

Les Gotcher

On

Sight Calling

The Four Basic Positions In Square Dancing

1. The Static Position
2. Lines Of Four, facing IN, or OUT
3. Double Pass Thru or Completed Double Pass Thru
4. The Eight Chain Thru Position

The first thing to learn is that there are **two** positions for each of the four basic ones. When you are working from Lines of Four you will find the second position by having dancers Bend The Line.

When working from the Double Pass Thru position, keep in mind that when you have the dancers Double Pass Thru, first couple go left, next couple go right you are immediately forming lines of four. At this point the dancers are IN sequence. However, after the Double Pass Thru, have first couple go RIGHT, next couple go LEFT, you are still forming lines of four but the dancers are now OUT of sequence.

One of the most important things a caller should learn right from the beginning is the fact that a Right & Left Thru will always — no, not always, but *almost always*, change the sequence. There is always an exception to any rule.

One other thing a caller should learn from the beginning is **sequence**. Sequence is determined by the position of the man. The ladies are not involved at all where sequence is concerned. I will be the first to admit that this is very chauvinistic but, *please* don't blame that on me. It was decided many, many years before I happened to come along. The ladies can be with opposites, or corners, or right hand man, but when they promenade HOME, they always go to the man's home position. That's just a fact of life and if you are a square dancer, accept it.

Now let's go back to that Static Position. If we have the heads do a Square Thru Four Hands everyone will be facing their corner. From this position we never call the Left Allemande because the dancers have just used the Left Hand. Instead we usually do a Right & Left Thru, then a Dive Thru, then a THREE QUARTER SQUARE THRU, leaving the Left Hand free for the Left Allemande.

If, from a Static Square we have either the heads or sides do a Pass Thru we have changed the sequence.

This is the one thing that threw me in the beginning. I knew that a Pass Thru would change sequence from the Static Square and I knew it would change sequence from Lines Of Four, but from the EIGHT CHAIN THRU position a Pass Thru did NOT change it

at all. I learned this at my club dance one night but of course I did not mention it to the dancers. I waited until I got home from the dance, then got my little figures out. They were magnetized so they would stay on the board, and I started working with the figures, determined to find out for sure. I couldn't believe it at first because I was sure that a Pass Thru would change the sequence of the dancers.

Here is the way I set it up, and the results, to my amazement: From Lines of Four, I had the dancers do a Star Thru. This, of course, changed the Sequence. They were now OUT of sequence. I had them do a Dive Thru (same as a Pass Thru) and stopped and checked it. They were still OUT of sequence. Now I had the Center Four Pass Thru — and I stopped again and checked. They were still OUT of sequence. At this point I had them do a Star Thru and to my amazement they are still OUT of sequence.

I kept asking myself, "Why?" I went over it time and time again to be sure. There was no doubt about it. This was something I was going to have to deal with. I needed answers and there was no one I could turn to because no one had been interested enough to even run into this fact, or to even care why it worked if they did know about it. It worked and that was all they cared about.

I needed answers and I had to have them before I could continue with my research. I knew that sequence was determined by the men's positions. I knew that the #4 man had to be on the Left of the #1 man if they are IN sequence and I knew that if he was on the Right of the #1 man they were OUT of sequence, regardless of what lady they had for a partner at the moment. I could easily see that the Star Thru from the Lines of Four put the #4 man on the Right of the #1 man. Again I checked it. I had the outside couple Dive Thru. I looked the board of dancers over and could see that the #4 man was still on the Right side of the #1 man. I had the Center Four Pass Thru — no change. The #4 man was still on the Right of the #1 man. Then came the Star Thru and the #4 man was still on the Right of the #1 man. This practically blew me away. I couldn't understand it at all. I went through it so many times I knew it was a fact. I had to accept it and get on with my job. And once again, I would never say, "*always.*"

There's one thing I did find out that night. I learned that after the Dive Thru, Center Four Pass Thru, then Star Thru the men had the opposite for a partner at this point. This was interesting. It meant that it could be used to get the same results as a Four Ladies Chain Across. Everyone now has opposites. So while I was still sitting there, I used it like this — After the last Star Thru they had opposites, still OUT of sequence. I had them Pass Thru, putting them back IN sequence and then I had them Bend The Line. Again I had them Star Thru, putting them OUT of sequence again. Now I had them Dive Thru,

Pass Thru and Star Thru. I looked to be sure that they all had partners back again, OUT of sequence, so I called Cross-Trail Thru and Find Corner, Allemande Left, and from then on I used this time after time, knowing how it was going to work from the beginning.

