

Tips for Your Tips

A series devoted to helping you become a more confident dancer

Intro to DBD (Dance by Definition, or Don't Be Deterred)

For those who began square dancing without learning the definitions of the calls, just hearing “DBD” is enough to make them shake their heads. Choreography that puts you in different positions does not have to be nerve-wracking.

Although it is called Dance by Definition, there is more to DBD than memorizing the definitions.

1. Adjust your mindset. You CAN do this! Breathe. Stay calm so you can think clearly and react smoothly.
2. Listen carefully. Square dancing is Simon Sez put to music. Don't assume! In addition to the name of the specific call, pay close attention to key words such as boys/girls, right/left, centers/ends, heads/sides, and split/all 8. You need to know when the caller is speaking to you.
3. Don't anticipate the next call; wait to hear what the caller says next. Don't expect a certain combination of calls just because that is what the caller “usually” calls. Dancing to a variety of callers broadens your horizons and exposes you to different choreographic combinations. Even the most experienced dancers can learn something new.
4. Be open to the new and different. Don't always try to make things “normal.” While executing a call, your facing direction or the sequence of your actions may be unfamiliar. However, don't assume you or another dancer is wrong just because things are not standard.
5. Don't expect a certain ending position. A different starting position or facing direction will alter where you'll be at the end of a call. Don't “fix” your final position – it may not be broken.
6. Trust your caller. The caller is the captain and your square is the ship; trust him or her to navigate you through sometimes bumpy waters.

In short, do not dance by “feel,” which may lead you astray; definitions never will. I will share more tips on approaching DBD in future articles. In the meantime, you may refer to some of my previous *Grand Square* articles,* especially “Calls and Their Definitions: Our Square Dance Language,” “Who Am I? Identifying Your Place in Your Square,” and “Walls Are Our Friends.” Happy dancing! *Jan Thompson*
(I would like to thank caller Betsy Gotta for conferring with me on this article. Betsy conducts Plus DBD workshops during the year.)

[*Editor's note: All Tips for Your Tips articles can be viewed on the NNJSDA website by visiting nnjsda.org/grand_square, clicking on Tips for Your Tips, and selecting an article by title.]

SQUARE DANCE CALLS

Useful Websites for Definitions, Animations, and Videos/DVDs

CALLERLAB.org (click on Dance Programs)

ceder.net/def

tamtwirlers.org/tamination

opensquares.de/basic.html

saddlebrookesquares.com/lessons.htm

gottadance.eboard.com (videos and DVDs for purchase)