

DEFINITIONS RULES AND GUIDELINES – 2021 August – Mel Wilkerson

Reading the definition.

The “definitions” are different than the “definition of the call”

The “program definitions” is a document. The beginning of that document usually contains important information about how to apply the individual movement definitions contained within. Those are the parts of “reading the definition that this part of the presentation is about.

This presentation is not about reading definitions. It is however about getting a better understanding of the Rules, conventions and guidelines that are often misunderstood, or not understood, that apply to the definitions that we so desperately cling to.

Many definitions are written with qualifiers, level restrictions, mention in appendices, the approach to take, rules, explanations of what is standard, proper, improper, and how to name dancers and so much more.

Unfortunately, those most important parts are often missed (intentionally or otherwise) by many callers today. The reasons vary from,

- This was how I was taught
- I read the definition – that is what matters
- The rest of the stuff is administrative and too cumbersome
- I am too lazy to go back and read the basic rules because I only call plus and above
- I don't need to know that – the definition explains it anyway
- Any one of 800,000 other reasons not to do it.

That is not the way square dance calling works. You are cheating yourself, but more importantly you are cheating the dancers from having the best experience they can have by not telling them the rules, and guidelines of how to play the game.

There is an awful lot of material in the first 15 pages (the stuff before the definition of circle left that is important. What I am going to concentrate on here is the stuff that starts about Page 8 – the rules and conventions, as well as other information provided from the Choreographic Guidelines.- This information will be provided in the handouts which you can get from Dan on his website.

Page 8-10. Of the basic Definitions provides the primary Conventions and Rules There are 3 pages that talk about 6 rules and conventions. They are so very important that they are what this presentation is going to be mainly focused on because they apply to all levels of dancing. Some of these rules are intuitive and others can be confusing if you don't understand them.

- **Passing rule** – tells you how to safely pass another dancer and on which side
- **Same position rule** – tells you what to do if you go to the same place (and more)
- **Facing couple rule** – tells about what to treat as facing couples even when they are not
- **Ocean wave rule** – tells about what to treat as in ocean waves when you are not
- **Squared set convention** – who goes in from a static square, do they stay in or get back out and what calls it may apply to.
- **Circle rule** – this is about turning a circle into a square by the use of some calls

This section basically says the conventions and rules are there for commonality and understanding. Callers that make choreography should read the rules and use good judgement if they are going to do something that conflicts with the 6 rules and conventions

The plus program tried to simplify the preliminaries in the plus program definitions by giving a shortened version to reinforce the rules because the basic and mainstream program are part of the plus program and all the rules etc, apply. It is shortened because rather than just say, (“see basic and mainstream definitions for rules” it said, these are important, here is a short refresher.

The Advanced Program. When we get back to advanced however we again have a reinforcement of the basic rules and a few additions that are applicable to a higher-level program. I guess it is there because it is so very important after dancing plus to remind the dancers that you must be able to dance good basic and mainstream if you want to be able to dance advance level dancing properly. The appendixes and extra terms are not there probably because if you don't know them by now, you likely shouldn't be dancing here anyway.

Challenge starts with a section that says READ THIS FIRST. This is the first time that Callerlab says that the definitions are there to refer disputes in interpretation about what a call means.

It also says: ***Before you use these definitions, you should be familiar with the CALLERLAB Basic/Mainstream definitions, the CALLERLAB Plus definitions, the CALLERLAB Advanced definitions, and the CALLERLAB standard formation names. Where possible, we have used calls and formations defined in those documents. This has let us make the definitions shorter and clearer.***

CONVENTIONS AND RULES

Most callers know and agree that there are 5 basic “rules” and one listed convention which apply to all square dancing regardless of the program which is being called. There are however a few other conventions which I may touch on and “taken as rules” which I will mention at the end. – the documentation for this is the Callerlab Choreographic Guidelines.

This topic, however, is rarely taught, mentioned, or even hinted at caller schools and in caller training curriculum. It is assumed that it is known and understood.

- **A convention** – in the terms of square dancing it refers to the way in which something is usually done.
- **A rule:** in the terms of square dancing refers to an explicit and understood “method” or principle which governs the conduct or process of action applicable to a certain set of criteria for the dancers. If they meet that set of criteria - then the rule applies.

