

10 Important Square Dance Calls February 2022

Why do we care?

Might give you a new perspective on the tools in your toolbox.

Might learn about a few new calls or ideas.

Might get you thinking.

> Date: Thu, 13 Mar 2003 08:46:50 -0600 (CST)
> From: "Lysle Shields Jr." <lshields@hiwaay.net>

>

> What 10 moves are the most important to square dancing?

I answered it in 2003 and just again last night.

No right answer — opinion.

I assume by “move” he means “call”.

“Most important” is subjective.

What criteria?

important to a caller (or a dancer)

important for resolving

important for moving people around

important for creativity

important because they changed how callers had to think about the square -- spin chain thru

important because this is what the non-dancing public knows about square dancing

Do Sa Do
Swing Your Partner

important because of call frequency

Allemande Left
Promenade Home
Right And Left Grand
Square Thru
Swing Thru
Run
Scoot Back
Recycle

important because these are what we use at a beginner dance

Circles
Stars
Do Sa Do
Arm turns including Allemande Left
Right And Left Grand
Promenade
Swing

important because they form the foundation

important because they inspired so much more

Clark's 2022 list

1. Run -- changes formations, can be done from lots of places, also Cross Run
2. Circulate -- simple rule, lots of applications; columns, lines, T-Bone; Split variation; enables calls that use Circulate in definition (e.g., Acey Deucey)
3. Spin Chain The Gears -- or any big pattern call
4. Counter Rotate -- simple rule, many starting formations; can be done split
5. Dixie Grand -- spawned the whole Dixie idea (Dixie Style, Sashay, Diamond, Spin)
6. Tag The Line -- variety of starting formations; creates the idea of tagging positions and Extend The Tag, Tagging Call Suffixes, and Any Tagging Call Your Neighbor, etc.
7. Square Thru -- limited starting position but takes a parameter, has a default, and can be done left; other calls based on it like square chain thru, square chain the top, square around, square thru on the Nth hand
...

8. Grand Square or Teacup Chain -- used in singing calls; Grand Square has well defined timing; spawned other squared set pattern moves

9. Diamond formation -- get in (Switch To A Diamond, Follow To A Diamond), Diamond Circulate, get out (Flip/Cut The Diamond); other formations Hourglass, Galaxy

Ted's 2022 list

1. Diamonds
2. Ocean wave rule, facing couple rule — adds creativity
3. Fractions
4. Circulate
5. Trade -- partner trade, arm turn trade, trade over a distance, couples trade, Trade The Wave
6. Left
7. Roll
8. Courtesy Turn which enables chains, right and left thru
9. Stars -- needed for All 4 Couples, All 8

Clark's 2003 list

1. [Circulate](#) is one of the first calls in which dancers learn general purpose rules which work from many formations, and their dance action depends only on themselves and the spots on the floor, and not on the other dancers. The simplicity of a Circulate is in stark contrast to its variety (center, end, lead, trailer, once, 1 1/2, etc.).
2. [Counter Rotate](#) qualifies for reasons similar to Circulate. It is simple, elegant, and yet many dancers never master it. Some find the need to memorize it in a case by case basis. Still others invent various cheats (which don't always work). Callers of old misunderstood it, and did it incorrectly from columns. Yet it remains a fundamental dance action.
3. [Scoot Back](#) introduced using the same hand 3 times in a row, which was an anathema to some. Yet it has stood the test of time, is fun to dance, and can have a certain amount of variety.
4. [Run](#) introduces the idea of a runner and runnee. It also provides a quick way to change formations. It extends into Cross Run (which opens up the whole idea of normal vs. Cross), can be done fractionally, and works well with t-bones. A simple call with a simple rule, and many possibilities.
5. [Tag The Line](#) is a fake-out kind of call. The initial "find the center of your line and turn to face it" requires situational awareness which takes some practice to acquire. It introduces the idea of "tag positions" and the ability to have a call take a parameter (0 Tag, 1/4 Tag, 1/2 Tag, 3/4 Tag, and Full Tag), and creates the idea of Extending The Tag (moving from one tag position to the next). Many other calls use Tag The Line as their base ([e.g., Tag Chain Thru, Tag The Top](#)).
6. [Remake](#), while somewhat of a hodgepodge, and having changed definitions over the years is still great for asking dancers to go 1/4, 1/2, and then 3/4. The formations may change wildly while doing this

(consider starting in thars or alamo rings). I would have nominated Swing Thru, but Remake has that and more.

7. [Spin Chain The Gears](#) is my poster child for any of our long pattern calls. It is a long sequence of parts, during which you connect and disconnect with people, form sub formations (e.g., stars, very center two, a wave), and may end up moving across the whole square. It is also dancing -- no stop and go here. Any of the other calls like Relay The Deucey, Spin Chain And Exchange The Gears, Relay The Top, Spin Chain The Star would have worked fine.
8. [Chain Reaction](#) is a cleverly named call in which dancers have to follow the rules (the definition) and consider what they should be doing next as each part unfolds (i.e., re-evaluate). "Flow" dancers never get it. Swing Thru is a MS example of this (Facing couples, right-hand waves, left-hand waves, grand), except that Chain Reaction carries this idea of following the rules much further.
9. The idea of working with [Phantoms](#) creates an important step from Advanced to Challenge, a step which some dancers (perhaps due to their learning style) never really master. If we are talking about square dancing, including Mainstream and C4, I have to include Phantoms.
10. Finally, [Rewind](#) is the canonical example of something that was considered and rejected by the majority of C4 dancers as being too hard, and "this is not what we want in our dancing". It must be included in order to show the limits of square dancing (or "not square dancing").

4 ways to dance:

Normal: Walking forward from beginning of call to end of call

Dancing backward: Walking backward from beginning of call to end of call

Undo: Walking backward from the end of call to the beginning of call

Rewind: Walking forward from the end of call to the beginning of call

I hope this gave you something to think about and engenders further discussion.