Social Square Dancing

the

SSD Program

FAQ

(Frequently Asked Questions)

Version #5.0
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*For square dancing to **grow**, we need extreme user-friendliness toward **beginner** dancers.*

Why do we need new dancers?

All activities and organizations need new people for growth. The number of square dancers has **dwindled** each year for decades. Here's why: it's far easier to **lose** a dancer than to bring in a replacement. Losing an experienced dancer is instantaneous. Training a replacement to comfortably dance at club level takes more than a year.

We desperately need a way to bring in new dancers **faster** than we lose existing dancers. We have needed that for decades.

In 2020, Covid-19 shut down square dancing completely. After months away from square dancing, many existing dancers will never return.

When we **restart** after Covid-19, our need for new dancers will be greater and more urgent than ever. If we can focus on making square dancing an ideal activity for **new** dancers, we can **grow** like never before. Let's consider the Covid-19 shutdown, and the upcoming restart, as a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for tremendous growth.

Why can't we do what we've always done in the past?

The age-old methods bring in **few**, if any, new dancers. New dancers can begin square dancing just **once** per year when (and **if**) you start a beginner group. It takes more than a **year** for a new dancer to reach a comfortable club level. The combination of **limited** product availability, and a **huge** commitment to a **long** training period, makes it very **difficult** for you to build up a nice-size group of dancers.

Decades ago, when square dancing was booming, beginner lessons lasted just a few weeks. You could start **several** beginner groups each year. Beginners could reach club level in a **reasonable** timeframe.

Over the decades, square dancing's entry barrier **rose** higher and higher. Classes became **longer** and class starts grew **less frequent**. We can all plainly observe that the number of dancers has **dwindled**.

The age-old methods do **not** work. We need a different approach which is more **friendly** toward **new** dancers.

What is the Dance Program Escalator?

Today's square dance scene involves constant **teaching** so that dancers can continuously **move up** to the next level. Dancers are always in **Learn Mode** and **never** in **Dance Mode**. **Next** year's new dancers will never get to dance with **this** year's new dancers, because the two groups will always be on different steps of the Dance Program Escalator (i.e. B1-B2-M-P-A1-A2-C1-C2-etc.), the undesirable, counter-productive Escalator of Levels.

What is the difference between Learn Mode and Dance Mode?

In the old-style training model, new dancers start out in Learn Mode. Each call is **explained**. Then, a **walk-thru**. For several weeks, new dancers require a distinct **pause** before and after each call. Therefore, Learn Mode consists of **"stop-and-go"** dancing, which gets tedious. Stop-and-go makes dancing a lot **more work** and a lot **less fun**.

Eventually, dancers learn to do a particular call at full dance speed. Yet they are **still** in Learn Mode. As soon as they learn a call, they must immediately learn **other** new calls. Each new call is explained, walked, instructed, then executed stop-and-go. **Most** dancing in Learn Mode is stop-and-go.

The **few** dancers who survive until the end of Mainstream class are pressured to immediately take a Plus class. Then maybe a wild west version of DBD. Then A-1. And so forth. New dancers are **perpetually** in Learn Mode with **stop and go** dancing. It takes **years** to eventually get to true Dance Mode where you can flow through an entire fun dance at full speed, moving with the music. New dancers' original goal was to finally get to dance with their friends who brought them into square dancing. But those original friends are no longer at beginner level. They moved on, to dance in Learn Mode for a higher program.

SSD is vastly different. For starters, learning time is kept **short**. Dancers reach Dance Mode **faster**. Dancers are encouraged to stay in **Dance Mode**. **This** crop of new dancers can dance with the **last** crop of new dancers and **next** crop of new dancers. Instead of tedious stop-and-go, dancing is fun, flowing movement with "wind in your face". We gain back our historically tremendous recruitment tools of "Friends Bring Friends" and "Friends Dance with Friends".

For decades, square dance leaders wanted to **teach** people to dance.

But people just wanted to **dance**.

Let's give people what they **want**. Let them **dance**!

What kind of square dancing would be easier to sell?

Square dancing is a **leisure** activity. A long training period is a huge entry **barrier** which keeps new customers **out**. For greater entry and success, we need a program that today's busy people can enjoy after a few **weeks** (instead of a few **years**) of training.

A shorter training period gives **you** many immediate benefits. First, during a year's time, you can easily start **two**, **three** or even **four** beginner groups. Think about how many new dancers you normally get from old-style once-a-year classes. SSD features **multiple** starts per year, so you'll immediately **double**, **triple** or even **quadruple** your numbers, by simply offering the product more **often**. Add in the amazing factors of "Friends Bring Friends" and "Friends Dance with Friends" and you gain a huge potential for **growth**.

What kind of shorter program can be easily learned by new dancers and also enjoyed by experienced dancers?

A good destination program must be **small** enough to learn in 12 weeks. It must also be **large** enough to provide an exciting and varied dance experience. These two goals (**easy** to learn, **satisfying** to dance) have always been a balancing act. In the past, we focused **mostly** on making square dancing more "interesting". That focus **cost** us big-time, by building a huge entry **barrier** to new dancers.

Today's callers who use SSD report that it offers a great **balance** between **short** training time (which favors **new** dancers) and a robust program with substance and **variety** (which favors experienced dancers).