If a convention (way of normally doing things is followed by enough dancers and callers, it may evolve into a rule or even may become a revised definition.

Caution: There is a risk in deriving a convention from lots of dance examples and then writing it as a rule. RECYCLE AS GIRLS TURN BACK – WHEEL AND DEAL IS AN EXAMPLE - **LETS HOPE THAT NEVER HAPPENS.**

- When something like this happens, and it does, the new rule is used to create new choreography which sometimes conflicts with the convention that led to the rule...if that happens, we end up with chaos, arguments about applications and sometimes dancers and callers just quitting and going off to do their own thing.

The importance of the convention and 5 rules is simply, without them in place, callers will create new choreography or use choreography in accordance with their own interpretation of the definition. A simple thing like a misplaced or missing comma can really change the meaning of the message.

Callers should always exercise caution and good judgment in creating new choreography **AND** use the rules in the way they are written. If you want to do it differently, then clarify very specifically in the definition of your new movement.

THE RULES – A CLOSER LOOK

Passing Rule

If the definition of a call has two dancers on the same path and requires them to walk past each other, they should pass right shoulders (unless otherwise specified) and continue.

The mirror image version of a call has dancers pass left shoulders and continue. That would be stated as “LEFT” DOUBLE PASS THRU.

Same Position Rule

If two dancers are required to occupy the same position at the end of a call, and are facing in opposite directions from each other, they form a Right-Hand Mini-Wave.

If an adjustment is necessary (since they are now two dancers side-by-side in a formation that expected one dancer), the adjustment is sideways, towards the outside of the group in which they were working.

Callers should not use a call that would result in two dancers who are facing the same direction, or at right angles, trying to occupy the same position.

EXAMPLE FROM LINES FACING OUT – CIRCULATE ONCE AND A HALF TAKES US TO A TIDAL WAVE.

Facing Couples Rule – *THE I AM NOT IN A WAVE BUT TREAT THE MOVEMENT LIKE I AM RULE.*

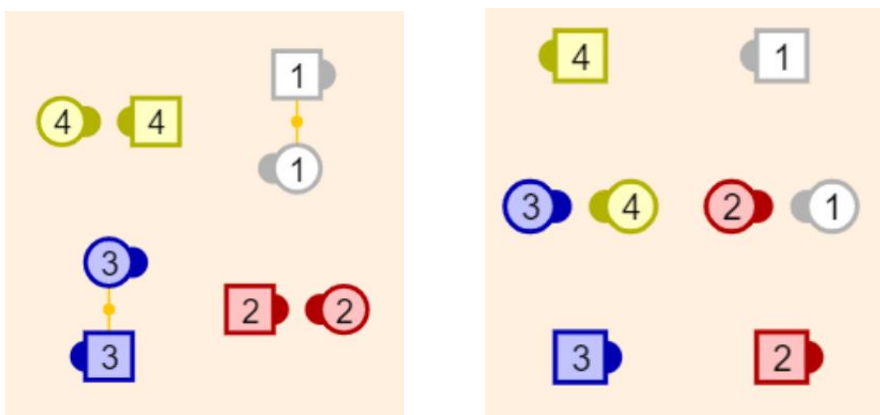
A few specific calls that are defined to start from an Ocean Wave are also proper starting from Facing Couples. Examples include Swing Thru and Spin the Top. In these cases, the dancers first step into a momentary Right-hand Ocean Wave and complete the call.

If the caller directs a left-hand call (e.g., Left Swing Thru), the dancers first step into a momentary Left-Hand Ocean Wave.

If the Facing Couples Rule is applicable, the call's definition in this document will have a comment to that effect. **If there is no such comment, then the Facing Couples Rule may not be used.**

While the rule is called the Facing Couples Rule, it is generalized to include Facing Dancers stepping to a Right-hand Mini-Wave and Facing Lines step to a Right-Hand Tidal Wave, etc.

The following types of mixed Mini-Wave and Facing Dancer starting formations, while unusual, are also proper: Swing Thru Swing Thru



Timing: Application of the

Facing Couples Rule does not change the timing of the call.

