

Country Sunshiners Guide for Square Dancers

THE SQUARE DANCER'S PLEDGE

“With all my ability I will do my best to help keep square dancing the enjoyable, wholesome, friendly, and inspiring activity I know it to be. This I pledge in the sincere desire that it may grow naturally and unexploited in the coming years and be available to all those who seek the opportunity for friendship, fun and harmony through square dancing.” by Carole Leamon

SQUARE DANCE CREED

If you belong to a club, in heaven's name work for it. If the caller gives you fun and good fellowship, support him, speak well of him, stand by him and the club he represents. If put to the pinch, an ounce of loyalty is worth a pound of cleverness. If you must condemn and eternally disparage, resign from the club and when you are outside damn to your heart's content. But as long as you are a part of square dancing do not condemn it. If you do, you are loosening the ties that have made dancing fun and at the first high wind that comes along you may be uprooted and blown away and may never know the reason for losing your friends in square dancing.

S... Smile

Q... Quiet when the caller is teaching

U... U always thank the caller for a pleasant evening

A... Arrive on time

R... Reserve your criticism for behind closed doors

E... Enjoy the company of everybody

D... Don't ever pass an open square (a square looking for additional dancers)

A... Always wear the proper attire

N... Neatness counts

C... Courtesy to ALL is a must!

I... Inattentiveness breeds broken squares

N... Nice corners and partners are a pleasure...be one

G... Go! And enjoy yourself!

INFORMATION FOR NEW (AND NOT SO NEW) SQUARE DANCERS

Welcome to the world of modern square dancing. The Country Sunshiners Club members hope you find it as interesting and enjoyable as we have found it. To help get you started and feel more comfortable we have put together some information on the things we wanted to know when we started square dancing.

Over the years the activity of square dancing has developed some basic ground rules and etiquette. These rules or standards are largely based on consideration and courtesy for those with whom we dance, and can help make the dancing more enjoyable for all.

- **Cost:** How much does it cost to square dance with the Country Sunshiners? Regular dances are \$7.00 per person and special event dances are \$8.00 per person. There is also an \$10.00 per person annual charge which includes insurance, CDCDA and Club memberships.
- **Attire:** What types of clothes do I need for square dancing? Square dancing costumes are not a requirement for learning to square dance, although most people who continue with square dancing find that they eventually do wish to wear square dancing clothes. The essential equipment for square dancing is a pair of clean, soft-soled comfortable shoes to protect the floor of the dance hall and the dancer's feet. Long-sleeved shirts are also recommended for men. Personal cleanliness is important in an activity where we exercise vigorously and in close contact with one another. A good scent-free deodorant (some people are allergic to scents) and a good mouthwash are good silent partners for the square dancer.
- **Badges:** You will notice the members of the Club wear a name badge which has their name and the name of their Club on it. These badges are very useful when you go out dancing to identify the wearer to dancers in both our Club and in other square dance clubs. The Club will order these badges and supply them to you at cost. Ask the Treasurer for more details.
- **Please be at your dancing and thinking best:** Because the enjoyment of the other people in a square depends upon you and your coordination, and square dancing requires the ability to quickly follow a significant number of different directions, the consumption of alcohol and/or other drugs before and during square dancing is discouraged.
- **When:** Our square dances usually start at 7:00 pm. Tardiness amongst square dancers may mean that one late couple stops three other couples from dancing. Please try to arrive a few minutes early so that you are ready to dance at the scheduled start time. It is important while learning to dance that you come to dance every Friday night and on designated Saturday mornings if at all possible. If you normally come dancing as a couple and one partner has to miss a night, the other partner should make sure they come and keep up to date.
- **Where:** We dance at the Duggan Community Centre, in the main hall. Our Club has an arrangement with the Community League which allows us to use the main hall for our dances on Fridays and some Saturday mornings at a significantly reduced rate (normal rent is \$350/night). In return we provide volunteer time to the Duggan Community League at their

fund raising events – bingos and casino. We appreciate your support in volunteering to work at least two bingo or casino fundraising events per member each year. Ask your Executive for further information.

- Food, drink and smoking: There is water, coffee or tea available at every dance, and a light snack is usually provided by the Club. Smoking is not permitted inside the dance hall.
- Host and hostess: Each dance night is usually divided into a beginner's section and a mainstream section. Between the two we have a 10-minute break so that the new dancers can get to meet and socialize with the other members of the Club. Each week four members are asked to be hosts and hostesses. The Club depends upon its volunteers to be a success. As a Club member, please endeavour to fulfill the duties of host and make the occasion pleasant for all concerned. Arrive early, greet guests and members, keep up the supply of drinks, set out the snack at the appropriate time, then stay after the dance to help clean up the hall. At the start of the year the senior dancers perform this role but later on in the year the new dancers will also be asked to take a turn.
- The dance format itself: The dance is divided into a number of sections each consisting of two "subdances" (called a "tip") followed by a break to rest and for refreshments.
- Be a good listener. Your caller directs the plays and signals the movements he wants you to dance. To react correctly you can't be talking or thinking of other things. You may not need the help but others may. If your caller is explaining something, talking not only distracts you, but also others. Therefore, you don't help the members of your square by talking. If the caller is walking dancers through a call, do not get ahead of the caller's prompting. It is inconsiderate to fellow dancers that may require this help to obtain a good understanding of a call, and may lead to the break down of the square later. It is best to have one teacher at a time. Individual dancers can help best by being in the right place at the right time.
- How to learn properly: Try to understand not which position does what, but the actions or implementation of the call from the various positions in the square. This is known in the square dance world as DBD – Dancing By Definition.
- Get into squares quickly: When the caller announces "square it up" for the next tip; join the square nearest you that needs dancers. If you're looking for a square, let the caller know where you are by raising your hand as you move across the floor. If you need dancers to fill out a square raise a hand with one finger to indicate one couple, two fingers for two couples, etc.
- Be courteous and cooperative: Courtesy and cooperation are always appreciated. Asking a partner for a dance and then saying "Thank You" to all those in the square at the end of the tip is a natural courtesy. In square dancing it is considered bad manners to pass a square needing dancers to fill another. More importantly, never leave a square once you have joined it until the tip is over (if in an emergency you must, then please find a substitute to fill your spot). Square dancing is a cooperative effort dependent upon each member of the square to make a success of the square as a whole, to make the square dance smooth, and a pleasure for all the dancers concerned.

- Take it easy: Square dancing can be strenuous exercise; know your physical limitations and don't exceed them. If need be, take a break, learn through watching and listening.
- Be friendly: You, I, and everyone are the hosts in square dancing. Get acquainted with others in the square, and make a point of dancing with as many dancers as possible during the evening.
- Take hands: Join hands with those beside you immediately after the completion of any figure. This will assist you to see the formation you are in and to progress to the next call.
- Avoid breaking down the square: Trust your caller, and do as he or she directs. If you stop you may cause a needless breakdown of the square. If the caller gives a call you have not heard before, the caller will often tell you how to do the call after the caller has said its name, and talk you through the call.
- Help others: To help someone who is lost, avoid talking; instead use hand signals. If you are lost, keep your head raised, and turn your head in all directions to see where to go, then move when you have determined where to go. Don't wander around. Often others in your square will indicate where you should go.
- Keep the square small, and lined up with the walls: If you can easily touch your corner, and are lined up straight then a turning call is less likely to disorient the dancers. Members of a square will also be more likely to be able to complete a movement before the next call.

Perhaps some of the above “road signs” will help direct the enthusiast on the path to being a better dancer. See you on the dance floor.