

Tips for calling a successful Community (“One Night Stand”) Dance

These are types of events where it will likely be most people's first time at this kind of dancing. They want to have fun “right now,” without having to spend a lot of time learning, or having to think too much about how to do things. Many of them may never do this kind of dancing again, but you can help them enjoy it NOW! You may have few or no experienced dancers in the group, so they won't be able to help one another if anyone gets lost, like we're used to doing in a Contra or English setting. So it can be **really** helpful to bring “wranglers” or “ringers” along, if you can. These are folks who know this type of dancing, can help you demo moves, entice reluctant dancers to join in, teach by example, or can stand out and help you “herd/guide” dancers as they get confused.

I recommend starting with the easiest dances from each group in the hand-out, and building up to harder dances, interspersed with easier (breather) dances. Try not to teach more than one or two new moves each dance.

Teach dances by walking through two times – with demos, if needed. I don't recommend ever completely dropping out of calling for ONS dances.

Use dances with circles, stars, allemandes, two-hand turns, do-si-do and lines moving (basically figures where the name of the figure tells you what to do). Believe it or not, a courtesy turn is one of the hardest moves to teach, so we usually leave chains and right and left throughs out of ONS dances.

In progressive dances, make sure the progression is clear and easy, such as passing through or moving forward.

For dances with sashays (“chassés”) or “slips” (Galopede, Cumberland Reel and Square, Virginia Reel, etc.) substituting walking down the set and back if necessary (for elderly dancers, etc.) work just fine.

Look for dances where it doesn't matter if you're a lady and a gent as partners. It can be good to not worry about who's dancing which part and who should be on the right or left. Many dances work for this. You interact with your partner and your neighbor, but don't have to worry about who is the lady or the gent.

This doesn't necessarily mean gender-free calling. If you want to do a dance that requires the ladies and gents to do different things, you can address them as such, no matter who is dancing which part. (Or try “lead” and “follow.”) A bag of ties for the ladies dancing the men's part can be helpful.

However, in many dances, you don't have to even mention ladies or gents. The dancers only really have to deal with their partner and their neighbor, or their corner and maybe their opposite (in squares). Also, you may refer to the top couple or the bottom couple, the 1/s or the 2/s, or some other easily identified subset of the dancers. If you have a dance where the two lines do something different, you can label them the “door line” and the “window line,” or something similar.

Bottom line: Enjoy yourself and convey the fun of the dance to new people. You may even recruit some to join community dance groups! Just in case this happens, it's always good to carry cards or fliers for dance groups/events to give out.

Have fun!! :D