Ocean Wave Rule *THIS IS THE I AM NOT IN FACING COUPLES BUT PRETEND I AM RULE*

Some calls that are defined to start from Facing Couples are also proper starting from a Right-Hand Ocean Wave. Examples include Right and Left Thru and Square Thru. In these cases, the

dancers have already stepped forward toward the facing dancer and are ready to complete the remaining action of the directed call. As a general guide, if the movement you are calling puts transitioning through a mini-wave, or left-hand wave as part of the call, the ocean wave rule applies. That means you can that facing couple movement from the wave

Sometimes this rule applies to specific levels. – for example – Pass the Ocean. Pass The Ocean is a facing couple call. You cannot call Pass the Ocean from an ocean wave at Basic or Mainstream, but the definition comment says it may be applied at other programs. – **My opinion is, you would be a jerk if you did but that is just personal opinion.**

- **Examples where it can be used**

right and left thru Standard wave at Basic and Mainstream

- Trade by from a 3/4 tag formation
- Swing
- Right and left grand
- Double pass thru from a 1/4 tag
- Square thru

Examples where it cannot be used

- **Circulates – no call in the circulate family can be used with the ocean wave rule.** – for example, from a 1/4 Tag or 3/4 Tag. Circulates from a wave are on a path to the next position
- Pass the ocean (at basic and mainstream)
- Touch 1/4

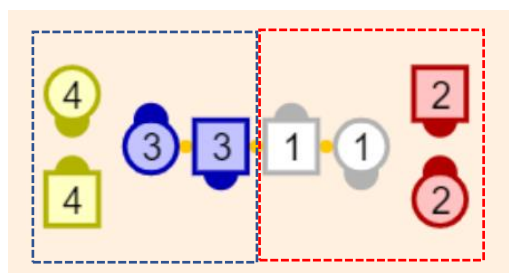
For the sake of dancer comprehension and teaching purposes, it may be necessary initially to have the dancers back up into facing couples, then step back into the wave and complete the call.

While the rule is called the Ocean Wave Rule, it is generalized to include Mini-Wave (Facing Dancers) and Tidal Wave (Facing Lines), etc. Examples include Pass Thru, Slide Thru, Box the Gnat, and Double Pass Thru (from a Right-Hand 1/4 Tag), and Pass To The Centre (from Right-Hand Ocean Waves).

For the Ocean Wave Rule to apply, the initial dance action of the call must start with a Box the Gnat, Pass Thru, or Right Pull By. In addition, the call must not be defined to have a different dance action from an Ocean Wave.

For example, the call Circulate is defined from Eight Chain Thru and from Ocean Waves. It would be improper to call Circulate from Ocean Waves and expect dancers to dance it as a Step Thru based on the Ocean Wave Rule because they would naturally apply the definition of Circulate from Ocean Waves. The following mixed Mini-Wave and Facing Dancer starting formation, while unusual, is also proper: you could call either a swing thru, grand swing thru, or a right and left thru from here or even a left swing thru... **But once again – you would be a jerk if you called it.**

The adjustment that is part of the Ocean Wave Rule does not change the effect of the call. It neither adds nor subtracts parts or changes the use of fractions. It is as if any dancer in a mini-wave had first stepped back into facing dancers and then all did the call.



For example, from a Right-Hand Mini-Wave Dosado ends in Facing Dancers, not in a Right-Hand Mini-Wave.

The Ocean Wave Rule also applies to calls that normally start from Facing Couples when the dancers are in a Left-Hand Ocean Wave. In these cases, the caller must direct a left-hand call (e.g., Left Square Thru).

Extensions like Reverse Wheel Around". When half of the dancers are in a Mini-Wave, and the other half of the dancers are Facing Dancers, and the call is a 2-dancer call (e.g., Box the Gnat, Slide Thru, Pass Thru) the caller should make clear who is to do the call (e.g., Everyone or Those Facing).

Timing: Application of the Ocean Wave Rule does not change the timing of the call.

Circle Rule - THE TREAT THE CIRCLE LIKE A SQUARE RULE (depending on the call)

From an In-facing Circle Of 8, if the caller names two adjacent dancers and their opposites and gives a call that starts from Facing Couples, the dancers dance the call as if the circle has been changed into a Squared Set, and follow the Squared Set Convention.

