and each time you use one, call another one (any other one) to cancel its effect. In addition, you must be aware that when calling Xs, you must call one and then cancel it in the same location in the square, or you must cancel it in a different location in the square plus be aware of how that moves the spot to which you must dance the active dancer before you can call an Allemande Left.

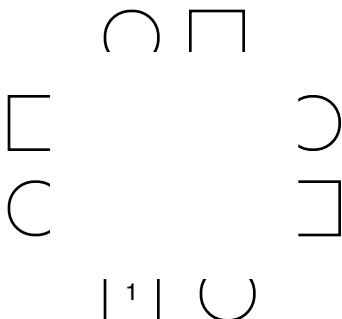
This may sound complicated, but when learning it step by step (as taught in Don Beck's book, Out of Sight), it is quite logical, and when you have learned many steps, you can generalize them so that there are really very few rules to remember.

As well as being academically very interesting, being able to use Mental Image is a powerful tool in a caller's arsenal. Even a sight caller will appreciate being able to ad-lib his singing call figures when memorized corners change every sequence. Think of what you can do in a guest spot when everyone comes in club costume and they all look alike for a tip or two, until you learn faces. There are many other ways that mental image calling can help also; use technical zeros with confidence; know instantly if a square is in sequence or out; ad-lib six couple choreography; etc. Learning mental image calling is well worth the time it takes.

The Basics of Mental Image Choreography

There are a few things that you must keep track of in order to create choreography on the fly, using mental imagery. The following summary will remind you of the things you must know how to do to use an abbreviated mental image system. It is probably enough to use in the earlier stages of square dance classes or for ad-lib choreography in singing calls. It is enough to show you the power of having this skill in your grasp. For a complete course in mental image choreography, one that shows much more variety and one that teaches the method step by step, refer to the book *Out of Sight* by Don Beck.

Think of the symbols in the diagrams below as representing the arms of the dancers. The squared set below is to familiarize you with the symbols.



To call ad-lib choreography and be able to subsequently resolve the square without being dependent on actual dancers, you must:

Keep track of the formation of the square in your head.

Keep track of the location of one person, the “active man” within that formation.

Know which calls are X type calls and which ones are O type calls. A partial list of Xs and Os follows.

Call as many O type calls as you want, without regard to how many, when, or where.

You must keep track of how many Xs are called and what location they are called in, i.e the in Middle, on the Left or on the Right. The active man can be dancing in one of three locations, the Middle (two couples dancing in the middle of the square and the other couples waiting on the outside), on the Left (two couples, including the active man, dancing on the left and two others dancing on the right), or on the Right (two couples, including the active man, dancing on the right and two others on the left). An X is considered as being done in the location where the active man is when the call is called.

To resolve the square when all Xs are cancelled with another X that was called in the same location as the first one, dance the active man to the spot shown below. Call Allemande Left.



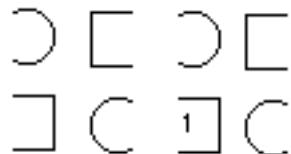
To resolve the square when an X is called on one side of the square and cancelled with an X on the other side of the square, dance the active man to the spot shown below and then call Allemande Left.



To resolve the square when an X is called in the middle location and then cancelled with an X on the left, dance the active man to the spot shown below.



To resolve the square when an X is called in the middle and then cancelled with an X on the right, dance the active man to the spot shown below.



List of Xs, Os, and Cross the Center Type Calls

O-Type Calls

BASIC

Forward & Back
 Dosado
 Pass Thru
 Half Sashay Family
 (Rollaway) Half Sashay
 U turn back (when called to everyone)
 Courtesy Turn
 Chain Down the Line (from 2-faced line)
 Right and Left Thru
 (Left) Square Thru (1-5 hands)
 California Twirl
 Dive Thru
 Wheel Around
 Box the Gnat
 Ocean Wave balance
 Pass the Ocean
 Extend (1/4 tag only)
 Partner Trade
 Star Thru
 Veer Left/Right
 Wheel & Deal (From two-faced lines)
 Zoom

MAINSTREAM

Turn Thru
 Eight Chain Thru
 Pass to the Center
 Walk & Dodge
 Slide Thru (opposite sex dancers)
 Scoot Back
 Tag the Line - Left/Right (from 2-faced line)

PLUS

Partner Tag (from same facing partners)
 Linear Cycle (From waves only)
 Explode the wave
 Explode & (Anything)(depends on "anything" call)
 Relay the Deucey
 Peel the Top
 Single Circle to a Wave
 Trade the Wave
 Crossfire
 Triple Scoot

A1

Cross Trail Thru
 Double Star Thru
 Lockit
 Mix
 Pass In
 Pass Out
 Pass the Sea
 Quarter In (from same facing couples)
 Quarter Out (from same facing couples)
 Quarter Thru
 Right (Left) Roll to a Wave

A2

Scoot and Weave
 Single Wheel
 Slide
 Slither
 Swing
 Switch the Wave

List of Xs, Os, and Cross the Center Type Calls

X-Type Calls

(Same facing direction)

BASIC

Two Ladies Chain
(Left) Swing thru
(Cross) Run
(Men, Women, Centers, Ends)
Trade
(Reverse) Flutterwheel
Split Circulate

MAINSTREAM

(Cross) Fold
Recycle

PLUS

Chase Right

A1

Scoot and Dodge
Swap Around/Reverse Swap Around
Turn and Deal (from 2-faced line)

A2

Recycle (from facing couples)
Slip

X-Type Calls

(Different facing direction)

BASIC

Chain Down the Line (from LH ocean wave line)
Lead Right
Bend the Line (from 2-faced line)
Sweep a Quarter
Touch 1/4

MAINSTREAM

Spin the Top
Cast Off 3/4
Slide Thru (same sex dancers)
Dixie Style to an Ocean Wave
Half Tag (from 2-faced line)
Fan the Top (from wave)
Couples Hinge
Single Hinge

PLUS

Follow Your Neighbor
A1
Square Chain Thru
(Left) Wheel Thru
A2
Split/Box Counter Rotate
Split/Box Transfer

Cross the Center Type Calls

BASIC

(Pass Thru) Trade By Ferris Wheel
Dive Thru (Pass Thru)
All 8 Circulate
Couples Circulate
Ferris Wheel (Square Thru 3/4)

MAINSTREAM

Eight Chain Two
Pass to the Center (Pass Thru)

PLUS

A1
Cross Over Circulate
A2
Trade Circulate (from waves or 2-faced lines)