

2025 – Workshop for Angels Handout

Why Be an Angel

The success of any class depends as much on the attitude of the club as it does on the ability of the students. Any dancer can serve as an Angel—but not every dancer should. It takes patience, kindness, and awareness to be an effective one.

The most successful square dance callers began because they wanted to promote and expand the activity. Angels should share that same goal. If your main motivation is to “show new dancers how it’s really done,” you may unintentionally create conflict.

Make New Dancers Comfortable

- **Invite others to dance:** Avoid letting new dancers fend for themselves—ask them to dance with you and/or join your square.
- **Square up thoughtfully:** A good rule of thumb is for Angels to square up as the second and third couples.
- **Heads or Sides:** Having experienced dancers square up as Heads OR Sides ensures every student has a strong corner.
- **Avoid reshuffling squares:** Once dancers are settled, moving people around can feel judgmental. Plan ahead to avoid this.

Maintaining Standards

High standards keep the experience enjoyable and rewarding. Having low/no standards leads to frustration and discouragement.

- **Positive advertising:** Avoid phrases like “*Two left feet? No problem.*” Square dancing is fun and accessible, but it also requires effort and commitment.
- **Respect individual limits:** Sometimes it’s better for someone to step away than to force them to stay and struggle.
- **Balance compassion with standards:** It’s possible to accommodate unique needs while still maintaining expectations.

Respecting the Caller

Every class has only one teacher. Resist the urge to give your own explanations in the square. If a student asks a question, direct it to the caller/teacher.

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Gender Roles and Clarity

Square dancing uses the terms ladies/gentlemen, boy/girl, man/woman for identification. When there is a gender imbalance, some dancers will learn the other role. Identifying your dance role out loud (e.g., saying “boy” or “girl” when dancing) helps everyone.

This works even when dancing your traditional role—saying the role aloud reinforces learning.

Break Time Matters

During breaks, avoid re-teaching calls. While it may be tempting to “strike while the iron is hot,” the brain needs downtime to process and decompress.

Use breaks to: Rest, Socialize, and Talk about non-dance topics.

Helping Without Overhelping

A little guidance can be useful, but too much robs dancers of the chance to learn. Resist the urge to pull or push someone through a call. Allow dancers to get a little lost—it’s how they learn.

Think of it like using GPS: you don’t really learn the route until you drive it yourself.

When Squares Break Down

Letting a square break down is better than shoving people into position.

Broken squares provide feedback to the caller about what needs more review. Mistakes create discomfort, but working through them builds confidence.

Encourage laughter and moving on—it’s part of learning.

Stacking Squares

Some dancers prefer familiar partners. While understandable, try to avoid “stacking” squares to accommodate fear. Instead, encourage dancers to mix and mingle. It will help build stronger dance community.

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No Bad Dancers

Often, what looks like lack of skill is really a chemistry issue. Not everyone is immediately compatible. Pairing students with Angels helps balance squares and improves the dancing experience.

Avoid Talking While Dancing

Before speaking during a tip, ask yourself: *Is this worth distracting from the caller?* Almost always, the answer is no. Save comments for the break.

Avoid Frills and Flourishes

Never initiate spins, twirls, or frills with class members. These can interfere with learning and feel overwhelming.

Frills are fun later, once dancers are capable and confident. If you're unsure if it's the right time, it's too soon.

Hands Up!

Touching hands after every call keeps squares stable. Most breakdowns happen when dancers forget to connect.

Make hand contact after *every* call, every time. This habit is equally important for new and experienced dancers.

Student-Level Dances

The more often dancers attend, the faster they improve. Research shows that up to 90% of new learning fades within 7 days.

Student-level dances are one of the best tools for reinforcing learning.

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Remember to Have Fun

Classes succeed when everyone—students, Angels, and callers—enjoys themselves. For callers, it's work, but the best kind of work. While a class *can* be taught without Angels, it's much easier (and more joyful) with your support.

Thank you for being an Angel! Your efforts are appreciated.