Earlier I said that there is always an exception to the rule, even in a Right & Left Thru. The Right & Left Thru, when used in any standard set up, will ALWAYS change the sequence. The exception is like this: From a Static Square have the two head gents FACE YOUR CORNER and Box the Gnat, SQUARE YOUR SET, WE'LL DANCE LIKE THAT. Now have the ladies do a Right & Left Thru and nothing has changed as far as sequence is concerned. The GENTS are all still in place.

Still working with the EIGHT CHAIN THRU position, we have Lines Of Four, IN Sequence. Again we will do the Star Thru and now we have the dancers in a position where they can Square Thru Three Quarters around to a Left Allemande. Take a good look at this set-up. The dancers did the Star Thru from Lines. The #1 man is what we will call the outside looking into the center. His partner is in front of him, his CORNER, the #4 lady, is on his right. This is the set-up you will look for to know that you have it right — #1 man is outside looking in, partner in front, corner on his right. That's easy. You simply call Square Thru Three Quarters and Find Corner, Allemande Left.

We said that there are two positions for each set-up. We said to get the second position you Bend The Line. Now look at that set-up. We have dancers, after they Bend The Line, do the Star Thru. Now look at the set-up. The #1 man is now inside looking OUT. He still has his partner in Front of him but his corner, instead of being on his Right, she is standing Back to Back with him. This is the set-up you will be looking for to be ready to Square Thru Three Quarters, Left Allemande.

This might sound like I just tried things out at home on my board, and after a couple of tries I jumped right into them. Actually, it took a lot of months of hard work and sleepless nights. I spent many an hour at home trying them out on the board, then putting them on paper, then going back the next week and trying them again. In all it took me a couple of years. I found that the most important thing a caller had to learn is **Sequence**. You had to learn how to read Sequence instantly, when they were IN or when they were OUT. Sight calling helped me to determine Sequence because I knew that the #4 couple had to be on the Left of the #1 couple to be IN, and, if they were on the Right side I had to do something to get them back on the Left side.

Of course as I went along the little light became brighter and brighter. I was scared to death of it at first. I wondered what I would, or could do if I were to get lost and get the dancers all mixed up. It finally became easier and easier until I found myself deliberately

trying to lose myself. In those days the dancers were my guinea pigs. I did not tell this to them, of course. If I lost myself I would just keep calling something, and everything, until I found myself. It became very enjoyable and somewhat of a challenge to me.

Eventually, of course, it occurred to me that everything on the floor was a pattern and that many different things could be used to get INTO and OUT OF any predicament that I could get myself into. This led me into **Equivalents**, and this became a very large part of my Sight Calling Method.

This would be a good place to take a look at some of the first Equivalents that I used back in those days. How I put them together and how Equivalents are still a BIG part of everything that the Callers are using today.

Equivalents

We will begin with something that is fairly easy. Let's take the "Four Ladies Chain." Starting from Lines Of Four, IN sequence. From Lines of Four a caller MUST make two chains, once with each of the side men, to equalize the square. For instance, if we have two ladies chain straight across, head gents will now have their corner lady, side gents will have their right hand ladies. Now we have them chain Down The Line, or you could call "Bend The Line, Two Ladies Chain." Now each gent has his original opposite lady for his partner. This is equivalent to Four Ladies Chain.

There are a lot of Equivalents for Four Ladies Chain and a caller should learn all of them so that he can change them around and never allow your dancers to figure they know what you are going to call. That was my main reason for coming up with so many Equivalents. I did not want the dancers to anticipate and jump ahead of me. I like to keep them guessing, that's the name of the game. Don't ever allow them a choice. Make them listen and that makes better dancers of them.

