

# New Dancers Handbook



## **Welcome to Square Dancing!**

You have just started on a journey of friendship and fun. This booklet was written to help you learn more about this great activity.

You are enrolled in beginning mainstream lessons, which depending on the lesson format will last from 3 all-day lessons with follow-up workshops to 20 weeks of one lesson per week. You will need to learn all these calls to dance successfully and have fun at any regular club dance. It's not hard; it just takes practice. Anyone can do it!

Square dances are called throughout the world in English, although the accents may be French, German, or even Swedish. Think of what fun you can have. Square dance clubs from the metroplex have danced on cruise ships, bridges, and even the Great Wall of China.

At the end of this booklet is a list of all the square dance calls you will be learning over the course of your lessons; you really will know all these calls and be able to dance them. It just takes practice, and it's fun practice. We were all beginning dancers once, just like you.

Experienced club dancers are at each lesson to dance with new students. These dancers are called angels. They help guide you through the square dance moves as you learn. It makes it easier and more fun for you. The angels love helping. You may dance with the same angels each week, or you may have different angels each dance. It's your choice. You gain valuable experience dancing with different people during lessons and, once you graduate, you will be dancing with different people in every square.

### **What happens if I miss a lesson?**

Sometimes it is simply unavoidable and you must miss a lesson. The calls that were taught the previous week are always reviewed the next week, so you won't miss learning a move. However, you will miss the practice that is so essential to becoming a good dancer. Do your very best to commit to being at every lesson. The more lessons you make, the better you will feel about your new dancing skill, and that leads to more fun!

### **When can I go to a square dance?**

You can start dancing at the New Dancer Dances (Student Hoedowns). As graduation nears and if you feel comfortable with your dancing, you can start attending regular club dances. Once you graduate, dance as often as you can. The more you dance the quicker the calls become automatic and

the more fun you will have.

You don't have to wait for a New Dancer Dance to visit club dances. Come to any of our scheduled dances to watch and learn. You will then get a chance to socialize with the angels and other club members that you see at lessons. You will also learn the dance protocol, hear different callers, see how we look in square dance clothes and what others wear, see how well you can eat at a dance, and in general, just have fun. Ask a club member when the regular dance nights are scheduled. This is your special invitation to visit any of these dances.

### **What is a New Dancer Dance?**

At the end of about eight weekly lessons or the three all-day lessons, clubs start hosting New Dancer Dances. The dates for these dances will be announced at lessons as they are scheduled. The dance moves that will be called (e.g. 1 - 40) will be the same as those called in class. You will know all the moves because you have already been taught those moves.

Angels will be there to dance with you. It is great fun to practice what you have learned and to begin to get the feel of what great fun square dancing can be. The evening of a New Dancer Dance, for those who request it, we will meet at a central location and carpool to the dance. Of course, you can go straight to the dance location, but we just want you to know that if you would feel more comfortable, someone will go with you as you begin to dance.

### **What do I wear to lessons?**

Wear comfortable clothing. You can wear jeans, slacks, "come from work" clothes, whatever is comfortable. You should wear leather-soled shoes which help you move more easily while dancing. Shoes with rubber soles or tennis shoes make it a lot harder to twirl because the soles stick to the floor.

### **What do I wear to dances?**

Men need to wear long sleeve shirts; it's the sweat factor. Sorry men, you often have sweaty arms, and the long sleeves make it much nicer for the ladies, especially when swinging and when the call is Allemande Left.

Ladies do not have to wear petticoats or short skirts. We old timers find we really like twirling those petticoats. It's a lot of fun, but they're not required. You can wear prairie skirts or regular street clothes, but you should wear some sort of a skirt (not pants) for dances.

## Mainstream Square Dance Calls

34. Slip the Clutch
35. Box the Gnat
36. Ocean Wave Family
  - a. Step to a Wave
  - b. Balance
37. Alamo Ring Formation
  - a. Allemande Left in the Alamo Style
  - b. Balance
38. Pass the Ocean
39. Extend (from 1/4 Tag only)
40. Swing Thru/*Left Swing Thru*
41. Run/*Cross Run*
42. Trade Family
  - a. (named dancers) Trade
  - b. Couples Trade
  - c. Partner Trade
43. Wheel & Deal
44. Double Pass Thru
45. First Couple Go Left/Right, Next Couple Go Left/Right
46. Zoom
47. Flutterwheel/ *Reverse Flutterwheel*
48. Sweep a Quarter
49. Veer Left/Veer Right
50. Trade By
51. Touch 1/4
52. Circulate Family
  - a. (named dancers) Circulate
  - b. All 8 Circulate
  - c. Couples Circulate
  - d. *Single File Circulate*
  - e. *Split/Box Circulate*
53. Ferris Wheel
54. Slide Thru
55. Cloverleaf
56. Turn Thru
57. Eight Chain Thru/  
Eight Chain 1,2,3, etc.
58. Pass to the Center
59. Spin the Top
60. Centers In
61. Cast Off 3/4
62. Walk & Dodge
63. Fold/*Cross Fold*
64. Dixie Style to an Ocean Wave
65. Spin Chain Thru
66. Tag the Line (In/Out/Left/Right)
67. Half Tag
68. Scoot Back
69. Fan the Top
70. Single Hinge/Couples Hinge
71. Recycle (from a wave only)

Avoid wearing sharp and jagged jewelry that can cause cuts since square dancing involves a lot of hand and arm contact. Metal belts can also cut hands.

