

“Tips for Your Tips”

A series devoted to helping you become a more confident dancer

Space: The Dancer’s Frontier

Dancing involves people moving across the dance floor to music. How you use the space will affect how smoothly and easily you dance.

1. Keeping your square “tight” or compact makes it easier to *identify your square’s formation at any given time; identify your position in it; and keep your formation neat* (lines, waves, and columns should be straight, and parallel to the walls and each other). Dancing in a compact square is more relaxing because it is easier to complete the calls in the allotted time without having to rush or run. Also, you can more comfortably touch hands with adjacent dancers while keeping your shoulders and elbows relaxed. In square dancing, neatness counts. If your column is not straight, adjust your position so that you are directly lined up with the other dancers in your column.

2. “Square breathing” is similar to your chest moving out and in while you are inhaling and exhaling. When Heads Promenade 1/2 Way is called from a static square, the side dancers step forward temporarily so the heads don’t have to travel as far. When a call leaves your square very spread out, adjust back in (“tighten up” the square) to make it easier to see your formation and do the next call.

3. Anticipate how much space you need to cover for your part of the call, and modify your pace and stride length accordingly. During All Eight Circulate, out-facing end dancers must take longer strides and move faster because they need to cover a longer distance than the other dancers; conversely, the other dancers need to take shorter strides. During Couples Trade, the centermost dancers must take extremely small steps. During Relay the Deucey (a Plus call), dancers must alternately take longer and shorter strides for the square to smoothly and successfully execute the call.

4. During a passing action (such as Pass Thru), dancers must move off their track as they pass the other dancer, *followed by* adjusting back onto their track. If there is limited space available, you may need to turn slightly sideways to avoid bumping into another dancer.

5. Keep in mind the footprints that should be occupied at the end of a call *while* you are performing the call. For example, the same two spots on the floor should be occupied both before and after a Courtesy Turn. For this to happen, the left hand dancer must back up while the right hand dancer moves forward. Otherwise, the resulting couples will not be facing one another directly. During Boys Run, the girl must step into the boy’s initial spot for the couple to occupy the same two spots on the floor at the end of the call.

6. During Step to a Wave, *each* dancer must adjust sideways slightly. After the call, the resulting waves should be parallel and lined up.

I welcome comments on this column and suggestions for future columns. Feel free to contact me at LTPT1@yahoo.com or 732-577-9413. Happy dancing!

Jan Thompson