

“Tips for Your Tips”

A series devoted to helping you become a more confident dancer

Playing with Ocean Waves

Many calls in the Basic and Mainstream programs are defined with a starting formation of facing dancers. However, to make choreography more interesting and challenging, some callers will use a mini-wave or an ocean wave as the starting formation for those same calls. The Facing Couples/Ocean Wave Rule states that anything that can be done from facing couples can be done from an ocean wave and vice versa. Thinking quickly and knowing how to proceed from your formation will determine whether your square is successful or not.

Pass Thru – The majority of the time, Pass Thru is called when you are facing another dancer. From this position, imagine the call has two parts: (1) taking one step to be side-by-side with the person (right shoulder to right shoulder), and (2) taking another step to move past him, thus completing the passing action. However, if you are in an ocean wave when Pass Thru is called, quickly think to yourself, “I have already done the first part. Now I need to take only one more step to complete the call.” In short, Ocean Wave = half of a Pass Thru or Pull By.

This thought process can be extended and applied to other calls. In each case, regardless of whether the starting position is facing dancers, a mini-wave, or an ocean wave, *the end position is the same.*

Right and Left Thru – The step that completes the passing action is followed *immediately* by a Courtesy Turn. Note: The Courtesy Turn comes a lot faster than you think.

Do Sa Do – The step that completes the passing action is followed immediately by taking a step to one’s right to pass back-to-back with the other dancer.

Square Thru – The step that completes the pull by action is followed immediately by turning one quarter (90°) into your box, followed by extending your left hand for the next pull by. Note: You will be working with the dancers from your original wave.

Turn Thru – From a right-handed ocean wave, the Turn Thru is with the person whose right hand you are holding.

Slide Thru – The step that completes the passing action is followed immediately by men turning one quarter to their right and ladies turning one quarter to their left. Note: Do not assume you will end in facing lines; follow the definition.

Right and Left Grand – Imagine your square is in a thar position, which is really two ocean waves crossing each other in the middle. Following the same thought process, it requires taking only one step forward to complete the first right hand pull by (usually followed by left, right, and left pull bys). In the case of Weave the Ring, the first step forward completes the first right shoulder pass.

Load the Boat (Plus) – When starting from a tidal wave, frequently the caller will helpfully suggest that dancers rear back before they begin to execute the call. When you rear back to momentarily “become” two facing lines, it is easier to recognize whether you are a center or an end, and to see which dancer you are “facing” and thus with whom you will interact.

Go ahead: Get your feet wet, and have fun playing with ocean waves!

Jan Thompson