When you consider the Covid-19 shutdown and the upcoming restart, our **best bet** is to emphasize a form of dancing which makes the activity very **friendly** to **new** dancers. **SSD** is that product.

How can we maximize "Friends Bring Friends" recruitment?

SSD is a fun yet meaningful dance program. Beginners can learn it *(Standard Application)* in 18 to 22 hours. Dancers are encouraged to **dance** that program, and to **recruit** their friends, with **no** pressure to move up to higher programs.

Think back to when **you** were a **new** dancer. You were enthusiastic about the **joy**, **friendship** and **excitement** of square dancing. You **loved** dancing to lively music and being on the same **team** with other **fun** people. You would have **gladly** invited your non-dancing friends to try it. **Except**, you couldn't. The beginner class you are in is already **closed** to new members. The next class starts a **year** later. After waiting a year, your enthusiasm **declined**, or you have already moved on to the next program.

What if a new class starts every 12 **weeks**, precisely when new dancers reach their **peak** of excitement? You'd have **far** more selling opportunities per year, and far more **enthusiastic** salespeople. We could once again enjoy a **key** selling feature which we lost over time: "Friends Bring Friends".

Every survey of square dancers shows that the **vast** majority of us got started because a friend or acquaintance **invited** us. With a shorter and easier program, we can **maximize** the recruitment method which is by far the most effective: "Friends Bring Friends".

While "Friends Bring Friends" will continue to bring you new dancers, a strong **marketing program** is always **desirable**. You can share marketing ideas, and find out what works for other leaders, in the **Social Square Dancing** group on Facebook.

*To know where we are **going**, we must understand where we have **been**.*

Who started SSD?

SSD was started by a "who's who" of prominent callers and leaders. If we "name names", we risk omitting some folks who made a contribution. It's correct to say that SSD is a **grass roots** effort.

SSD is also the culmination of a movement which has been ongoing for decades. Most leaders recognize the need for a **shorter**, **easier** entry program to make square dancing more marketable to **new** dancers.

What is the difference between SSD and the CALLERLAB Basic program?

Basic is a **stepping stone**. SSD is a **destination**.

The CALLERLAB Basic program is the first step of the Dance Level Escalator. Except most of the time, we completely **skip** that step. After a new dancer learns Basic, they **never** get to actually **dance** and enjoy it. Instead, they immediately **rush** onward to learn Mainstream. Then Plus. Then Advanced One. And so forth. New dancers are pressured to learn **more** calls and move up the escalator. Basic is **not** a **dance** program. It's a **teach** program. Basic is the first step of the escalator.

By comparison, SSD is an active, vibrant **destination** program where people happily dance with **no pressure** to move up to higher levels.

Another key difference: SSD is far more **popular** than CALLERLAB Basic. How many Basic dances or clubs are there anyway? **Very** few, if any! And even if any Basic dances exist, they are only a temporary stepping stone to higher levels. Every Basic dancer is **expected** to learn more calls.

By comparison, SSD dances are held at locations and clubs all over the map. SSD is a **destination** with no pressure to move up. You can bring your friends in a few **weeks**, instead of just one time per **year**.

What's the difference between SSD and Target 2000?

Target 2000 tried to **change** existing CALLERLAB programs. SSD is a separate program which does **not** alter existing CALLERLAB programs in **any** way.

Back then (and still today), Mainstream has about 70 calls and Plus has about 30 calls. Many dance leaders felt that Mainstream was **too large** and Plus was **too small**. Mainstream took **too long** to learn. The relatively **few** survivors from a long Mainstream class immediately rushed into a Plus class. Target 2000 attempted to **balance** Mainstream and Plus. The idea was to make Mainstream **smaller** and Plus **larger**, so that **each** program would have about 50 calls.

A smaller Mainstream program would be **easier** to learn. Thus, more beginners would **survive** the class. A larger Plus program would be **harder** to learn. Thus, we could discourage brand-new Mainstream dancers from immediately **rushing** to Plus.

It was a great idea, with one huge **drawback**. **Changing** the existing CALLERLAB programs is almost **impossible**. Those programs are too firmly entrenched. Everyone wants change but no one wants **to** change. Any successful new idea must be a better mousetrap and **also** must **not** alter the existing mousetrap.

SSD is an easy-teach, fun-dance **destination** which can be reached by new dancers far more **easily**, and far more **often** (more beginner classes per year) than Mainstream.

What's the difference between SSD and Mainstream?

SSD is a sub-set of Mainstream. Mainstream has about 70 calls. SSD has about 50 of the most **popular** / most **fun** / **easiest** to learn Mainstream calls.

Here's another very important difference. Mainstream is a **stepping stone** on the Dance Program Escalator. Everyone who learns Mainstream is **expected** to eventually (and often, immediately) learn Plus. By contrast, SSD is a stand-alone **destination** program. People are welcome to dance SSD for as long as they want, with **no pressure** to move up.

SSD is aimed at people who **want** something that the existing CALLERLAB dance programs **cannot** give them. Think about the last time **you** started a beginner group. Only **some** of those people survived until the end of the class. SSD is aimed at the people who dropped **out** of Mainstream class, along with all of their friends they **would** have brought in. SSD lets us **lose fewer** and **keep more** new dancers.