Oh, and don't forget the deodorant. Nothing is worse than doing a California Twirl under some not so nice smelling armpit.

### Where can I buy square dance clothes or shoes?

There are some square dance shops in the area. Check the *Promenade* or ask an angel at your lessons for information about the location of square dance shops.

### How much do dances cost?

When you go as a visitor, you usually pay about \$6.00 per dance. Special dances, such as Club Anniversary Dances, may be a little more. This is quite a bargain for good music, socializing with happy people, no alcohol or smoking, and plenty of good food. If you are a member of that club, you do not pay at the door because your dues paid for the dance.

As a student, you can attend the sponsoring club's dances for free until you graduate. If you attend a New Dancer Dance at another club, you must pay to dance.

### What happens at a regular dance?

When you arrive at a dance, there is a sign-in table for guests and for members of the club. Sign in and pay if you are a guest and are dancing. You can watch for free.

Usually the Grand March starts at 8:00 p.m. When you see dancers lining up in a line by couples, you know it's time to get in line with your partner for the first dance. When the music starts just follow the dancers and the caller's directions. Once you have four couples in your line and your line has stopped moving, the Grand March is finished. The four couples in your line are those with whom you will dance the first tip. After some short announcements, your line slides to the left or right to make room to make a square, and the caller starts the first dance.

## What time do the dances usually start?

Dance times are announced in the *Promenade*; however, most dances usually start at 7:30 p.m. with Early Rounds or a Workshop. The Grand March usually starts at 8:00 p.m. Dances usually end between 10:15 and 10:30 p.m.

## What are Early Rounds, and the dancing between tips?

These are round dances that are cued by a round dance cuer. You will see two steps, waltzes, fox trots, cha chas, rumbas, and jives. Many square dancers go on to take round dance lessons in order to be able to round dance. The name comes from the fact that the couples are in a big circle on the floor, and dance around in that circle. Come a little early to watch.

## What is a tip?

A tip is two square dances called by the caller. Usually a caller calls one patter call (just called square dance figures) similar to what you have done in lessons where you dance with everybody but in no particular order. Then the caller will call a singing call.

In a singing call, the girl rotates around the entire square, temporarily becoming a partner with each man in the square. She should end up back with her original partner at the end of the song. During a singing call, the caller sings some of the words of the song between his calls to the square dancers. A tip is always two dances, but sometimes two singing calls are called rather than one patter and one singing call.

## How many tips are called at a dance?

There are usually six tips called at mainstream clubs during a dance, which includes the Grand March as number one. Sometimes there are plus tips either during, or at the end of the dance. You will need to take plus lessons in order to dance the plus tips.

How do you know if a tip is going to be plus? First, the Grand March tip is never plus. After that, the caller will announce if the next tip is to be plus.

## How do I get to be a better dancer?

Practice, practice, practice. Square dancing is simply a learned skill.

## Mainstream Square Dance Calls

1. Dancer Naming
  - a. Partner/Corner
  - b. Heads/Sides
  - c. Couple #1,#2,#3,#4
  - d. Boys/Girls
  - e. Centers/Ends
2. Circle Left/Circle Right
3. Forward & Back
4. Dosado/*Dosado to a Wave*
5. Swing
6. Promenade/Single File Promenade
7. Allemande Left
8. Arm Turns
9. Right & Left Grand Family
  - a. Right and Left Grand
  - b. Weave the Ring
  - c. *Wrong Way Grand*
10. Left-Hand Star/Right-Hand Star
11. Star Promenade
12. Pass Thru
13. Split Two
14. Half Sashay Family
  - a. Half Sashay
  - b. Rollaway (with a Half Sashay)
  - c. Ladies in, Men Sashay
15. Turn Back Family
  - a. U-Turn Back
  - b. Backtrack
16. Separate Around 1 or 2
  - a. to a Line
  - b. and come into the middle
17. Courtesy Turn
18. Ladies Chain Family
  - a. Two Ladies Chain
  - b. Four Ladies Chain
  - c. Four Ladies Chain 3/4
  - d. *Chain Down the Line*
19. Do Paso
20. Lead Right
21. Right and Left Thru
22. Grand Square
23. Star Thru
24. Circle to a Line
25. Bend the Line
26. All Around the Left Hand Lady
27. See Saw
28. Square Thru (1,2,3,4)/ *Left Square Thru (1,2,3,4)*
29. California Twirl
30. Dive Thru
31. Wheel Around
32. Thar Family
  - a. Allemande Thar
  - b. Allemande Left to an Allemande Thar
  - c. *Wrong Way Thar*
33. Shoot the Star/  
Shoot the Star Full Around

## Acronyms and Definitions

**Banner:** A rectangular banner with the club name made by each club to hang on a wall. These are captured or retrieved during club visitations by the club having the most members present. The rules require a one to two square minimum according to the visiting club's guidelines to capture a banner.

