

Creating A Teaching Order That Will Help Students Succeed

Goals of a Good Teaching Order

- ❖ A good teaching order will help callers teach as effectively as possible.
- ❖ A good teaching order will help to insure that, by the end of their lessons, the dancers will be able to respond properly to the calls they encounter.
- ❖ A good teaching order will help minimize dancer confusion during the lessons.
- ❖ A good teaching order will train dancers, so they can comfortably enter their *local* square dance activity.

Factors that Make up a Good Teaching Order

❖ Primary Considerations

- Teach basic formations very early.

Teach calls that will allow you to get into the most commonly used formations and arrangements.

Teach dancers to be comfortable in these formations.

Allow dancers to move easily from one formation to another.

Once they are comfortable in the common formations and arrangements, you have the freedom to teach any call that starts and ends in one of these formations.

- Teach harder calls as early as possible.

This allows as much practice as possible before graduation on the calls that need it most.

- Do not teach more than one hard call per lesson, if possible.

- Where possible, save the easier calls or the infrequently used calls for the end of the series of lessons.

Dancers do not require as much practice time on these.

- Do not teach calls with similar names close together. (Leave at least four weeks between them if at all possible.)

This lets dancers learn one action for one name, without having anything to confuse it with.

When a call with a similar name is eventually taught, dancers will not have to choose between two partially learned calls and possibly/probably choose the wrong one.

Examples of calls with similar names:

Star Thru, RH Star, Shoot the Star

Right and Left Thru, Right and Left Grand

Grand Right and Left, Grand Square

Spin the Top, Fan the Top

Flip the Diamond, Cut the Diamond

Spin Chain Thru, Spin Chain the Gears, Spin Chain and Exchange the Gears

- Do not teach calls with similar actions close together. (Leave at least four weeks between them if at all possible.)

This lets dancers learn one action at a time, without having a similar new action to confuse it with.

When a call with a similar action is eventually taught, dancers will not have to choose between two partially learned calls and possibly choose the wrong one.

Examples of calls with similar actions:

Box the Gnat, Touch 1/4, Star Thru, Slide Thru

Slip the Clutch, Shoot the Star

Relay the Deuce, Spin Chain Thru, Spin Chain the Gears, Spin Chain and Exchange the Gears

Flutter Wheel, Reverse Flutter

All Eight Spin the Top, Remake the Thar

Grand Right and Left, Weave the Ring

Swing Thru, Spin the Top, Fan the Top

- Calls that are frequently used together should be taught separately.

This insures that each call is learned independently, not just the pattern of the combined calls.

Examples of patterns to avoid (until calls are learned individually):

Flutter Wheel, Sweep 1/4

Lead Right, Circle to a Line

Pass Thru, Wheel and Deal, Double Pass Thru, first couple go left, next go right

Swing Thru, Men Run

Centers In, Cast Off 3/4

Swing Thru, Spin the Top, Right and Left Thru.

Once the calls are learned, individually, use them together in the common patterns so that dancers become familiar with common usage also.

❖ Other Factors that effect order

- The order will also be dependent on how many calls you teach per lesson.

This will vary with the number of lessons you have time for.

For example, are you going to teach Mainstream to non-dancers in 20 weeks or in 45 weeks.

This will vary with the total number of calls you are going to teach.

For example, teaching non-dancers to dance in a Mainstream club will be different than teaching them to dance in a Plus club, where it is better to teach them from a combined Mainstream/Plus list than it is to teach them Mainstream and then Plus.

Many people hesitate to teach the Plus calls before the Mainstream calls are taught, but think about some of the items mentioned above:

Since one goal is to teach dancers so that they can dance comfortably with their local clubs when they graduate if that program is Plus, then just learning Mainstream doesn't meet this goal.

Also, since many of the Plus calls are more difficult to learn than most of the Mainstream calls, teach the Plus calls early enough to allow plenty of practice time on them before graduation, and to allow several weeks between each of the harder Plus calls, especially the ones that are similar, for

example Spin Chain the Gears, Spin Chain and Exchange the Gears, and Relay the Deucey.

- Teaching all variations of a call at once depends on the call.

If a call is easy and all variations are used frequently, by all means teach all variations at the same time.

If a call is difficult, do not teach all variations at once, even if several variations are in common useage.

Teach the call from the most common formations and arrangements first, i.e. the ones they will need most to survive after graduation.

As time permits, teach additional variations.

- ❖ Other Considerations, examples of specifics I have found useful

- Teach Dive Thru before California Twirl

Just teach the California Twirl action without giving it a name. Since the ending facing direction is just to have them face back in, they will easily be able to orient to it.

Later, when you teach California Twirl, you can start with lines facing out, have everyone make an arch with their partners, and do that thing you do as part of a Dive Thru. Then do it from other formations. You'll find that they have no troubles figuring out where to face after it.

- Spin Chain Thru before Spin/Fan the Top

Knowing where to stop after a 3/4 turn is a difficult thing for dancers. By first introducing the 3/4 turn in a Spin Chain Thru, you can say Trade and a little bit more until the very centers join hands/arms to form an ocean wave.