Callers who use SSD report that most SSD dancers are **happy** to dance that program forever, and to bring their friends. Always remember that SSD is a new product aimed at a new (and **bigger**) audience than Mainstream.

Why was SSD created?

Square dancing needs a thriving **entry** program which is **also** a **destination** program and which does **not** even attempt to **change** the existing CALLERLAB dance programs. Fortunately, such a program has **already** been around for decades.

Each year, millions of people migrate to warmer climates for the winter. They're known as "snowbirds" or "winter Texans" or "winter Arizonans" or "winter Floridians", etc. For many decades, square dancing was and continues to be a popular recreational activity for temporary winter visitors. A winter dance program must absolutely be teachable during a **12-week** winter season.

Over the years, winter square dance programs have been extremely successful. Some groups are **huge**, with hundreds of members.

If you said "the SSD program was born in the winter RV parks", you'd be correct. Square dancing today needs a dance program which is **quick** and **easy** to learn, and also **fun** and **satisfying** to dance. SSD borrowed heavily from the most **successful** program of this type. SSD achieves the delicate **balance** between the needs of both **new** and **experienced** dancers.

What do the letters S.S.D. mean?

SSD started a few years ago as "**Sustainable** Square Dancing". Shortly after SSD began, CALLERLAB did what they always do. They formed a committee to study and test the new idea. The study came back with good news. Clubs using SSD were able to **grow** their groups with great results.

Now it's time to introduce this experimental program to a **wider** audience. "Wider audience" means "**all** callers and dancers outside of the SSD committee". The SSD committee has already had the product for a few years.

Recently, the SSD committee voted to **change** the name from "**Sustainable** Square Dancing" to "**Social** Square Dancing". Let's agree that the SSD committee is the proper place to shape the program. We have no need to worry about **why** they wanted to change the name from Sustainable to Social. The name changed because a majority of leaders voted **for** the name change.

From the very beginning of SSD, it was common to use just the acronym "**SSD**". That common term remains the same. The general plan is to promote SSD as **Sustainable** Square Dancing to callers and leaders (who care a great deal about **sustainability**), and to promote it as **Social** Square Dancing to dancers and prospective beginners (who care a great deal about **sociability**).

If SSD is from CALLERLAB, why can't I find it on the CALLERLAB website?

It's there. It's just buried underneath a **mountain** of other things CALLERLAB has done for the past five decades. CALLERLAB documents decades of square dance history. SSD is just the latest chapter.

Search is your friend!

If you want **general** knowledge about SSD from many different sources:
> The **CALLERLAB Knowledge** website has extremely good info on almost any square dancing topic. Go to http://callerlabknowledge.org and search for **ssddoc**. The very first result is "SSD Documentation and Support Materials", a collection linking to documents and materials from many different sources. Here's the direct link: http://callerlabknowledge.org/?s=ssddoc

If you want **specific** info about **current** items of **business** in the CALLERLAB SSD **Committee**:
> The regular CALLERLAB website has current documents for active committees. Go to http://callerlab.org and search for **SSD**. The search results will contain all current CALLERLAB documents mentioning SSD, including the Teaching Guide, press releases, committee brief, etc.

Who uses SSD?

Callers and dancers all over the world! The **Social Square Dancing** group on Facebook has over 500 members, and the number increases every week. More and more leaders discover SSD every day.

You might wonder why there is no published list of SSD leaders. Here's why: SSD is growing very **quickly.** Any roster of SSD groups would be out of date before you could even read it. The best answer to "Who uses SSD?" is "People who have **found a better way** for square dancing to **thrive!**"

*Not too **big**, not too **small**, but just **right**.*

If square dancing is a grass-roots activity, why do we need a list of calls?

When we **all** use the **same** list of calls, we gain **huge** advantages:
  A. Dancer **Portability**: SSD dancers can dance with **any** SSD group, **anywhere** in the world.
  B. **Knowledge** Sharing: an SSD Guidebook can be (and in fact, has been) published, for **all** to use.
  C. **Resource** Sharing: square dance music companies can release (and in fact, have released) singing calls **specifically** for the SSD movement.
  D. **Experience** Sharing: SSD groups can share **success** stories and **help** each other succeed.

Why can't SSD use an existing list? Why do we need a new list?

The SSD program requires a list of **fun**, **popular** calls which are **easy** to learn and **satisfying** to dance. The program needs ample **resources** (e.g. recommended teaching order, guide book, singing call figures, patter modules, etc.) for callers to use. The SSD list has **all** these things and more. It also has a history of **success**.

Much thought went into the SSD list and teaching order. When you compare the SSD list with the CALLERLAB Mainstream list, you'll find that some of the **least** popular and/or **hardest** to learn Mainstream calls are **not** on the SSD list. The SSD list is designed to be **short** on teaching time and **long** on danceability. The program is designed to be taught *(Standard Application)* in 18 to 22 hours. It will build a whole **new generation** of dancers at a **fun** and **exciting** level which can be learned in a reasonable timeframe.

Where can I get a copy of the SSD list?

It's in the SSD guide: http://callerlabknowledge.org/?s=ssdguide

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Why should I follow the SSD list exactly, instead of my own variation of it?

