

GUIDELINES FOR CREATING THE SQUARE DANCE PROGRAM FOR A CANADIAN NATIONAL CONVENTION

A) ANALYZING SPACE NEEDS AND ALLOCATING SPACE

1) *Allocating sufficient space for the Basic and Mainstream dancers is of primary concern. Since many dancers at these levels cannot dance anywhere else, they have no options except to sit out when the hall is too crowded. Also, since all higher-level dancers may spend some time in the Mainstream hall, allowance must be made for their effect on the total space required.*

2) *When allocating space, the committee should consider the following:*

- a) How many dancers utilized each hall at the preceding National?
- b) What have the dancers indicated regarding their dance halls on their registration forms?
- c) For dancers who plan to dance in several halls, one approach is to assume they spend an equal time in each hall and to fractionalize them when doing the addition.
- d) Also take into consideration that a popular caller will pull in dancers from higher levels and crowd the lower-level halls.
- e) Each square requires about 16 square metres (170 square feet) with wheelchair dancers requiring about 50 square metres (500 square feet).

3) *Each program committee should ensure that statistics about attendance in various halls is gathered either by the MCs or by themselves.*

- a) We recommend that counts be taken hourly. Some may be missed but we should end up with a few for each hall for each session.
- b) These hourly counts should be included in the final report for use by future Nationals.

B) RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING WORKSHOPS

1) *Workshops should be scheduled in each hall.*

- a) We recommend at least one hour each day and no more than 3 hours each day.
- b) Obviously the amount of time allocated to workshops is part of the master plan for the Convention Schedule and the Convention Board should make the final decision.
- c) Also we leave the types of workshops to be presented in the hands of the organizing committee. The types presented below are some of the options used in the past. The comments regarding each type come from callers and dancers across the country.

2) *The following are some possible workshops that have been used in the past listed in order of priority as recommended by the committee.*

- a) Explore some non-standard positions of calls on the hall list. We seem to be in agreement that this is the most profitable type of workshop in terms of improving the dancers' abilities.
- b) Call tough tips with some non-standard positions for calls at the hall level without workshopping. This is intended to clear the hall of the newer dancers at the level and stimulate the competent dancer with some more challenging choreography. Newer dancers should be encouraged to move down a level where they can demonstrate their competence.
- c) Explore calls not on any CALLERLAB program list. Burleson's Encyclopedia offers lots of possibilities or callers might experiment with their own or a friend's new call.
- d) Introduce a few calls from the next level. This has pros and cons and strong opinions on each side.
 - i) On the "con" side it may encourage dancers to progress to the next level and thus weaken our base. If we want to keep dancers at the Mainstream or Plus levels then we should make that level as interesting and fun as possible by exploring the calls to the fullest. Stick to extended applications for workshops.

- ii) On the "pro" side it may satisfy the craving for new material without moving to the next level. Also dancers might find that they are not ready to deal with the calls at the next level and the corresponding assumption of competence at their current level.
- iii) Since conventions are an opportunity to experience new things, this clearly falls into that category. By presenting such workshops we are giving dancers an opportunity to sample something and decide for themselves whether they like it or not.
- iv) "Intro to" workshops might also satisfy dancers who have partially learned the next list but who are not ready to attempt dancing at the next level. Without such workshops those dancers might be tempted to venture into the next level and thus lower the floor level there, which would further encourage upward drift.

3) Scheduling can allow workshops in one hall to be back-to-back with regular dancing in the hall below in level so that dancers can choose whether or not they want to attend a workshop.

4) Callers assigned to do the workshops should have indicated willingness and ability on the questionnaire, and should be told well in advance of the Convention.

5) Because of the number of callers involved, it seems more organized for the Programmer to designate moves to be workshopped rather than leaving the decision to the callers. Otherwise dancers may end up workshopping the same move more than once. (Often assignment is done at Mainstream and Plus but left up to the callers at the higher levels perhaps because the program committee does not have the necessary knowledge. However, there are plenty of willing higher-level callers who would help with this problem.)

C) GUIDELINES FOR ASSIGNING LEADERS TO ROOMS AND NUMBER OF TIME SLOTS

1) As far as possible each caller who requests time at a given level, should be given some time at that level.

2) If a caller is only willing or able to be present to call for part of the convention, then that caller cannot expect an equal allotment of time slots.

3) If there are extra time slots available in a hall after each caller who wishes to call there has been assigned one slot, then apply the following criteria in the order presented.

- a) Assign a regular tip to those who were assigned workshop tips (if the caller requested both).
- b) Utilize callers who listed this level as their first choice and who have clubs at this level or are traveling callers who regularly call this level.
- c) For halls where resources are scarce, assign all eligible callers a second tip.

4) If there are not enough time slots in the Mainstream or Plus hall for each caller who wishes to call there to be assigned one slot, then apply the following criteria in the order presented.

- a) Make sure that every caller who wants to call there is given a slot in either Mainstream or Plus paying attention to their personal priority choice.
- b) Try to provide a second slot in the other hall for those assigned workshop time.
- c) Try to provide a second slot in the other hall for those who wish to call only Basic, Mainstream and Plus
- d) Try to provide a second slot to callers who indicate these two halls as their first and second choice and who have clubs at both level or who travel and regularly call both levels. (Definition of "Traveling Caller": one who calls a significant number of dances each year in other regions, provinces or states than their home. And in particular one who calls so many away-from-home dances that the home club schedule is restricted.)

D) COMMENTS REGARDING SHOWCASING

1) Programmers should use some means of judging ability, experience and popularity in determining who is allocated the calling slots in the main halls during "high attendance time" and "prime time".

2) What is "high attendance time" and "prime time"?