I mentioned earlier that I arrived at one of these equivalents simply by accident. That was when I had the dancers Star Thru from Lines Of Four and a Dive Thru, Pass Thru, Star Thru put each gent with his opposite lady.

*Promenade now and don't slow down
Keep on walking these girls around
Ladies roll out and skip one man
Promenade the next around the land
Heads wheel around and Star Thru*

*Dive Thru, Pass Thru, and Star Thru
Now Cross-Trail Thru, watch it man
Here comes old corner, left allemande.*

We could put a couple together, using one and then using the other. Something like so:

*Promenade now and don't slow down
Keep on walking these girls around
Heads wheel around, two ladies chain
Turn those girls and Bend The Line
Two ladies chain, you're doing fine
Turn these new girls and Star Thru
Dive Thru, Pass Thru, And Star Thru,
Cross-Trail now across that land
Hunt out old corner, left allemande.*

There are any number of these that will give each gent his opposite for a partner. Here is another one that just might slow them down a tad. Try this:

*Promenade now and don't slow down
Keep on walking those girls around
Heads wheel around and Swing Thru
TURN THRU, walk straight ahead -
Bend the line and Swing Thru
TURN THRU, walk straight ahead
Bend the Line (Everyone with opposites)
Star Thru, Dive Thru, Pass Thru - Star Thru
Then Cross-Trail across the land
And find the corner, left allemande.*

You can carry these on just as far as you want to. There is no limit.

From the Static Square, when we want to chain TWO Ladies, not four, we MUST do the same Ladies Chain Rule. There MUST be two chains to equalize the square. For instance, if we have head ladies chain to the Right, the head gents will have their right hand lady as his new partner, side gents will have their corners for partners. Now have New Head Ladies Chain Left and each gent will have the opposite lady.

The above can be called several different ways. You will have to use the ladies to Sight Call this. The gents are not going anywhere.

Head Two Ladies Chain Right

New Side Ladies Chain Right (With opposites)

New Side Ladies Chain Left

New Side Ladies Chain Right (With partners)

Head Two Ladies Chain Across

New Head Ladies Chain Right (With right hand ladies)

New Side Ladies Chain Across

New Head Ladies Chain to the Right (With partners)

Way back when, I was using everything I could get my hands on and there was no such thing as a "Trade By." Now, by using Trade By, we can come up with many more equivalents. Here is a good one and I use it often:

Heads right and circle to a line

All eight roll a half sashay

Star Thru across the way -

Trade By - and Star Thru -

Pass Thru and Bend The Line

All eight roll a half sashay

Star Thru and - Trade By -

Star Thru, Cross-Trail Thru

Find corner, left allemande.

Incidentally, did you notice that after that first sequence, Roll A Half Sashay, Star Thru, Trade By and Star Thru, everyone is with the opposite? So there's another one that will replace the Four Ladies Chain Across. There are many more of them and you will be running into them as time goes by. When you do, jot them down before you forget them and they will be good for future use.

Sight Calling is not something that you will use 100% of the time. Every caller should learn sight calling so that it is handy if you happen to need it. You just might forget where you were in something, or something interrupted your train of thought for a second and while you were distracted you failed to do something that you intended to do, or you were not sure that this or that happened, so you take a quick look at the dancers (sight

calling) and see exactly where they are. As you go along, adding extra changes to your list it all becomes easier and finally you are fairly sure where the dancers are at all times. If you know sight calling you can always check, eliminating all the worry and confusion. Study it a little at the time — master it. Your calling will become pleasant instead of a chore. You will be smoother, consequently, your dancers will be dancing smoother.

Sequence

Not enough can be said, or written about Sequence.

Sequence determines everything that is going on out there on the floor. You should know at all times, or at least be able to take a look (sight call) and see whether they are IN or OUT of Sequence. This will determine what you can follow up with.

Remember: Sequence is determined by the men only. The ladies are not involved at all. They can be moved around. They can be with the right hand man, or with their opposite, or the corner. This has nothing to do with Sequence. As long as the men don't move, sequence is not affected in any way. This might sound chauvinistic, and it probably is, but that's the way it has to be.