Examples:

- From a Squared Set: Join Hands, Circle Left; Heads Up To The Middle And Back; Heads Square Thru 4.
- From a Squared Set: Heads Half Sashay; All Circle Left; 4 Boys Spin The Top.

The good news is that those definitions apply to every level of square dancing. There may be a qualifier that says there is an exception or an allowance for different uses at a higher program level, (pass the ocean or right and left thru for example) but generally they are the same throughout.

Squared Set Convention – THE STAY IN OR GO HOME RULE

Calls that are defined as starting from Facing Dancers or Facing Couples are also proper starting from a Squared Set. There are only 3 parts to this rule

- The caller must identify which pair of couples is active (e.g., Heads, Boys). The active dancers move forward into the centre of the set and execute the call.
- If they end facing the same walls as the inactive dancers, they will remain in the centre (e.g., Heads Square Thru 4, Heads Star Thru, Heads Touch 1/4).
- If the call ends with the active dancers not facing the same walls as the inactive dancers, then the active dancers end back on Squared Set spots unless there is clear reason to remain in the centre. (E.g., Dancers should return to Squared Set spots for Head Ladies Chain, Heads Right and Left Thru, Heads Pass Thru, or Heads Square Thru 3. – **HOWEVER** - Because of the ending handhold, on the call Heads Box the Gnat, the Heads remain in the centre and take the next call.

Usually, the exact ending position is obvious from the next call (e.g., Heads Right and Left Thru, Sides Right and Left Thru), or doesn't matter because the next call continues the dance action (e.g., Heads Pass Thru, Separate, Around 1 To A Line). Some callers who want the active dancers to remain in the centre precede the call with a "Heads Move In", "Heads Move Forward", or "Heads Move into The Centre". For example, "Heads Move in and Square Thru 3" would have the Heads remain in the centre instead of returning to Squared Set spots.

Timing: Moving into the centre adds 2 beats to the timing for the move. Note that the time needed to move out of the middle will often be blended into the final portion of the call (as in Right and Left Thru, during the Courtesy Turn) or be overlapped with the start of the following call (as in Heads Right and Left Thru, Sides Right and Left Thru).

Good News: the five rules and one convention that are fixes (sometimes called the 6 rules), apply to all programs, they do not change with the programs, where there is a specific application of these rules is stated, and Qualifiers at different levels are also stated – E.G. Pass the ocean from waves – has a program statement)

Therefore, it is important to read the “Definitions Document: – Holistically.

At each program the definitions include:

- Definitions document
- Formation Documents
- Choreographic guidelines.

There are some other rules that callers need to be aware of and these can be found in the Choreographic Guidelines, also found on the Callerlab website.

The Choreographic Guidelines also provide guidance to callers for teaching and calling but additional “recommended rules” to help deal with the “soft skills” of calling and dancing. Soft Skills are such things as flow, hands, smoothness, variety, timing, and other aspects that lead to success.

The two-beat rule – relates to giving commands.

- **COMMAND TIME:** The amount of time required to give the command (move) to be executed, generally, should take no more than 2 beats. There are some exceptions to this two-beat rule. For example, SPIN CHAIN AND EXCHANGE THE GEARS.

The smoothness rule – this relates to body flow

- In order to make dance action as smooth as possible the caller must choose material which allows the dancers to smoothly move from one move to the next. This means the dancers must be positioned at the completion of one move so the transition to the next can be accomplished without abrupt changes in direction. In attempting to meet this requirement the caller must consider both the space available for the move and the type of movement, whether straight line or rotational.
 - **The variety exception:** The elements of variety, interest, and choreographic challenge are also very important. Sometimes a deliberate violation of smoothness rules provides excitement and variety which are of equal importance to the dancers. Unfortunately, this excuse is overused when explaining why dancing is not smooth. The rules of smoothness are complex and too few callers concern themselves with how to bring smoothness to the dancers.

The rule of alternating hands (shoulders) rule – there is a lot of argument and exception.