**Club Dress:** A dress for the ladies, a shirt or tie for the men that match the ladies' dress. The club members choose the club dress. You may choose whether or not you wish to purchase a club dress. It is not required.

**Friendship Badge:** Dangles given by NORTEX when a dancer has visited 20 different clubs. You must get signatures from each club visited. Ask for a Friendship Badge Card when you go to a dance.

**Promenade:** Magazine published monthly by NORTEX listing all the clubs, their scheduled dances, special dances, and various lessons.

**Visitations:** Scheduled visits by your club to another club, often done to either retrieve your club's banner or capture their club's banner.

**Plus:** Calls at a higher level than mainstream.

**Advanced & Challenge:** Calls at a higher level than plus (just more calls).

**APD or DBD:** All position dancing or dancing by definition.

**NORTEX:** North Texas Square and Round Dance Association.

**NTCA:** North Texas Callers Association.

**SSDUSA:** Singles Square Dancers USA.

**TASSD:** Texas Association of Singles Square Dancers.

**TSFSRD:** Texas State Federation of Square & Round Dancers.

The more often you practice, the quicker you learn, the more comfortable you become, and the more fun square dancing becomes.

## When can I take plus lessons?

You can take plus lessons after you have completed the mainstream lessons, and have enough floor time. We recommend that you dance regularly (say once a week) for several months before you take plus. You become a better dancer if you dance often and it makes it easier to learn plus.

Many of us have taken lessons more than once to feel comfortable on the dance floor. Take lessons again if you are not sure of the moves. You want to be comfortable dancing. Again, it just takes practice.

## Why should I join a club?

There are many good reasons to join a club. First and foremost, you get to know the members of your club and they become very good friends.

Social activities beyond square dancing are part of club membership. The club holds other activities such as holiday get-togethers, dinner nights out, Super Bowl parties, or visits to special happenings in the metroplex. This is a good way for you to get to know other members of your club in different social settings.

When you join a club, you pay dues. Your dues pay for all your club dances. This means you don't have to pay at your club dance. Your dues and income at the door from visitors are what pays for the hall and the caller. Everyone else has volunteered their time and efforts.

When you join a club, you will also have an opportunity to join the North Texas Square and Round Dance Association (NORTEX). The cost is about \$10.00 per dancer. As a member you will receive the *Promenade* which is the magazine published by NORTEX. It lists all the regularly scheduled club dances, special dances, tells you when and where they are held, and who is calling. The *Promenade* is free to you as a part of your NORTEX dues. If you are not a NORTEX member, a subscription for the *Promenade* will cost \$60.00 a year.

## **How do I join a club?**

Just ask an officer or an angel of the club you wish to join. They will give you all the information you need. Pay your dues and a nominal badge fee, and you are in. Welcome to the wonderful world of square dancing!

## **When should I join a club?**

At the end of lessons you can decide which club you want to join. For a while you may want to just go as a visitor to various clubs and then decide which club to join. Either way, you will be welcomed at any club because square dancers are friendly.

## **Can I belong to more than one club?**

Certainly, and many dancers belong to more than one club. Remember, however, belonging to a club means you should support the club activities, attend visitation and club dances whenever possible, and help with refreshments from time to time.

## **Who will dance with me if I don't have a partner?**

Although square dancing is a couple activity, many singles do participate. Our area has several singles' clubs that provide a great atmosphere for socializing without needing to be a couple. Girls ask guys to dance; guys ask girls to dance. Remember that it is only a 10-minute tip, not a lifetime commitment. The purpose is to dance and have fun. Angels are always looking out for the new dancers when they go to club dances to help them get started in the fun of square dancing.

## **Miscellaneous**

### **Drinking not allowed**

There is no alcohol at the lessons or at square dances. If you have been drinking, you will be asked to leave; it's just the rule! You can't square dance well if you are "under the influence." Some clubs have a group of dancers that meet after a dance (an after party) to eat and/or have a drink. That's up to you if you wish to join them, and it is a fun way to get to know other square dancers.

### **Smoking outside the hall only**

If you smoke, there are designated areas outside the buildings where you may smoke. You may not smoke inside the hall. Announcements are always made at the beginning of a dance, designating where smoking is allowed.

## **Graduation**

At the conclusion of lessons, there will be a graduation ceremony. This is a great event and you will be the guest of honor. Graduation is the beginning of square dancing. Dance often and regularly to enjoy what you have learned.

You have been part of a class, so you already know these square dancers. These friends are waiting for you to join them in a square.

Want to dance and don't want to go to another club alone? Look at the club roster of the club you joined, and call someone to go with you. What an easy way to make great friends!

## **Questions?**

If you aren't sure about something, ask an angel, your caller, or any club member you see at the dance. They will be glad to answer your questions. Your angels are here to help you, so relax and enjoy square dancing. We are glad to have you joining us.

**See you in a Square!**