Quite often we hear a caller say to a group of dancers, especially at a beginner class, when they first square up, "Take a good look at your corner, that's the person on your left, and notice what position you are in because this is your home position for this dance." Wrong! This will be the home position of the gents, but not for the ladies. The ladies can be, and probably will be, moved around a lot, dancing with one gent and then another, most likely dancing with all of them before the tip is over. They will eventually end the tip with their original partner. However, none of these movements that moves the ladies around has anything to do with the Sequence. So keep this one thing in mind, ladies are never involved in Sequence—just the chauvinist men are.

When you are watching the #4 lady so as to get her into position for a left allemande, make sure that she is with her partner. This is very important.

Half Out Of Sequence

If someone should ask you if there is such a thing as **half out of sequence**, your answer should be "Yes, there certainly is," and you would be right, because there really is. I'll give you an example. Have couples ONE and TWO do a Right & Left Thru. The dancers are HALF OUT of sequence at this point. Don't get yourself into some predicament like this

unless you do it purposely, knowing full well what you are going to do all the time. Now follow that call up with THREE and FOUR do a Right & Left Thru. The set is OUT of Sequence at this point. Right here you could have either new heads, or new sides Cross-Trail Thru to a Left Allemande. This is a very good movement for you to practice on and it is also good for the dancers because it really makes them listen.

Try something like this. Tell the dancers that they must forget all about whether they were heads or sides, just work from the position they are in. In other words, if heads get into side positions, they become sides. Now have at it:

*One and Two Right & Left Thru,
Three and Four Right & Left Thru
Four and One Right & Left Thru,
Three and Two Right & Left Thru . . .*

Keep track of how many times you do it. Up to now we did it twice so they are IN Sequence. This can go on and on. Use it, for FUN.

Trade By's

Many years ago, before anyone ever thought about a Trade By, I dreamed up a figure, or pattern, that I used many times during a three-hour dance, which we did during '50s and '60s and even later. I did not give it a name but I am certain that someone got the idea for **Trade By** from it.

I worked out the set-up for it and I could use it from just about anywhere. I knew that the #1 man had to be with his opposite lady facing the #2 couple. From here I had them do a Right & Left Thru, turn your girl and Star Thru, and this was my set-up. From there I would have them Square Thru Four, a Right to Mother, Pull Thru and there's corner, Left Allemande. Like so:

*Promenade now and don't slow down
Keep on walking those girls around
Heads wheel around, don't get lost
Four ladies chain straight across
END Ladies Chain diagonally across
Turn these girls and - Star Thru
Then Dive Thru - Pass Thru*

*Right & Left Thru the outside two
 Now turn the girls and - Star Thru
 Then Square Thru across from you
 Count four hands and when you do
 Give a right to Mother, pull her thru
 And here comes corner, left allemande.*

This was an easy set-up to do and I could set it up almost anywhere, so I used it a lot. The real easy way to set it up would be to have Heads Star Thru and Pass Thru. This is where you start from: The #1 gent, with opposite will be facing couple #2. The #3 gent with his opposite will be facing couple #4. Just that simple. Now have them do a Right & Left Thru, then follow with a Star Thru. Now you have it set up, Square Thru Four Hands, Right to mother, Pull Thru, Left Allemande. You could set it up something along these lines:

*Head couples promenade half way
 Into the middle and square thru
 Right & Left Thru the outside two
 Turn your girls and - Star Thru
 Now Square Thru across from you
 Count four hands and when you do
 Give a right to Mother - pull thru
 Here comes the corner, left allemande.*

Or, do a "shorty":

*Heads roll a half sashay
 Star Thru across the way
 Right & Left Thru, Turn her
 Star Thru, then Square Thru
 Count four and when you do -
 Right to Mother, pull thru
 Here's corner, left allemande.*

Any one of those "Right to Mother" calls today would be a "Trade By."

Scoot Back

What actually, does a Scoot Back do? What I mean is this: Could you get to the same end result if you used some other call? Yes, you sure can. If you were to call "Turn Half By The Right" you would have dancers in the same position they are in after a regular Scoot Back. Just try it:

*One and Three Square Thru Four
Touch a Quarter and Scoot Back*

Now do like this:

*One and Three Square Thru Four
Touch a quarter, Turn Half by the Right*

You can repeat this as many times as you want to and the second time the dancers will be in the same position they were in just before you used the Scoot Back.

