

Tips for Your Tips

A series devoted to helping you become a more confident dancer

DBD (Dance by Definition) – Which Hand Do I Use?

To start many calls, you must know with which hand to begin. Right and Left Thru tells you in its name: Start with the right hand. Allemande Left is another easy one: Extend your left hand. With Do Paso, usually the caller will say, “Partner by the left, corner by the right.” But, what if the initial hand is not explicitly named?

1. **Swing Thru** *always* starts with a *trade by the right hand* regardless of whether the dancers are in a right-hand or left-hand wave. Therefore, when in a left-hand wave, first the center two dancers trade by their right before they and their adjacent end dancers trade by their left. Only when the caller specifies **Left Swing Thru** is the first trade done with the left hand.
2. **Spin the Top** *always* begins with *each end dancer trading with the adjacent center dancer* regardless of whether the dancers are in a right-hand or left-hand wave. From a left-hand wave, the initial trades are done by the left, followed by the new centers Cast Three-Quarters by the right while the end two dancers travel forward (counter-clockwise) around the outside in a quarter circle.
3. **Spin Chain Thru, Spin Chain the Gears (Plus), and Spin Chain and Exchange the Gears (Plus)** all start like Spin the Top (i.e., each end dancer of the wave trades with the adjacent center dancer). NOTE: The names of these four calls all start with the word “Spin.” The definition of the call is the same for right- and left-hand waves; what changes is the hand by which you do each successive part.
4. **Fan the Top (Plus) and Peel the Top (Plus)** both have the center dancers cast three-quarters, regardless of the handedness of the wave – just as with Spin the Top. What differs is the action of the end dancers of the wave while the centers cast. NOTE: The names of these three calls all end with the word “Top.” One can think of it as Top = Centers Cast Three-Quarters.
5. **Square Thru** always begins with a right hand pull by. Only when the caller specifies **Left Square Thru** is the first pull by done with the left hand.
6. **Flutterwheel** starts with the right-hand dancers going in to the center and turning by the right forearms. Although the right-hand dancer is frequently a woman, gender is not part of the definition. **Reverse Flutterwheel** is initiated by the left-hand dancers going in to the center and turning by the left forearms.
7. **Scoot Back** begins with the in-facing dancers stepping straight forward to join adjacent forearms (i.e., the arm to the center of the box). From the more common right-hand box, the turn is by the right forearm while the out-facing dancers run right into the vacated spots. From a left-hand box, the turn is by the left forearm and the run is to the left. The caller does not have to say Left Scoot Back since the action is defined by the handedness of the box; callers who use that term are trying to help the dancers know by which forearm to turn and which direction to run.
8. **Follow Your Neighbor (Plus)** is similar to Scoot Back regarding the arm used to turn and the direction in which to loop.

Aren't you glad we have only two hands? ☺ Happy dancing!

Jan Thompson

Visit nnjsda.org/grand_square and click on Tips for Your Tips to read all the helpful articles in this series.