We're all in this **together**. When we **all** use the **same** list, **everyone benefits** from each other's collective wisdom, experience and **success**. By using a common list, you gain a valuable **guidebook**, choreographic **material**, singing call **figures**, expert **advice**, **ideas** you can use from other groups, and **more**.

What if my favorite call is not on the SSD list?

Please feel free to use your favorite call, or **any** call you wish, **after** you give a quick and entertaining teach to **that** night's group.

SSD is aimed more at **Dance Mode** than Teach Mode. If you choose to use extra calls, it's a great idea to select a call which is **easy** for you to **teach** and also **fun** for your customers to **learn**.

What if I think the SSD list should be bigger or smaller?

You are **not** alone! Feel free to use **any** calls you wish, with your own group. Simply give your customers a **quick** and **entertaining** teach **before** you use a new (to them) call.

SSD is a **grass-roots** effort. You are very **welcome** to get involved with the Facebook group and/or the CALLERLAB SSD committee. Come up with an idea. Convince others that your proposal is solid and your reasoning is sound. If you invent a better mousetrap, the entire SSD movement will move in the direction of **your** success story! It's exciting and satisfying when **your** idea helps shape history!

We hope the benefits of having a **tested**, **popular**, **well-designed** program will outweigh any desire to become a maverick. SSD uses **proven** methods which have brought great **success** so far. You benefit from everyone else's experience. And everyone else hopes to benefit from your successes. We're all in this **together**.

*The hardest part of a journey is taking the **first** step.*

How do I get started?

Start by drumming up a group of beginner dancers. Then provide a place where they can enjoy **dancing** with **no** pressure to move up to higher programs. It has always been challenging to round up a group of beginners. Thankfully, it is **far** easier to recruit people into a 12-week training program than it is to bring people onto the Dance Program Escalator (where the training period never really ends).

With the Covid-19 shutdown, and the upcoming restart, everyone will be on the same page to focus on **new** dancers to **rebuild** our groups. Get involved with the Social Square Dancing group on Facebook, where you can pick up ideas from hundreds of other like-minded leaders.

Where do I find beginner dancers?

Gathering enough people for a successful square dance beginner group has **always** been a challenge.

Think about how hard it is to get people to commit to a **year** of learning 70 to 100 difficult calls. SSD is definitely an **easier** sell. People commit to just 12 weeks of learning just 50 calls.

Consider how many people start a year-long Mainstream/Plus class, and how very **few** survive until graduation. **SSD** has far **fewer** dropouts because the class is **shorter**, more **fun** and usually **larger**.

It's still a chore to scare up a beginner group. Thankfully, with SSD it's a far **easier** chore.

Here's the best part: once your program gets rolling, the "Friends Bring Friends" concept kicks in. SSD lets you start a beginner group more often. Your group size builds much **faster**.

Remember to invite **former** square dancers! Surveys show that most former dancers dropped out because it was just too **much** (to learn, remember, commit, etc.) Former beginners can be a **great** source of people for your new SSD program.

How often should I start an SSD class?

SSD is designed to be taught in 12 weeks. You can start a new beginner group **either** one, two, three **or** four times a year. Multiple starts per year give you a **huge** advantage. Old-style programs start beginners just **once** per year. With SSD, starting **multiple** times per year, you can **double** or **triple** or **quadruple** your annual growth.

You do not **have** to start multiple times per year. Some leaders like to start several times a year in the **beginning**, to **build up** their numbers. Once they get **ahead** in the game, they can relax the pace and have fewer starts. The choice is always **yours**.

In addition to bigger numbers, SSD gives you a huge gain in **enthusiasm**. When classes last an entire **year**, your new graduates (your main sales people) are **weary** and jaded. With **SSD**, your star sales reps, at the 12-week mark, are at the exact **peak** of enthusiasm and excitement.

How many weeks should my SSD class last?

SSD is designed to be taught *(Standard Application)* in 18 to 22 hours. The exact format is up to **you**. You can do 2 hours per week for 10 weeks. Or 1.5 hours per week for 12 weeks. Some leaders have even reported good results with "twice-a-week", i.e. two 90-minute sessions per week for 6 weeks.

Many other formats are possible. The good news is that with a short cycle time, you can **tweak** your program every few months, until you have a **fine-tuned** solution which works **great** for **you**.

What is the structure of an individual SSD session?

The SSD guide covers this topic in depth. One popular format has an hour and a half of **beginners** followed by an hour and a half of SSD **dancing**, on the **same** evening. This is just one common format. Other formats have been used successfully.

A successful program provides the **two** things your dancers **need**:
1. A place to **learn** the program.
2. A place to comfortably **dance** the program with **no pressure** to move up.

Old-style programs often fail because beginners must endure **Learn Mode** for a **year** or longer. Dancers can **only** dance stop-and-go. SSD emphasizes **Dance Mode**. This gets people **excited** about dancing and bringing their friends. People bring their friends **not** for the **learning** but for the **dancing!** SSD lets you give people a **great** dance after a **short** training period.

Where can I get a copy of the SSD guide book?

Free download from CALLERLAB Knowledge website: http://callerlabknowledge.org/?s=ssdguide

The SSD guide has suggested lesson plans for **each** and **every** week of your new SSD group! You don't have to do your homework. It's **already** been done for **you**!

