TEACHING ORDER
DESIGN PRINCIPLES

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The following table shows the changes made to this document since December 2007

Changes have been made as follows:

Change Date	Change Made
12/05/07	Document approved for publication
12/06/07	Changed "4. REVIEW" to "F. REVIEW"

TEACHING ORDER DESIGN PRINCIPLES

A. FORMATIONS

1. Introduce dancers to the most commonly used formations early. These formations include Square, Circle, Stars, Facing Lines, and Eight Chain Thru. Teach calls that allow you to easily move between these formations using standard positions.

2. Introduce new formations gradually. Name and describe each formation as it is introduced, and continue to refer to the formations by name.

3. Include explanations of the vocabulary of square dancing in various formations.
   a) Dancers need to be told where to look for their current partner and corner.
   b) Define words such as centers, ends, leaders and trailers.

4. Help dancers develop their formation awareness by encouraging them to clearly establish each formation with correct facing directions and handholds.

B. ANALYZING INDIVIDUAL CALLS

1. CALLS WITH DESCRIPTIVE NAMES

   a) Calls that utilize English are almost self-explanatory and are easy to teach dancers that understand English (i.e. Arm Turns, Stars, Pass Thru, U Turn Back, Separate, Go around "X", Walk into the middle, Split Two, Make a Line, Go Forward and Back, Lead Right/Left, Veer Left/Right, Step to a Wave, Bend the Line). Early teaching of calls that fit in this category builds confidence amongst the doubters regarding their ability to learn this form of dance. Goal posting for example provides great enjoyment with wind-in-your-face dancing and gets new dancers into the habit of listening with all the many variations one can create.
   b) For those who do not speak English, the call names mentioned above are no more informative to the dancers than any others. For those dancers short names are the easiest to learn.

2. PRECISE CALLS

a) Some calls allow some variation in the ending position of the dancer, which will be compensated for by the natural assumptions made in beginning the next call. (The most obvious example is "Allemande Left your corner, Swing your partner".) Other calls require precise floor location and wall orientation in order to be able to identify the ending formation. Callers should be aware of the precision necessary for success and explain appropriately.

b) Begin with calls that automatically allow some inaccuracy in the actions of new dancers. This increases the early success rate and encourages dancers to further explore the activity.

c) Gradually increase the precision required as dancers become more aware of their position in the formation, and with respect to the walls. The teaching order should place some of the precise calls early enough to encourage this aspect to become part of the learning process.

d) Begin to teach fractional turns early and continually reinforce them. Circle 1/2 and Circle 3/4 are useful calls for beginning to think about this concept.

3. BUILDING-BLOCK CALLS

a) Identify the calls that are useful as building blocks. In general these calls have just one part and they are relatively easy to learn. They allow the caller to easily create the common formations. Also they are often contained within other calls, so competency with them is necessary for dancers to successfully complete those other calls.

b) Plan to teach the appropriate building-block calls at the same time that a new formation is introduced.

c) Plan to teach the building-block calls before they are needed within another call. Once they are mastered, it is easier to teach the more complex call.

d) Within families of calls or groups of related calls, begin with the least complicated and gradually increase the complexity.

4. EASIER AND HARDER CALLS

a) Sort the list to be learned into easier and harder calls. In making this decision consider the number of parts in the call, the number of dancers involved in the call, and the number of starting formations that must be taught. (See also sections 5 and 6.)

b) Teach at most one hard call per session. Such calls should be taught early enough so that they can be properly re-taught, reviewed and drilled.

5. CALLS REQUIRING AT LEAST TWO SEPARATE TEACHING UNITS

Some calls may require two separate teaching units with time between for the first taught application to be mastered. Some such types of calls are listed below:

a) Some four dancer calls feel significantly different when danced from different formations (e.g. Right and Left Thru from Facing Lines is much easier than from Eight Chain Thru).
b) Some calls have both a right-hand and a left-hand application that should be taught during class (e.g. Ferris Wheel).
c) Some call definitions include at least two different actions depending on the starting formation (e.g. Wheel and Deal from a Two-Faced Line versus from Lines Facing Out).

6. CALLS FOR 1, 2, 4 AND 8 DANCERS

a) Calls where a couple stays together and those with handholds provide security for new dancers.
b) The teaching order should smoothly integrate calls that involve various numbers of dancers. This is one distinguishing characteristic that helps reduce confusion between two calls.
c) Spread out the teaching of calls involving all eight dancers moving in a circle. These are easily confused if taught close together. Also dancers get dizzy learning and drilling them.

7. CALL USAGE FREQUENCY

a) Compile and study frequency usage statistics to sort the calls into "commonly used", "regularly used" and "infrequently used" categories. The data should include recent calling from all of the following:

   i)   Your own dances, and dances of others calling in your local area
   ii) Regional and national events your dancers are likely to attend
   iii) Both patter usage and singing call figures

b) Commonly used calls should be taught early and well drilled to ensure success.
c) Infrequently used calls can be taught later.

8. ESSENTIAL AND NON-ESSENTIAL CALLS

a) Beware of classifying a call as non-essential. We do have pairs of calls that usually accomplish the same result, but they each have their reason for existence. The most obvious examples are Star Thru and Slide Thru where the chief issue at Mainstream is the handhold. For newer dancers the handhold insures success. For experienced dancers the free hand may make the body flow smoother.

b) Some callers may view some calls as non-essential because they view them as duplicates of others they prefer to use or simply as calls they dislike. When teaching in isolation, it is reasonable to teach first those calls you will be using regularly.

c) It should be considered essential to teach all calls on the relevant program list before informing dancers that they have completed their instruction time.