- "The hand to be used next must be 'available' at the completion of the preceding action to feel smooth."
- Consider, for instance, the sequence "STAR THRU, RIGHT AND LEFT THRU." If use of alternating hands was required for comfort, this sequence could not feel smooth for the men, yet it does. WHY?
 - An explanation can be found in an interpretation of the rule, as follows: "The hand to be used next must be 'available' at the completion of the preceding action to feel smooth." If we consider this interpretation when looking at the above example, we see that at the end of the "STAR THRU" the man's right hand is in the correct position for the "RIGHT AND LEFT THRU" and is, therefore 'available'. If we merely switch the sequence of these two moves, the sequence becomes very unsmooth. That is, if we call "RIGHT AND LEFT THRU, STAR THRU" the man's right hand has just been used to courtesy turn the lady and is therefore, not 'available'. In this case the sequence would be considered as unsmooth by the men.
 - Another sequence which violates the same hand (shoulder) rule is, (from eight chain thru formation) "PASS THRU, TRADE BY." In this sequence the dancers coming to the centre after the "PASS THRU" must again pass right shoulders for the "TRADE BY." This sequence is used extensively and is smooth. WHY? This time the answer is in the

body position of the dancers. After the "PASS THRU" they are slightly offset and in a position to "PASS THRU" using right shoulders in the centre very comfortably.

- There are numerous examples. Touch $\frac{1}{4}$, scoot back for example

The difficult choreography convention

- Common ways in which difficulty is added to square dance choreography is using unfamiliar moves, unfamiliar formations/arrangements, unusual use of the rules, or a combination of these elements.
- The purpose behind deliberately using difficult or extended choreography should be to increase the pleasure of the dancers not the caller. As has been discussed earlier in this document, the goal of each caller should be to provide smooth flowing, interesting dance material with just the right amount of difficulty. Any caller who can consistently provide this perfect, or even near perfect, mix is a true artist. It can be done, but it is not easy.
- Because of the special challenge in this type dancing, success will bring a special pleasure to the dancers and will be a victory for the caller. Conversely, **failure will not only be disastrous for the dancers, but could be equally disastrous for the caller**. The advice is to obtain full knowledge of these techniques and to proceed slowly.
- The sequences used to implement this programming technique can include complex choreography, unusual or unfamiliar starting formations, unusual or unfamiliar arrangements, surprise get-outs, modifications of the definition of moves, unusual use of the rules, and other factors which will increase the difficulty of the choreography.

The building block rule – create a foundation first and build on it.

- The goal is to introduce or use a new application (that could be the first time you introduce a movement or the first time you introduce and extended application, or even when you go out and come up with something weird and wacky to suit the difficult choreography rule. It is important to provide at least some practice from familiar SET-UPS. This will help reinforce the rules and feel of the move.

The Weaning rule – this is about the use of helper words

- **Clues** - Clueing" is providing clues or hints to the dancers. Clues help the dancers find the correct formation, arrangement, facing direction, hands to be used, where dancers should be, Position, and other considerations. **Clues normally DO NOT include part of the definition**. – “look at your diamond” or “girls in the centre” or boys with the left hand.....
- **Cues** - Cueing" is when the caller provides directions which include part or all of the definition of the move – e.g., do a do-pa-so, partner left, corner right, back to the partner left...or scoot back, boys turn girls flip or vice versa, or right and left thru and turn the girl.

Most successful callers provide a combination of both clueing and cueing. Primary concerns of the overuse of cueing are:

- Some dancers may never learn the moves; they simply listen for the cues and depend on the caller to tell them what to do.
- Dancers who do know the moves may interpret the cue as new directions rather than part of the previous move; they may then start an additional move.

The idea is to be sparing, use as needed for the dancer (not the caller to fill time) and wean them off as soon as you can.

The extra time convention – delay the move delivery to give the dancers more reaction time (note: this is more a convention technique than a rule)

- The caller can provide additional lead time by delaying the delivery of the moves. This will provide more time for the dancers to react to the moves. This delayed timing can disrupt the

normal delivery of the moves and very easily result in a certain amount of stop and go dancing. The extra reaction time will provide time to act on the helping words or to apply what they know to the new situation created by the difficult choreography.