Who will promote SSD to dancers?

SSD is designed to take full advantage of "Friends Bring Friends". SSD keeps the training cycle short, frequent, easy and fun. **Today's** beginners become **tomorrow's** best sales agents.

How did **you** get into square dancing? For most of us, the answer is simply **"Friends Bring Friends"**. Do you remember how excited **you** were when you first started square dancing? After the first few weeks of beginner sessions, you were **hooked!** You would have gladly brought your friends, except it was a whole **year** until the start of the next class. SSD lets new dancers bring their friends **several** times a year, instead of just once a year.

Who will promote SSD to callers?

SSD is **Social** Square Dancing. The word "Social" implies that it spreads via "Friends Bring Friends". Just like SSD dancers sell the program to other dancers, SSD callers sell the program to other callers.

When callers discover that SSD groups are **thriving** while old-style year-long-class groups are **languishing**, you get **instant** promotion. You will hear a **lot** about SSD as square dancing starts back up.

SSD has its own Facebook group named "Social Square Dancing". Search for it on Facebook and then request to join the group. As of this writing, the group has over **500** members, and the number **increases** each week.

CALLERLAB keeps callers informed about new developments and success stories in the world of square dancing. CALLERLAB is on board with SSD and recommends it as a **great** way to start up again after the Covid-19 shutdown.

How do I get my club to offer the SSD program for new dancers?

We will soon have a **once-in-a-lifetime** opportunity to **permanently** improve square dancing by focusing on SSD. Covid-19 **stopped** all square dancing and devastated the membership rosters of existing clubs. Even if your club danced at a very high level **before** the shutdown, they will need to **ease** back into dancing once we restart. Since **everyone** needs to dance an easier level **anyway**, we might as well provide a sustainable product for **new** customers.

We need to start thinking of beginners as actual **dancers**, actual **customers**, actual **users** of our product. For **far** too long, we thought of people as customers only **after** they graduated from a year of class.

Ask your club if they are interested in providing a dance experience for people who do **not** dance, yet would be interested in learning how **only** if it's **easy** and **fun**. Explain that **other** recreational choices allow people to participate **fully** after a very **short** training period. SSD has a **12-week** training period which is a **vast** improvement on the old-style **year-long**-class model.

SSD does not change **any** existing CALLERLAB program. If your club is already successful with Mainstream, Plus and beyond, keep on doing what you're doing. If your club could use **more** dancers and **more** sustainability, consider the SSD program. You'll be in good company. Every day, more and more leaders turn to SSD as a **fantastic** way to bring in **more** new dancers more **often**, and to keep them dancing longer.

What if I just don't like SSD and I prefer to teach the same programs I've taught for years?

Square dancing is a social and leisure activity. People do it because they **enjoy** it. This applies to callers as well as dancers. Find something you **enjoy** and have a **blast**.

SSD does not change **any** CALLERLAB program in any way. You always have a choice. Please use any method **you** wish for growing your dancer population. SSD is specifically designed to address **today's** marketplace. Other callers have had **success** with SSD. If you choose SSD, you'll be in **good** company. Each day, more and more leaders turn to SSD as the **only** viable way to **rebuild** square dancing.

Should I teach the calls from all formations and arrangements?

Short answer: **NO!**

Longer answer: In the past, CALLERLAB recommended teaching from many formations and/or arrangements. Let's think about how **other** leisure activities teach beginners.

> Snow-skiing – do you **start** with the **toughest** double-black diamond run, even if you're a brand-new beginner?

> Running – do brand-new beginners **start** by running a **marathon**?

> Roller skating – do you **start** by skating **backwards** on one foot while **juggling**?

Leisure activities start at an **easy** level. Then, if you **want** to, but you don't **have** to, advance to a higher level. Over time, beginners **may** choose to learn more. But there needs to be a dividing line between "**Learn Mode**" and "**Dance Mode**". That line needs to occur **sooner** rather than **later**.

In today's fast-paced world, a **year** of training is **far too long**. It's **folly** to expect beginners to know the same **intricacies** which took many **years** for experienced dancers to learn. It makes **far** more sense for beginner square dancers to dance at a **fun** and **easy** beginner level. With SSD, this level can be **easily** reached after a **short** and **fun** 12-week training period.

After Learn Mode … Dance Mode!

What do SSD dancers do after 12 weeks of class?

After 12 fun weeks of Learn Mode, SSD dancers get to enjoy the best part: **Dance Mode**! Existing dancers and leaders might find it difficult to accept that SSD is a **full destination** dance program. SSD dancers are encouraged to dance at SSD dances, **forever**, with **no pressure** to move up to higher levels.

This "no pressure" approach is completely **different** from how we've always done things in the **past**. In old-style year-of-class programs, the very minute dancers finish a program, they are pressured to take the **next** class. They **never** get to dance and **enjoy** the level they learned.

The CALLERLAB foundation surveyed **former** dancers, to find out **why** they **quit** square dancing. The most common reason for dropping out is because they felt pressure to learn and do **too much**. For a new dancer, no matter how much they learn, it **never** seems to be **enough**. They are always hounded to learn **more, more more** … and this pressure pushes people **out** of square dancing forever. **Non**-dancers have every **right** to expect square dancing to be a **fun** leisure activity with **no** pressure.

