

Tips for Calling a Square Dance Party Dance

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Questions to ask the sponsor.

Indoor or outdoor event? Is there a rain shelter?

Who is attending? adults, kids, teens, seniors, gays, all of the above

How many people expected?

What is the sponsor expecting? (square dancing, two step dancing, line dancing)

Is it a special event (celebration, wedding reception, father/daughter, birthday event etc.)

What you need at the site (electrical connections, table, stage etc.)

What to bring.

Since you may be appearing in an unfamiliar location bring GPS, maps, backup equipment including some phonograph records, flashlight, square dance clothes/

Checkout the hall.

Get there early and sound out the hall.

Is there enough room to dance?

Choosing music to use for the party dance.

A good general rule is to at least use some of the music that was popular when the attending crowd was in high school.

For kids use bouncy music with medium tempo.

For seniors add some music from the 40's and 50's.

For teens use fast and boisterous music.

If the hall is decorated with bales of hay and the dancers are wearing farm clothes use country and western music.

In general be careful about singing calls with inappropriate language. Especially important if the event is for children or sponsored by a religious group.

Choosing choreography to use for the party dance

General considerations

For young children use very simple choreography

Also for young children avoid partner changes

Make maximum use of directional calls

Avoid using alamande left. Keep in mind that at a club dance alamande left can be equated to a left turn thru.

Would you call left square thru at a beginning dance?

Modify your choreography to allow extra time for the party dancers to complete a given call.

You can always add an up-to-the-middle and back or a dosado to fill the time to a promenade home.

It goes much better if you can get most of the crowd on the floor at the beginning of the dance.

Yes, some people are afraid and some people just don't want to dance.

Generally it's a good idea to take a break between tips. There are occasions, however, when it is better to keep dancing for a longer time without a break.

First tip

If there are enough dancers on the floor, start with forming a large circle holding hands with partners.

For the occasional dance where all the dances are the same gender or when there are many more of one gender than the other, be prepared to use terms like Bell's and Beau's instead of ladies and gentlemen.

In the circle have fun with circle left, right, ladies, men up to the middle and back, dosado, swing and promenade.

Optionally break the circle into squares or finish the first tip in a circle.

Following tips

Good calls to feature in subsequent tips are promenade 1/2, pass thru, promenade single file, make stars (right, left, heads, sides, men, ladies) right and left grand, arm turns, ladies in center back to back, backtrack.

If dancers are exceptionally talented you could consider right and left thru, ladies chain and half of the grand square.

Consider intermixing square dance tips with simple line dances, circle dances, contra dances (Virginia Reel) and easy to follow gimmicks like the hand dance or spiral serpent dance.

Simple line dances (i.e. Birdie dance, YMCA, Hokey Pokey, Bunny hop) work especially well with young children.

Other popular line dances I have used at square dance parties are Macarena, Cha Cha Slide, Electric Slide, Amos Moses and the Wobble.

Closing tip

As with a club dance end the party dance on a high. Use bouncy, upbeat music. Instead of a singing call consider morphing the squares to a circle. In the circle call face partner and right and left grand all the way around.

Another option with a circle do the spiral serpentine gimmick. With Couples, consider doing a grand march.

Music Resources

Kalox-1151 Charles Polka, Mac Gregor 699, Okey Pokey/Bunny Hop, Columbia, Little Black Book, RCA Amos Moses, Capital William Tell Overture(Glen Campble), Kalox 1112 Gand Colonel Spin, Decca Jingle Bell Rock, Stardust Electric Boogie, ESP 001 Birdie Song, Ashton101, Bingo Waltz, RCA Macarena