

Degree of Difficulty and How We Must Think by Bill Harrison

While dancing, all parts of a dancer's body are working as a team. The ears take in the calls; the brain decides what to do, sending signals to the body to move. If the material delivered is too difficult for dancers to understand it becomes impossible them to dance.

There are two possible parts of controlling a caller's delivery. One is controlling the difficulty of the material you call and the second is helping dancers cope with the level of difficulty planned for them.

Judgment:

Judgment of the degree of difficulty can contribute in what makes a dance a success or a failure.

Your brain runs with 3 basic limits. These are 3 important items to remember. If you remember these items and take time to judge the floor while you are calling, success will come much easier.

1) How much can the brain keep track of at once?

This is often referred to as "Short Term Memory". Dancers must remember the name of the call and what direction they must move to execute the call.

2) How fast can the brain retrieve calls from memory.

Better understanding of a call allows the brain to retrieve the information faster. Calls with higher frequency of use can be retrieved faster than those that are used less frequency. Calls that sound alike or feel alike can have the same negative reaction.

3) How fast the brain can react to what's coming in the ears as it tells the body what to do.

This is the process of reacting to the information being delivered and implementing the command.

Right and Left Thru, teach:

The example that was shown will give some insight to the many things that we take for granted of dancers. There are many obstacles that enter the picture of calling and the material or types of material in which we decide to use for our dances.

Call Frequency and Helper Words:

Call frequency is a big factor of how successful the dance you have planned is going to be. Many have fallen in the trap where you arrive at a dance, set your equipment up and are ready to begin. Just seconds or maybe 15 minutes before you begin the President or booking contact, walks up and says "give it to them, they can do anything you want to call from any position". The first thing that happens is, we remember all of the calls that are not called as frequently, based on our experience. "Wham!" the floor has been broken down, not one square is dancing, and what has anyone gained. Nothing is gained and the session could be very long and frustrating.

This situation should have been handled better. Take the call or calls that are not called as frequently and use them to your advantage. Use helper words to make the people successful.

Example 1:

Set the dancers up so that you can use helper words to make them successful, such as Lines of 4, Boys on the end and Girls as the centers. Call Load The Boat, the helper words would be Boys work on the outside, Girls work in the center (*middle*). If you needed to cue or help, this would become easier by having the same sex to deal with. As we all know the most difficult part would be the center four, so just help the Girls.

The same would go for Fan The Top, having the same sex as the centers would be much easier to use helper words.

Example 2:

Heads Lead Right, Circle to a Line, Ends 1/2 Load the Boat,

If most callers would have read this written in a notes service or magazine, most would have used it as written. This could lead to failure. First, the frequency of Ends 1/2 Load the Boat is next to zero. Secondly, there are no helper words from the caller who chose to use this. Just because something is interesting and has been written by someone else, does not mean success is always going to be there for whomever decides to use the material.

Here is how this could have been handled using better judgment.

Higher success can be achieved by having the same sex as the ends and using helper words the dancer's brain can quickly access. Boys/Girls do 1/2 of a Load the Boat; Boys/Girls will pass thru, turn the corner and pass by the next Boy/Girl and stay facing out. Helper words can be used while they are dancing without interfering with the dance action. The dancer expression shows success and amazement of what they have accomplished with your usage of the different choreography.

Example 3:

Let's take Follow Your Neighbor and Spread as another example. In a Boy/Boy, Girl/Girl, Ocean Wave, call Follow Your Neighbor and just the Boys Spread. The helper words could be Boys have Right's and Girls have left's joined. Adding to the complexity of the action many dancers believe Follow Your Neighbor and Spread to be one call, not two separate calls.

In the above examples success is accomplished by creating setups that allow easy use of helper word to guide the dancers through interesting choreography.

Creating Creativity:

If you are writing material or playing with your checkers to see how combinations work, keep in mind the following:

Uncommon Calls: Fan the Top from facing couples, or Spin the Top from facing couples.

Obscure Call Usage: Heads, Square Thru 4, Sides Sashay, Step to a wave, Boys begin a Spin The Top. How many dancers would know how to begin or how to finish?

Unusual Starting Formations: Ocean waves- Peel the Top. Columns- Peel the Top. Here the dancers could have difficulty locating who they must work with, let alone how can this call be completed from here.

Unfamiliar Ending Formations: Often this is the result of an unusual starting formation. An example would be to have a line of 4 with a boys in the middle, then call pass thru, wheel and deal. The tendency for the couples half sashayed would be to repair the arrangement. Another example would be ocean waves with girls as ends and boys as centers and call recycle, tendency would be to repair the arrangement.

Unusual Use of The Rules of The Calls: It is vital for callers to know the rules of each and every call. This does not mean that a caller has to call through C4 to be a better. The more one knows the rules of the calls, the more success he will have with creative choreography.

For example, Slide Thru from waves.

Higher Degree Of Difficulty:

In Plus program, Cut the Diamond gives dancers some problems if the points are facing the same direction. The dancers tend to want to trade with Right/Left hands. If the Points were facing the same way, the trade would be a Partner Trade. Use this combination, have same sex as the points, example line of four with Boys on the end, Girls as the centers, then have the boys pass thru, the girls pass the ocean, now call Cut The Diamond. Helper words become easy when same sexes are doing the same parts. Such as, Cut The Diamond the Boys Slide together and partner trade and after the call is completed, state that the Boys are facing in.

In Conclusion:

The key is to have dancer success. To obtain this you must have good judgement of the floor, useful knowledge of the rules of the calls, and a vocabulary of knowledge in helper words. The longer you have to explain what you want the dancers to do may cause failure. The dancers want to dance.

Remember that dancer's dance by what they hear the most. This goes for positioning, usage of the calls, to patterns that they hear the most. Each dance is a different dance and if you wish to use variety or different choreography, you must sell what you want them to dance. Yes, each dance you are not only an entertainer, but also a sales person. You are in control of your own destiny, be it a success or failure. Use good judgment when being creative.