C. CALL SEQUENCES

1. POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER

a) Separate in the teaching order calls that will be confused because of similar names, same starting formations, or similar dance actions. This confusion is known as "negative transfer" of knowledge.

b) Two or more calls with similar but distinct actions can be taught sequentially when transfer of knowledge will aid in learning. This aid is known as "positive transfer" of knowledge.

c) Where possible choose a teaching order that allows more dancing and less explaining.

   i) Early in the list consider how one call can set up an easy teach of the   next call.
   ii) Later in the list consider how to avoid the situation where the dancer   needs knowledge of the last taught call in order to learn the next call.

2. CALL RELATIONSHIPS

a) Teach calls in groups that allow the caller to create choreography that flows smoothly between a few formations.

b) For sight callers include some of the powerful resolution calls early.

3. CALL PATTERNS

a) Assure that each call has several preceding and following calls so as to avoid teaching patterns.

b) Teach the commonly used singing call patterns to insure success. But avoid overusing common get-ins such as "Square Thru".

4. REDUCE THE IMPACT OF MISSING A WEEK.

a) Build confidence during the first tip of each dance by using simple or well-learned choreography.

b) Attempt to teach all building-block calls at least 2 lessons before they are needed as part of another call. For example, Trade should be taught 2 lessons before Trade By.

c) If four calls are being taught during each class, then students who miss a week will be faced with learning eight calls in one session. Therefore at least seven calls should separate any pair of calls that needs separation.

5. TEACHING UNITS

 a) Each item in the list should be a teachable unit.
 b) Under some circumstances it may be possible to teach more than one unit during a single tip.
 c) Many matters influence the number of new ideas that can be presented during a given session of teaching. The goal should be to create a logical teaching sequence. The number of teachable units taught during a session will depend on the teacher, the students, and the situation.

D. DANCING AND THE DANCE ENVIRONMENT

1. The teaching order should ensure that all aspects of dancing are included in the instruction.

 a) Teach movement to music
 b) Teach balance and body control
 c) Teach awareness of timing and styling
 d) Teach resistance and counter dancing

2. Teach listening skills and discuss reaction time.

3. Include time to explain the commonly accepted rules of the dance environment.

 a) The Ground Rules and Square Dance Etiquette
 b) The Dress Codes
 c) The Lost Squares Procedure
 d) The Emergency Call for Medical Aid

4. Ensure that dancers receive information about the square dance world.

 a) The language of Square Dance Programming
 b) The organizations in the Square Dance world
 c) The history and heritage of our activity

5. Consider providing plateaus to assist in planning Special Class Events.

E. TEACHING PROCESS

1. PROCESS FOR TEACHING ONE CALL

    Good teaching precepts say that, session-by-session, a call

    a) Be taught from scratch,
    b) Be re-taught from scratch,
    c) Be quickly reviewed,
    d) Be called without teach or review,
    e) Continue to be called regularly.

2. CLASS PROGRAMMING

    Class time should be planned to take advantage of the following facts.

    a) The first twenty and the last ten minutes of a class are prime learning times and should not be wasted. Something should be taught during this period.
    b) Many consider the third tip to be the best time for teaching a complex call. That would be after transitioning the brain to square dance mode but before the students are too tired to concentrate.
    c) Concentration and retention significantly drops after ten to fifteen minutes of effort. Learn the concentration time of your class and plan accordingly.

3. TEACH TO REACH THE VISUAL, AUDITORY AND TACTILE LEARNERS -   EXPLAIN FOR BOTH THE GLOBAL AND THE ANALYTICAL

    a) Studies of how students learn have identified differences that should be recognized in our teaching of square dancing and considered in the construction of a teaching order. The following is a quick description of the various types of learners and their needs with respect to square dance teaching.

        i)   Begin with a brief general picture of the call (how many dancers, starting and ending formations, timing) to give the global learner a frame for the details.
        ii)   Describe the action concisely in words that the dancer will hear when you cue them. The teacher should also be prepared with a verbal picture of the action and a tactile description of how it feels. Avoid excess explanation without dancer action.
        iii) Demos should be done where all can see and so that each can follow one dancer who begins with their back to the watcher.
        iv)   Aim for a very clear initial walk through so that everyone goes through the motions correctly the first time. Carefully consider which starting formation and arrangement will make that possible.

v) Auditory learners (those who learn primarily through their ears) need a concise description of the action in words that can be memorized if necessary.

vi) Visual learners (those who learn primarily through their eyes) benefit from frequent demonstrations and will appreciate receiving diagrams and written descriptions of the calls they are learning.

vii) Tactile learners (those who learn primarily by how something feels) need to feel the action from every position they will experience during dancing.

viii) Review the general picture after the dancers have seen the details so that the analytic learner can combine the details into the big picture.

ix) Suggest clues about how to connect the name of the call with the action.

b) When designing the teaching order consider separating calls that can best be taught using a demonstration.

c) Consider the needs of the tactile learner regarding sufficient repetition of a call from one formation before moving onto another formation (see calls requiring two or more teaching units).

F. REVIEW

a) Regular review of all calls learned is critical to ensuring long-term retention.

b) Periodical review tips or dances helps to consolidate knowledge and build confidence.

c) The end of the teaching order should include 3 weeks of no new calls. If this cannot happen during class time then allowance must be made for this needed review during the first dances after class is completed.