*Heads Square Thru Four, Touch a Quarter
Turn Half by the Right, Girls Scoot Back*

This could go on forever. The net result is "Turn Half By The Right."

Equivalents — How many are there?

The answer is that there is absolutely no limit to how many there are. Starting from a completed HEADS SQUARE FOUR. This is really an Eight Chain Thru Position but we will start from here to get some equivalents. Let's say HEADS PAIR OFF and we will start each equivalent from that point.

*Swing Thru, Boys Run Right
Wheel and Deal (Back to Zero)*

*Right & Left Thru - Touch a Quarter
Walk & Dodge - Partner Trade -
Flutter Wheel - Star Thru (Back to Zero)*

*Pass The Ocean - Girls Trade -
Recycle - Star Thru (Back to Zero)*

*Veer to the Left - Wheel & Deal -
Veer to the Left - Wheel & Deal (Back to Zero)*

Almost all of the things I am talking about can be called directional and the dancers do not have to know the figure, they listen to the call. Here's one to try:

*Heads to the right, circle to a line
Pass Thru now and Wheel & Deal
Double Pass Thru. Lead Couples
Do a Partner Trade - Pass Thru
Trade By - Step to a Wave*

We just did Trac II. If you had called Trac II they would do it from memory. We SIGHT CALLED it. Do not make dancers try to remember calls. Teach them to listen to you all the time and you will tell them what to do. It's a lot more FUN.

With the many equivalents you have at hand, and the many variations we can change them into, the Zero's that you can use, always knowing whether the dancers are IN sequence or whether they are OUT, and you have a tool you can use to be certain, SIGHT CALLING. It does take a little effort on your part but the results are astounding and your efforts will be rewarded by the results.

Imagine yourself slowly turning a kaleidoscope, watching patterns that are endless and symmetrical. Using the "Sight Calling" method, you are, in effect, turning the kaleidoscope and producing these designs. With just a little effort you will know why these figures materialize right before your eyes. Now it's all up to you to make this conscientious effort to become one of the World's Better Callers.

It's the little things that make the dance. They don't have to be so complicated. Take a look at the little old TOUCH A QUARTER — little things like this:

*Heads Touch a Quarter
Boys Scoot Back
Boys Run Right*

The above equals Heads Star Thru. The only difference is that you've given the dancers a lot more dancing and they had to listen to you all the time. You are using a lot of basics and this is something a dancer needs to have, plenty of practice on basics.

*Heads Touch a quarter
The Boys Scoot Back
Boys Run Right and
Square Thru 3/4's
Left Allemande*

In doing the above you could have just called Heads Star Thru and Square Thru Three Quarters, left allemande. Again, this gives them more basics and a lot more practise on the basics. We are not trying to fool them, we are trying to make better dancers of them.

*Heads Touch a Quarter
Boys Scoot Back - Boys Run -
And Star Thru,*

That one above is equivalent to a Right & Left Thru. Think about this. It means any time you want two couples to do a Right & Left Thru you can simply call the above and the net result would be a Right & Left Thru. Try something like so:

*Heads right and circle to a line
Pass Thru - Boys Run Right
Boys Scoot Back
Boys Run Right again
All Eight Cross-Trail Thru
Hunt for the corner, left allemande.*

Styling

Keep in mind that styling can be overdone. We are right on the brink of perfection and when we carry it that far we are asking the dancer to be as smooth as ballet dancers. This would be perfection, and although we would like that we must remember that we are taking a lot of fun out of it, at least, for some folks we are. The most important thing to the caller is to see that the dancers are having fun.

