

Square Dance Terminology

Angel – An experienced square dancer who helps in classes by dancing with the students.

Call – a.) A distinct square dance maneuver that the caller “calls” to the dancers and they perform. Examples: Allemande Left, Star Through, etc.
b.) A “song” called by the caller using many individual “calls” in a choreographed sequence. Examples: Patter Call and Singing Call.

Dangle – A Dangle is an item which hangs from a dancer’s nametag to commemorate a special dance or achieving a notable dancing accomplishment. Common dangles include an “angel” for having assisted new dance students through an entire class session.

Halfway Dance – A dance where the caller only uses calls from the Basic List (51 calls, through Ferris Wheel)

Mainstream Dance – A dance where the caller only uses calls from the Basic and Mainstream lists. (68 calls, through Recycle)

Patter Call - (NOT “Pattern”) A quick succession of spoken or sing-song delivered dance calls usually accompanied by music, generally without lyrics. The arrangement of calls may appear “on-the-fly” with calls randomly strung together. Sometimes planned in advance by the caller or may be improvised by the caller as the dancers are moving. The primary purpose of patter calls is to give dancers a challenge by surprising them with unexpected arrangements and calls. Also known as a “Hash Call”.

Plus Dance – A dance where the caller uses a variety calls from the Basic, Mainstream, and Plus Lists. (100 calls through Sin Chain and Exchange the Gears)

Pettipants – An extra garment layer worn under a ladies petticoat for modesty so underwear will not show while twirling.

Ribbon – Special occasion dances are usually sold ahead of time, but instead of issuing a paper ticket, the dancers is given a ribbon to use as their admission ticket. The ribbon is then worn at other dances advertising that the wearer is going to that dance.

Short-Pants Dance – A summertime dance where shorts and other loose or cool attire is encouraged due to the warm weather.

Singles Rotation / Singles Board – Singles Rotation is a means of matching singles with other singles at dances. This avoids the awkward request to dance and potential to decline by instead matching dancers more or less randomly. A Singles Board is used to display the matches, letting each single know who they’re paired up with for the next tip.

Singing Call - Singing calls most often done to a recognizable melody with known lyrics. The caller mixes in the dance calls between sections of song lyrics. Generally a singing call uses a pattern where each person dances a portion of the call with others in the square before returning to their original partner at the end. The primary purpose of singing calls is to relax, dance well together as a group, and enjoy the song and the caller's performance.

Square - A set of 4 couples aligned so that each couple faces inward from the four sides of a square.

Square Dancing Levels - The levels of square dancing are as follows:

Basic (Part A - 30 calls, and Part B - 21 calls for a total of 51 calls)

Mainstream (17 additional calls for a total of 68 calls)

Plus (31 additional calls for a total of 100 calls)

Advanced 1 (A1) (46 additional calls for a total of 146 calls)

Advanced 2 (A2) (35 additional calls for a total of 181 calls)

Challenge 1 (C1) (79 additional calls for a total of 260 calls)

Challenge 2 (C2) (86 additional calls for a total of 346 calls)

Challenge 3A (C3A) (83 additional calls for a total of 429 calls)

Challenge 4 (C4) (A C4 dancer typically knows about a 1000 calls)

Challenge 5 (C5) ("Hard" C4 level dancing is sometimes informally called C5)

Stack the Wood – A friendly hug. ☺

Stacking a Square – Making an arrangement before the tip to pre-select dancers who will be in your square. This practice is frowned upon and is seen as exclusionary. However, sometimes done so that students or new dancers can be with friends who can graciously accommodate their mistakes.

Tip - A set of two square dance "songs" usually starting with a Patter Call followed by a Singing Call.

Visitation – An occasion where one square dance club visits another club's dance.

Workshop – A square dance class where the material covered is a review of previously learned calls. An example is when students graduate at "Plus" level, having been taught all the Plus calls, then attend classes to review the Plus calls more thoroughly.

Yellowrock – Another word for give your partner a hug