- a) Morning dance sessions tend to be the least popular to dancers.
- b) Time slots close to meal times tend to have lower attendance.
- c) 2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. and 8:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. tend to have the highest dancer attendance.
- d) Friday and Saturday evening in the Mainstream, Plus and A1 halls are generally considered "prime time".
- e) Other times might also be considered "prime time" such as immediately after the banner parade or opening ceremonies or the final hour on Saturday evening.

3) Factors to consider in ranking callers when selecting those privileged to be assigned calling slots in the "high attendance times" and during "prime time":

- a) Do they want to call during "prime time"?
- b) Do they regularly call for a club at this level?
- c) Do they regularly call special dances at this level?
- d) Does their Calling Experience Data indicate sufficient experience to justify a "prime time" slot?
- e) Do you have separate confirmation of their ability from some other source besides their questionnaire?
- f) Since we are suggesting guidelines for a Canadian National Convention, one option might be to attempt to present a representative sampling of our best talent from across the country.
- g) One dance session might be used to showcase local or regional talent.
- h) Another dance session might be used to showcase foreign visitors.

4) Showcasing is obviously a touchy issue but random selection of callers would not be a good idea because that might place an inexperienced and timid newer caller immediately after a "big-name" caller on Saturday night. That is definitely a recipe for intimidation and disaster!

5) Ultimately the choice of who calls during "prime time" is in the hands of the programmer. The goal is to provide the best possible experience for the dancers. Thus we would recommend the use of our best resources during prime time. We can only try to ensure that the programmer has accurate information regarding the ability of the callers available and an understanding of the factors that we consider important when assigning time slots.

E) SUGGESTIONS FOR DEALING WITH THE MECHANICS OF SCHEDULING

1) Obtain a database of information from the callers by requesting answers to a questionnaire. Include the following kinds of information:

CONVENTION DATA:

- a) Caller's and Partner's Name
- b) Mailing address, phone number, e-mail etc.
- c) Times during convention available to call

	Morning	Afternoon	Evening	Comments:
Thursday				
Friday				
Saturday				

- d) Check categories where you feel confident and willing to participate.
 Indicate your first five choices. Note: Types of workshops might be different)
 (A check in the Mainstream column for "Intro to Next" means you would call an Intro to Plus
 in the Mainstream Hall. N-S Workshop = Non-Standard Workshop)

	Basic	Mainstream	Plus	A1	A2	C1	C2	C3
Dancing Tip								
Singing Only								
Intro to Next								
N-S Workshop								
Tough Tip								

- e) Please rank the following with #1 indicating which you feel is your strongest performance.

_____ Teaching
 _____ Regular Patter and Standard Choreography
 _____ Interesting and Different Choreography
 _____ Singing Calls

- f) Nearly all callers will be assigned some MC time.
 If you would like more MC time than the average please indicate here and explain why.

- g) Indicate other areas where you expect to participate so we can avoid scheduling conflicts.
 Rounds Contrás Clogging Teens Panels Other

- h) Would you be available to call at the
 Trail In? Trail Out?

- i) Rate the following with respect to your personal reasons for attending and wishing to call at
 this National Convention.

1 = very important 5 = not important

- 1 2 3 4 5 For the calling experience
 1 2 3 4 5 To please the dancers
 1 2 3 4 5 To become known
 1 2 3 4 5 To obtain bookings
 1 2 3 4 5 Want some Prime Time
 1 2 3 4 5 Other reason _____

- j) Would you like us to limit your calling time so that you have more dancing time? If so please
 explain your priorities.

- k) Do you have any special requests for us to try to accommodate?

- l) List other callers attending the convention with whom you would enjoy sharing a tip.

EXPERIENCE DATA:

- m) How many years have you been calling?
 Has it been continuous?
 What is your current number of dances called per year?

- n) List Clubs for which you call on a regular basis
 Club Name # Squares CALLERLAB Program

- o) List the Classes you have taught in the last 3 years

- p) List other National Conventions for which you have called.

- q) List local or regional conventions where you have participated during the last two years.
- r) Estimate the average number of special dances that you call per year.
 Local? _____
 Regional (within your Province or State or Area)? _____
 National (outside your region but in your country)? _____
 International (outside your country and not nearby)? _____
 Other? _____ (explain)
- s) List Square Dance Leadership organizations to which you belong.

2) Set a deadline for registration of callers and the receipt of these questionnaires (usually between January and March for a July convention).

3) Make a large chart showing the names of the callers down the side and the time slots across the top. Set up a code for each hall and type of tip.

4) Begin scheduling where your resources are scarcest (probably higher-level workshops).

F) GUIDELINES FOR M.C. DUTIES

1) The Mainstream and Plus halls should have an MC at all times. Any other hall where the scheduling is tight should also have an MC to keep track of the time.

2) MC's should not be needed when each caller has half an hour or more to call. In those halls, callers can be asked to introduce the caller following them and help with the sound adjustment. This usually applies to the higher-level halls where callers tend to be busier and do not have time to MC for each other.

3) MC's should be programmed to call either prior to, during, or after the time they are on duty as MC. If they are programmed to call after being an MC then they have an opportunity to assess the dancing ability of the floor before calling. If they are programmed to call before acting as MC then each caller automatically introduces the next caller and becomes the MC. Note that clocks on each stage helps to keep all halls synchronized with each other.

These guidelines were written by a CWDIA Committee formed at the Ottawa National Convention in July 1998 (CWDIA = Canadian Western Dance Instructors Association). Our mandate was to write some guidelines to assist future program committees with the task of creating a program for a National Convention that is enjoyed by the dancers and viewed as fair and satisfying by the callers. The document was completed for presentation at the Vancouver Canadian National Convention in 2000.

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