

# **EFFECTIVE TEACHING INTEREST SESSION**

(Compiled by Dottie Welch for CALLERLAB Workshop in Nashville, Tennessee, 2012)

## **TEACHING TECHNIQUES -- PREPARATION:**

### **1. CHOOSE THE CALL AFTER CONSIDERING TEACHING ORDER ISSUES:**

- Are the dancers confident with all the parts?
- Can an earlier taught call be used as a transfer aid?
- Avoid sequentially teaching two calls that might be confused with each other.

### **2. ANALYZE THE CALL**

- Know the definition and styling both in words and in your own dancing of all parts.
- Know the possible starting and ending formations.
- Know which hands must be free before the call and which are in use at the end.
- List several calls that can comfortably precede and follow.
- Decide which starting formation and arrangement will be easiest to teach.
- Know the Standard (most commonly used) Formations and Arrangements.
- Know the number of steps required to complete the call.

### **3. PREPARE THE ACTUAL TEACH**

- Check available teaching hints suggested by experienced teachers.
- Prepare a quick Global synopsis of the action.
- Consider if a demonstration is appropriate.
- Decide on a concise description of the action that conforms with the official definition.
- Think about describing how the call feels to the tactile learner.
- Be prepared with other ways to explain the action in case the first is unclear.
- Try to find some way to relate the call action and/or name to something they know.
- Decide on concise, quick cues to help at first.
- To minimize problems, try to anticipate difficult spots and common errors.
- Be prepared to teach correct styling although you may wish to emphasize that later during a re-teach or review. If demonstrating, always use correct styling.

### **4. PREPARE CHOREOGRAPHY**

- Plan a quick Get-In to the starting position and a quick resolution from the ending.
- Plan drill figures that use a variety of simple preceding and following calls.
- Plan drills for each variation of the call that you expect them to be able to dance.
- Remember that tactile learners should have an opportunity to experience the call from each position and facing each wall.
- Concentrate on one idea at a time.
- For two or four dancer calls, slowly add the various possible formations of eight.
- Always be aware of the degree of difficulty of the new call and the other calls.
- Keep sequences short and successful.

### **5. PREPARE SINGING CALL FIGURES**

- First create an easy figure that uses the call from the easiest position.
- If possible, include a part that can be omitted until the dancers' timing is correct.
- Prepare other singing figures for further teaching and drill.

**1. DANCER PREPARATION**

- Some warm-up time is a must.
- Review any necessary foundations for the new call.
- Dancer readiness and concentration usually peak during the third tip.
- Avoid big challenges late in the evening.

**2. THE MUSIC**

- Select non-invasive music with a steady beat and play it close to standard tempo.
- Remember that the dancers should always be moving to the music.
- Keep talking time to a minimum, much can be taught while they are dancing.

**3. THE TEACH**

- Begin with a quick global picture.
- Start with the easiest application and aim for a successful first walk through.
- Use your planned teach, adjusting as dancer response requires.
  - Demonstrate the action or paint word pictures (for visual learners).
  - Describe the action step by step (for auditory learners).
  - Tell them how it feels (for tactile learners).
  - Clearly indicate where the call begins and ends.
- Keep an eye on the clock and limit yourself to a maximum of 10 minutes of teaching.
- Project confidence that they can succeed, give encouragement, and be patient.
- If there is difficulty, take the blame yourself, apologize, and try a new explanation.
- Find honest words of praise for whatever they accomplish.

**4. THE PRACTICE**

- Error free practice is critical. Avoid letting a dancer repeat an incorrect action.
- Encourage them to become more efficient until they achieve standard timing.
- Repetition is necessary for mastery but it must be interesting and fun.
- Use choreography that drills the new call with variations in the surrounding calls.
- Work from the simple to the more complex in a logical structure.
- Use the call in the Singing Call if drill during the patter indicates success is likely.

**5. THE FOLLOWUP**

- Re-teach the call the next week.
- Review the call the third week and re-teach if necessary.
- Continue to use the call each week, cueing less as they become more confident.
- Keep a record of successful teaching experiences.
- Do more homework if you are less than satisfied.
- Have available a written description and diagram.
- Explain to dancers who are interested how to use pawns or find internet animations.

**REFERENCES:**

The Caller Text, The Art and Science of Calling Square Dances, Compiled by Bob Osgood, Organized by Bill Peters, published by The Sets in Order American Square Dance Society, 1985

Teaching Techniques, by Jerry Reed, produced by Callerlab

## EXAMPLE: TEACHING SQUARE THRU

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The next call is Square Thru.

[Four watching see a demonstration.]

