

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.

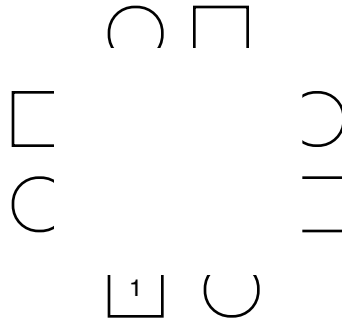
This may sound complicated, but when learning it step by step (as taught in Don Beck's book, *Out of Sight*), it is quite logical, and when you have learned many steps, you can generalize them so that there are really very few rules to remember.

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)