You should begin your styling at the first lesson. I have found that the dancers, almost all of them, are not even conscious of the beat. After I teach an Allemande Left, a Right & Left Grand and Promenade Home, I teach Ladies Chain. First the Head Ladies Chain, then the Side Ladies Chain followed by Four Ladies Chain. This is where you can

begin styling. Explain to the ladies that they do have a beat to go by and that they should listen to the beat of the music. Remember, these are beginners so you do not want to do anything that would in any way discourage them. Take it easy. Explain that they should go into the middle and cross over to the opposite man in FOUR BEATS. The opposite gent should take them by the left hand, putting their right arm around their waist and Courtesy Turn in FOUR BEATS. When we get the head ladies doing it smoothly you work the side ladies, doing the same thing. Then explain that All Four Ladies Chain takes exactly as many beats, four beats to cross over, four beats to Courtesy Turn the girls, another four beats to chain back and another four beats to turn. They are doing this in 16 beats of music. Nothing could be easier.

The important thing here is the fact that you were not just teaching them to cross over in four beats, turn in four beats, you have made them aware of the beats in the music and this is what we are looking for, especially for beginners. There will always be a few dancers who are not aware of the beat. They don't even hear it. These you will have to tolerate. Most of the class have known each other for years, so the dancers are willing to tolerate the few who are having all the trouble, simply because they are friends, and they are hoping that they can help them and that they will become better dancers.

Very early in the beginner class I work them into a Grand Square. I usually do this about the fourth lesson. I like to get them into it because it is an ideal movement to use your counting system. As soon as they know how to go all the way through Grand Square, reversing it and ending up back at their Home Position tell them that you are going to put the count to it now because it should take 32 beats of music to complete the Grand Square. Work them until they know it.

You will find that beginners, whether it be Square Dancing, Contra's, Couple (round) Dancing, whatever it is, the new dancers will have a tendency to rush, gaining on the beats. Discourage this. I always explain to the dancers that this certain movement will take 32 beats, I am going to take those 32 beats when calling it, so you do not have to hurry up your steps to keep up. Then I say, "Let's make a deal on this. I promise not to call so fast you can't keep up and that way I will never rush you and you promise me that you will use up the beats and that you will never rush me." They usually say "That's a deal" and we get back to business.

If you are interested in styling to the point of perfection you are going to run into a lot of problems and the first problem is Y-O-U. I really mean that. If your calling is not perfect you cannot get perfection from your dancers. This will not be easy. I am sure of this because I had to do it myself many years ago. I worked in a lot of motion pictures

choreographing square dances, Polkas and Varsouvianas, any type of period dance they wanted in a picture. I was always working under the music department and those people are always looking for perfection, not only in music but in any type of dancing. This shocked me when I first called a square dance in the picture they were making. I knew nothing about music, I could not read a note of music and I still can't for that matter but I had an idea of what they wanted. Several heads of the music departments helped me. They wanted perfection and they wanted me to be sure I was right on the beat and they wanted the dances timed out. It was not easy. I would go home at night, set up my equipment in a spare bedroom we had and I would work hour after hour on my own timing so I could pass that on to the dancers. As I said, It's not easy and it's something you will have to achieve if you want to teach styling.

There is still another strike against you. We have to remember that square dancing is sold right at the beginning by telling them it's FUN. If you were to mention that it had to be timed to perfection a lot of them would never come back for the second lesson. Even after you have graduated a class there will be many dancers who are only interested in dancing with their friends and enjoying themselves. Nothing wrong with that but—we want them to enjoy themselves. Another strike is against you when there are so many new things coming out and you have to stop and teach these new things. Again I will refer back to ballet. I have no idea how much ballet each of you have watched, but whether you have ever watched it or not I am sure you know that they are not interested in NEW material. They are interested in perfection. Many of the ballet numbers they do are centuries old. They never change them. They work hard to perfect them. They are dedicated people and they work hour after hour to achieve this perfection. Another thing to keep in mind is the fact that those people are professionals and they are being paid to be perfect. Square Dancers are dancing just for the fun of it.

You need not even tell the dancers that you are going to teach styling. When you are sure that you yourself has attained that goal you've been seeking this is where you use it. Always insist on your dancers doing everything on beat. No one needs to teach you that. You already know it otherwise you wouldn't be calling. Get perfection from yourself. This same perfection will spread through all the dancers, at least it will spread through most of them. As I mentioned earlier, there will always be those who cannot learn to dance on the beat because they do not even hear the beat and don't even know that there is a beat. You will have to adjust and learn to accept it because they are more than likely members you have. They are always there when you need someone to help out.