For many years, we wanted to continually **teach** people more calls and positions. But people just want to **dance**. SSD lets them dance, with **no pressure** to move up. Plus clubs can offer a Plus Class one time each year for those who **choose** to move on. Every M/Plus club could have the SSD concept replace their current, non-productive and probably a bit nostalgic, new dancer class. Focus on building SSD first, as an integral part of your club, before even thinking about having a Plus Class. Patience is a virtue!

How can I keep dancers entertained long-term, using only 50 calls?

Start with a positive **attitude**. SSD dancers all over the map are **happy** to dance the SSD program. If other callers can do it, then so can **you**. Good news: **plenty** of help is available.

The SSD Guide contains **hundreds** of well-researched, smooth, flowing, danceable routines. You don't have to do your homework, because it's **already** been done for **you**. The routines are arranged and color-coded by their intended audience:
- **SA** (Standard Application) – for **all** dancers, beginners and experienced alike.
- **SAV** (Standard Application with Variety) – to provide a **tiny** bit of extra spice for experienced dancers.
- **EA** (Extended Applications) – to **occasionally** challenge your dancers and give them deeper knowledge and understanding.

There will always be a dichotomy between **new** dancers and **experienced** dancers. Successful SSD programs often teach or workshop something, in a **fun** and **flowing** and very **danceable** way, on the 2nd or 3rd tip of a dance., This **equalizes** the floor. Both new and experienced dancers get to enjoy something a **little** different. **You** can then use that variation for the rest of the evening. Everyone enjoys the variety **together**. Nobody is left behind. The SSD guide contains several examples you can put to **immediate** use.

May I teach my favorite call, even if not on the SSD list, to my own group of dancers?

Yes, because you'll develop a **quick**, **fun** and **effective** teach for each additional call you use. You are always welcome to use any additional call you choose. Just teach it **first**. And **not** just an ordinary "teach". Remember, they're now **out** of Learn Mode and into **Dance Mode**. For **any** new call you introduce, give them a **good**, **effective**, **fun** and **successful** teach.

Variety is the spice of life. But **too** much spice ruins the dish. Numerous surveys show that people drop **out** of square dancing because it's too **hard** and **complex**, and **not** due to lack of variety. Keep it **fun**, **flowing** and **exciting**.

Also remember that SSD is designed to be experienced in "**Dance Mode**" instead of "Learn Mode". At **all** times, make your program lean heavily **away** from what most callers want (to **teach** people to dance) and lean heavily **toward** what most **customers** want (to **dance**).

If I teach my favorite call to my group, can other SSD dancers still visit and dance with us?

Yes, you may use any call you wish. Just give a short, flowing and effective teach **first**. If you teach a new call **early** in the dance, you can then use the call for the rest of that evening.

How do I get my club to allow dancers to remain at SSD with no pressure to move up?

If your club supported the idea of offering a **fun** and **easy** product to people who do **not** square dance, the next step is to persuade your club to offer a place for these **same** new dancers to **dance** at an **easy** and **fun** level, with **no pressure** to move up. This benefits your club because it maximizes "Friends Bring Friends" marketing. Focus on building SSD first, as an integral part of your club, before even thinking about having a Plus class. Patience is a virtue!

If your club prefers the old, **broken** model (where new dancers are in **Learn Mode forever**, and it takes **years** until a scant **few** survivors eventually reach club level), they are free to keep using the existing programs. But **why** would they? Square dancing needs to **rebuild**. Why not rebuild using a model which **improves** your chances to win?

SSD is completely separate from, and does not alter, **any** existing CALLERLAB. dance program. Nobody expects a Plus club to drop their club level down to SSD. Instead, we expect many existing Plus clubs will want to offer a **new** product, a **Social** Square Dance program, to a brand-**new** target audience. The new audience can dance either on a separate night or on the regular club night at an earlier session.

Some clubs will be **very tempted** to **cherry-pick** the SSD group and bring everyone up to Plus and beyond as **quickly** as possible. We **must resist** that urge, because cherry -picking is how we got into our current **predicament**. SSD is a better mousetrap. Instead of a **year** of **stop-and-go** dancing during class, people get a full and **exciting** dance experience after just 12 **weeks**. Instead of dropping **out** because it's too **hard**, people stay **in** because it's too **fun**. Instead of waiting a **year** to bring their friends, people can bring their friends every few **weeks**. Instead of your top recruiters (recent graduates) being completely **exhausted** after a year of constant Learn Mode, your recent graduates are in **fun** Dance Mode and still at the **peak** of excitement, enthusiasm and persuasiveness.

It is important to explain to your club that "someone **else's** SSD group" is absolutely **not** a prime hunting ground for students to fill your Plus Class. Focus on the **customer.** Either you offer a product (SSD) suitable for a **new generation** of dancers, **or** you offer a product suitable only for **survivors** of the old-style year-long-class model. (Some clubs may choose to offer both products to both audiences.)

If your club supports the concept of bringing in new dancers, then they should **also** support the idea of providing a place for those **same** new dancers to comfortably dance at a **fun** and **exciting** level which can be **easily** reached and **enjoyed**, with **no pressure** to move up.

