

Reprint

DBD

By Keith Stevens

Dancing by Definition requires a different way of thinking about square dancing. It is not a radically different way of thinking about square dancing, nor is it difficult.

Actually we all dance by definition. We couldn't square dance if we had no definition for doing the calls. However, we often dance with an incorrect definition. What many dancers do is perform calls with muscle memory or with emphasis on gender rather than square dance positions. That is, we dance a memorized series of muscle movements that we have learned will 'get us through', Or we dance girls' parts and boys' parts rather than parts based on a dance position such as center or end or leader or trailer.

Dancing by Definition is dancing according to the approved definition by Callerlab, the International Association of Square Dance Callers. The calls that are defined with gender parts are very few. In the entire list of more than six thousand square dance calls, there are probably fewer than two dozen that are defined in terms of gender. All the rest are defined in terms of a dancer's position.

Dancing by definition opens a whole new world of enjoyment, excitement and variety without having to learn any more calls than we already know. It adds two to three times the variety that exists when dancers and callers don't use the philosophy of dancing by definition.

So, how does a dancer prepare to dance by definition? First, and most obvious, callers must teach and dancers must learn the correct definition of calls. Second, dancers must become aware of what position they hold in the square, end, center, leader, trailer, point, etc. Third, dancers will enjoy more success if they are precise performing circulates, turns and the forming of lines, columns, waves, etc.

Let's take a look at just one call from the mainstream program to examine how thinking might change when we begin dancing by definition. The call will be recycle. Recycle is called from one arrangement so often that dancers have forgotten the definition they first were taught (or should have been taught). In its place muscle memory has overpowered dancers' minds as they perform the call. Recycle is most often called from right-handed waves with boys as ends and girls as centers. Do you notice that upon hearing the call "recycle" the girls offer a left hand to the boys and spin around as the boys drag the girls to the left into a position facing another couple who have the same "spin and drag" thing?

This memorized series of muscle moves only works in the arrangement of right-handed waves with boys as ends and girls centers. When girls are the ends of right hand waves they still try to spin around and the boys still try to drag a girl to face another couple. This spin and drag

routine will always fail from other arrangements. So how can we always succeed? We always succeed by always dancing by the approved definition.

Here's the Callerlab definition: "The ends of the wave cross fold as the centers of the wave fold in behind the ends and follow them around, then face in to end as two facing couples."

To succeed every time recycle is called dancers must first be thinking of this definition, second, they must know in what position they stand, and third, they should perform the 'fold', the 'cross fold' and the 'face in' precisely to form facing couples with the other two dancers in the original wave.

With this thinking (dancing by the definition) dancers can enjoy recycling success from about a half dozen arrangements. And all that has happened is a slight change of thought. It's as simple as changing dancers' awareness of gender to awareness of position; changing dancers' thinking from "girls spin" and "boys drag" to "ends cross fold as centers fold, follow and face in."

Since we all dance by definition anyway, let's dance with the correct definitions. Let's ask our callers to help us learn to enjoy increased variety, interest, excitement and success in square dancing without having to learn any more calls.

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