- Depending on the complexity of the helping words and the difficulty of the material, the timing can be such that little, if any, compromise of smoothness is required. The goal should be to retain as much smoothness as is practical for the situation.
 - Example: From a static square (SS) - "HEADS STAR THRU, AND PASS THE OCEAN, SIDES WORKING DOWN THE WAVE WITH EACH OTHER, DO A RIGHT AND LEFT THRU"
 - These delays are usually built in with unfamiliar choreography or introducing something different to allow the dancers to establish and recognise where they are and what they are doing....the most common use of this is at plus...with take a peek – trade the wave.

The movement modification convention – this usually applies when callers fractionalise or “suspend completion of a movement to do something else or end in a different formation than the definition calls for.

- There is a tendency to modify definitions and it is growing all the time. When modifying definitions however, as noted, all the other rules and conventions apply. It is very hard for dancers to keep track of these things so a caller must do it for them.
- This rule simply states, if you are going to change something – make sure it is clear to the dancers what you want.
- Square thru, but on the third hand....
- Load the boat but centres stop at the wave.....
- As a couple as opposed to as couples – can be used as a modifier at every level however it is also now a concept for the advanced program

The reason for clarity is that dancers learn by single memory chunks based on the full movement. They need extra information to interrupt that automatic reaction and figure out if the “modification” applies to them.

The give them space rule – the dancers must be able to move comfortably without being squeezed.

- If dancers are 'squeezed' into a tight area, they cannot dance smoothly.
- Moves involving two couples in the centre of the set can be either smooth or not smooth depending on the combination of moves.
- Example:
 - from a starting double pass thru formation, "CENTERS SWING THRU" feels smooth.
 - From the same formation, however, 'CENTERS PASS THE OCEAN, SWING THRU' could be quite congested and uncomfortable, even on an uncrowded floor.
 - from a starting double pass thru formation, if we call "FLUTTERWHEEL" or "LADIES CHAIN" the action is very tight and 'squeezing' occurs.

This is a common sense rule that is often overlooked – and it applies to the whole of the floor not just the square....crowded halls (I wish) means you must make sure you don't press the squares into each other....lined up squares in a full hall make pass the ocean, grand swing thru very uncomfortable.

The momentum Rule: -

Momentum is the tendency of the dancers to continue to move in an established, usually forward, direction. Sequences which enhance this forward motion are usually more comfortable and smoother than those which disrupt this momentum.

Example:

- "HEADS STAR THRU, DOUBLE PASS THRU, CENTERS IN, BEND THE LINE" – uncomfortable – momentum jarr
- "HEADS STAR THRU, DOUBLE PASS THRU, CENTERS IN, cast off 3/4" – comfortable – momentum flow

FINALLY - THE ARC – APPLICATIONS REVIEW COMMITTEE

What is it?

The Applications Review Committee (ARC) was formed in 1998 to review the proper or improper usage of square dance calls. The committee is composed of knowledgeable callers from all over the world who review written requests from callers and/or dancers and decide as to the proper or improper application of these calls. (These are the referees if you will)

All callers on this committee agree to abide by its decisions. The committee is reactive rather than proactive. It accepts questions from dancers and callers about proper or improper usage of definitions.

As said before, there are no square dance police, but these guys are as close as you get to making a decision.

They don't always get it right, and there have been times when their decisions have been reversed, however, they have been one of the greatest assets in reducing the misuse of calls over the years by saying, yes, it is proper or no it is not.

How it works,

- Submit your question
- It gets reviewed.
- They work on it, deliberate, dance it, see what else applies and eventually say yes or no.
 - If YES – then it is fine to use it that way – with caution
 - If NO, then do not use it.
- If not satisfied with a NO, (or a yes) resubmit and it will be re-evaluated. –

A good example of this is that in 2003 the ARC said Acey Deucey was improper from a $\frac{3}{4}$ tag formation. Everyone stopped using it, including the caller who asked the question. He however was not satisfied, with it being listed as improper and reframed his argument following a revision of the definition for clarity. He then resubmitted the question back to the ARC. IN July 2006 the ARC said, "*Yes. The committee voted this to now be a proper use of the call. The new definition permits this usage as there are four centres and four outside dancers. This ruling super cedes an earlier ruling by the ARC.*"

The ARC decision history can also be found on the Callerlab website.