Can my SSD group visit other clubs which dance Mainstream or Plus?

With proper preparation, **yes**!

We've had this same situation for decades: one club starts a class in September and another club starts in January. How can we let everyone dance together? The answer has **not** changed. Simply contact the leader of the other club. Provide a list of calls your group knows.

With SSD, this will be **easier** than ever before, because when square dancing **resumes**, the focus will be on recruiting, teaching and rebuilding. By the time an old-style Mainstream class finally graduates, SSD will have churned out **several** consecutive beginner groups. SSD produces far **more** people than old-style once-a-year classes. After the restart, **most** beginners will be in the SSD program. (During the first **year** after the restart, **all** new dancers will be SSD, because the old-style crop is harvested only **after** a **year** of class). Therefore, it will be **easy** to cater to SSD dancers, because they will be the majority.

With SSD, it's more important than ever to cater to **new** dancers. New dancers are your **best** sales people. Give them a **fun**, **exciting** dance where they can **succeed** and have fun, and they'll **help you** build up an even bigger crowd. Success creates **more** success and **more** fun.

Where can SSD dancers find other SSD dance groups?

Use the internet! The Facebook group "Social Square Dancing" has over 500 members, and this number grows every week. SSD groups can be found all over the map, even before the Covid shutdown. After we restart, SSD will be even **more** prevalent. Most leaders will view the restart as a golden **opportunity** to offer square dancing to a **brand-new** target audience. There are already a lot of SSD groups. There will soon be a lot **more**, as more and more leaders realize that SSD helps them **win.**

Should national square dance conventions have a separate hall for SSD?

Yes, we all want an immediate **cure** which will **fill** the halls at conventions. Whether or not our wish is realistic, SSD is our **best** chance to fulfill it ... given enough **time.**

Whenever SSD dancers **start** coming to conventions, we must recognize that SSD dancers can dance **only** in the SSD hall. All other dancers at the convention can **also** dance in the SSD hall. SSD will be the "**common ground**" which ties **all** convention attendees together. When a convention eventually has an SSD hall, it needs to be the **biggest, center-stage, prime-time** hall.

Currently, the **biggest** (Live Band) hall at Nationals dances Mainstream. **Anyone** at the convention can dance in that hall. *(And only about 35 different calls are used in that hall, which is another topic entirely.)* At future national conventions, the **biggest** (Live Band) hall **should be SSD,** for the **exact same reasons** why that same biggest hall is Mainstream today: so that **everyone** can dance **together** at the big event.

How does the CALLERLAB recommendation "that calls be taught from more than a single position (formation and arrangement)" fit in with SSD?

SSD does **not** change any existing CALLERLAB program.

SSD packages square dancing into a new, **user-friendly** product. SSD is designed to be taught, standard application, in just 18 to 22 hours. This lets new dancers get what **they want, sooner.** After just 18 to 22 hours, new dancers are **out** of Learn Mode *(mostly stop-and-go dancing)* and **into** Dance Mode (with **fun** and **energy** and smooth **flow**).

SSD is **more** than a list of calls. It's a **philosophy** of giving people what they want. As callers, we want to **teach** people to dance. But dancers just want to **dance.** SSD lets them **dance, sooner** than ever before. Also, SSD puts the focus on Dance Mode with dancer **success** rates of 99.9% or higher.

By design, **most** SSD dancing is good smooth standard-applications choreography, in **flowing Dance Mode** *(instead of stop-and-go Learn Mode).* You can introduce other usages and even brand-new calls, in **small** doses: **one** workshop tip per SSD dance.

SSD classifies choreography into **three** groups by **difficulty:**

- **SA** = **Standard Applications:**
  - o **familiar** formations and arrangements.
  - o **high success** rate for new dancers.
- **SAV** = **Standard Applications with Variety:**
  - o different but not difficult
  - o Still easy for new dancers to **succeed**
- **EA = Extended Applications**
  - o practically **everything** else
  - o A **little** mix of EA can provide a great dancing experience.
  - o Remember: a **little bit** goes a long way!

You don't have to do your **homework**, because it has **already** been done **for you.** The **SSD Guide** contains hundreds of smooth, flowing, interesting figures. Each figure is clearly labeled and **color-coded** into one of the three difficulty groups (SA, SAV, EA).

I heard that SSD focuses on symmetry. What is symmetry?

For decades, we mainly entertained dancers by **teaching** new calls and new usages *(formations and arrangements)* for existing calls. This approach has huge disadvantages: dancers are constantly in **Learn Mode** and the dancing becomes **tedious stop-and-go.**

SSD focuses on smooth, flowing **Dance Mode.** To provide variety, SSD uses the concept of symmetry. Once dancers know a smooth flowing dance pattern, they **enjoy,** and are **successful** with, the **same** dance pattern from the **opposite** angle or flow.