This is a four person call and we will begin with the Heads working in a box in the middle of the set.

[ Classify the call according to number, place and formation.]

Each of the dancers in the box will be walking along the sides of a small square.

[ Helps associate the name with the action.]

From this position men will be moving clockwise and girls counterclockwise. Each time you meet another dancer, you will pull by using alternating hands.

[ Gives a global picture.]

Heads take note of your corner. You will be facing them when the call is complete.

[ Sets up a known ending.]  
[ Gives the visual learner a goal.]

Heads with the opposite dancer right-hand pull by making sure to let go just as your shoulders pass. That is Square Thru One.

[ If they don't let go, then the pull may cause them to turn out.]

Heads turn in 1/4 towards the active dancer beside you and with the person you are now facing (who happens to be your original partner) left hand pull by.

[ Teaching "turn in and pull by" discourages an extra turn at the end and makes it easier to teach the fractional parts.]

That completes Square Thru Two or Half Square Thru.

Heads turn in 1/4 towards the centre again

(boys are turning right, girls are turning left each time) [ This helps the tactile learner.]  
and with the person you are now facing right hand pull by (notice that you are alternating hands). [ Always make sure dancers know where the call ends.]

That completes Square Thru Three or Square Thru 3/4  
(You should now be facing out toward the head walls.)

Now complete Square Thru Four by turning in once more [ Informs dancers of variations and pulling by (your original partner) with the left hand. in terminology.]

This is also called Square Thru (without a number stated).

You should all be facing your corner.

[ A simple get out increases the chance of success.]

Bow to your corner and back out at home.

Square Thru should feel like a small Wrong Way Right and Left Grand with squared off corners.  
Imagine driving around the block.

[ This information is for the tactile learner.]

Sides Square Thru Four (repeat the explanation), Bow to corner, Square Up

[ Aim for a simple get out to increase the success rate.]

**DRILLS FOR SQUARE THRU:**

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Heads Square Thru Four, (explain that you now have two boxes)

Everybody Square Thru Four, (explain that all are now facing out)

Bend the Line, Square Thru Three, (corner is beside you) Left Allemande, Square Up

Sides Square Thru (remind them that four is assumed), Dosado, Star Thru,

Lines Forward and Back, Pass Thru, Bend the Line,

Each Four Square Thru (some facing out, others facing toward the center)

Outsides Courtesy Turn, Centres Square Thru 3, Left Allemande, Promenade Home

Heads Square Thru Three (facing out), Separate Around 1 to a Line, Go Up and Back,

Star Thru, Centres Pass Thru, All Square Thru Four (ends in lines facing out),

Bend the Line, All 8 Circle Left, Ladies Centre Men Sashay, Left Allemande, Promenade

Sides Square Thru Two, Split Two around one and make a Line, Go Up and Back,

Pass Thru, U-Turn Back, Square Thru Three (ends in lines facing out),

Bend the Line, Square Thru Two, Outsides Separate to Home,

Centres Right and Left Thru and back away at Home

**SINGING CALL FIGURES FOR SQUARE THRU:** [may omit calls in square brackets]

<b>From Static Square:</b> [ Heads go up and back, - - - - ] Heads Square Thru Four, - - - - - - - - , [ Dosado - - ] - - Pass Thru, Allemande Left [ Grand Right and Left - - , - - - - ] [ - - Swing ], - - and Promenade	<b>Classic Double Stars Figure:</b> Heads Square Thru, - - - - Make a Right Hand Star - - - - Heads Star Left in the middle, - - - - [Square Thru Four, - - - - ] - - - - , to your corner Swing Swing and Promenade
<b>From Facing Lines:</b> Heads Promenade Halfway, - - - - - - Lead Right and Circle to a Line - - - - , - - Right and Left Thru - - - - , - - Go Up and Back Square Thru Four, - - - - - - Swing and Promenade	<b>Different:</b> Heads Square Thru Three, - - - - Separate Around One to a Line, - - - - Go Up and Back - , Outsides Star Thru Centres Square Thru 4, - - - - All Right and Left Thru, Swing, Promenade
<b>Various Starting Formations:</b> Heads Square Thru Four, - - - - - - [ Dosado, - - - - ] All Square Thru Four - - , - - - - [ - - Bend the Line, - - Go Up and Back - Square Thru Three, - - - - ] Swing - - , and Promenade	<b>Playing with 3/4:</b> Four Ladies Chain 3/4, - - - - Heads Promenade 3/4, - - - - Sides Square Thru 3/4, - - - - Circle Four 3/4, - - - - All Square Thru 3/4, - - - - Swing and Promenade