Here's an example of symmetry: Flutterwheel and Reverse Flutterwheel. In Flutterwheel, the **right-hand** dancer starts the action, and everyone moves **clockwise.** In Reverse Flutterwheel, the **left-hand** dancer starts, and everyone moves **counter-clockwise.**

Separately, Flutterwheel and Reverse Flutterwheel are each great calls. But **together,** the combination is far **greater** than the sum of the parts. If we call only Flutterwheel all the time, dancers would always flow clockwise. But we **don't** call Flutterwheel all the time. We blend in Reverse Flutterwheel so that dancers get the **best** of both worlds. They flow clockwise **and** counter-clockwise. The right-hand dancer starts **and** the left-hand dancer. They use the right hand **and** the left hand. That's symmetry!

Think about swinging on a **swing**. The whole point is to go **back** and **forth** and **back** and **forth**. It's pleasurable. If you went just one direction on a swing, such as just **back and back and back,** or just **forth and forth and forth**, it would **not** provide **any** pleasure at all. It's **the** same with square dancing. Symmetry gives people the pleasure of **true dancing** instead of just movement.

Symmetry is even **more** pleasurable when applied to **entire dance patterns.** After dancers are comfortable with:

> "Swing Thru, Boys Run, Ferris Wheel"

they also enjoy the same pattern with **symmetry:**

> "Left Swing Thru, Girls Run, Ferris Wheel (*uphill)"*

Each pattern is great as a stand-alone event. But the **combination** of the two patterns **together**, provides **symmetry** and contrasting flow, to create the **true pleasure** of **dancing.**

The **SSD teaching guide** will provide countless examples of well-designed, smooth, flowing symmetry. You don't have to do your homework because it has **already** been done **for you.**

Instead of constantly learning new calls in **tedious stop-and-go** Learn Mode, SSD dancers find **smooth, flowing symmetry** in Dance Mode far more **interesting** and **satisfying** .

Look for **more** symmetry educational material to come out soon!

*An **ounce** of prevention is worth a **pound** of cure.*

Where can I find ideas and success stories?

CALLERLAB's **SSD Guide** contains full information on how to start and maintain your own SSD group. The Social Square Dancing group on Facebook is an active forum with over 500 members. The Callerlab KnowledgeBase has a collection of SSD documents and materials from many different sources: http://callerlabknowledge.org/?s=ssddoc

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Where do I find dance material which uses only SSD calls?

CALLERLAB's **SSD Guide** contains hundreds of ready-to-use, fun and flowing dances for you to call. You don't have to do your homework, because it's **already** been done for you. The material is arranged and color-coded for three different audiences:
- **SA** (Standard Application) – for all dancers, even beginners
- **SAV** (Standard Application with Variety) –a **tiny** bit of extra spice while still in Dance Mode.
- **EA** (Extended Applications) – to **occasionally** challenge your dancers and give them deeper knowledge and understanding.

Many square dance music producers have released and will continue to release singing calls for SSD.

Which is more important: What I call, or How I call it?

How you call it! Square dancing is a form of **entertainment**. If the caller is **fun** and **energetic**, it's much easier for the dancers to have a **fun** and **exciting** good time.

Decades ago, when we had millions of square dancers, callers would **never** try to **change** the figure of a patter or singing call. Thus, every caller had the **same** choreography. The **only** difference between callers was how **smooth** and **entertaining** you could deliver the **same** material that **every** caller had. Square dancing **grew** like crazy, back when the **only** focus was **how** to make it dance better.

Think about opera singers. **Some** singers are **more** acclaimed than others. But they **all** sing the exact **same** musical notes. It's not **what** they sing. It's **how** they sing it. The same is true in square dance calling. **How** you call is **far** more important than **what** you call. Keep it **fun**, **smooth** and **exciting**!

What happens if my club insists on continuing to teach SSD dancers all the way through Mainstream or Plus?

This would give other nearby SSD groups a serious competitive **advantage** over **your** group.

Dance Mode is the **big** drawing card of square dancing. Dance Mode is fun, flowing, smooth, exciting, energetic. By comparison, Learn Mode is a **chore**. Learn Mode is mostly stop-and-go.

SSD lets people reach **Dance Mode** much **faster**. This keeps people excited and **enthusiastic**. "Friends Bring Friends" becomes your biggest recruitment technique.

Why would you **give up** all of those **advantages?**

SSD was originally called "Sustainable Square Dancing". What does sustainable mean?

SSD is **designed** to be sustainable. Sustainability requires **responsibility**.

It's okay to go into a forest and cut down a **few** trees to build your house, as long as you harvest **responsibly** so that the forest can **regenerate** the trees you took. It's **not** okay to clear-cut a forest until **nothing** remains.

It's okay to go to a great fishing lake and catch a **few** fish. **All** forms of fishing have daily limits and size restrictions. You throw back the smaller ones (the ones not yet ready to harvest) so they can **replenish** the resource.

Sustainable square dancing is exactly the **same**. In **any** sustainable endeavor, the resource is something to **enjoy** today, and **more** importantly, a living breathing system which grows more of the resource each and every year.

SSD gives us a wonderful opportunity to practice and improve our **leadership** skills. SSD is specifically designed to be **easy** and **fun** to learn, while also providing enough fun and **variety** for dancers to **enjoy** year after year. Compare this to Mainstream and Plus, where it takes **more** than a year for beginners to reach club level. And once they reach club level, they are immediately **pressured** to take even more classes and learn even more variations.

We need to sell **Dancing**, not **Classing**. SSD can succeed only if we offer an easy and fun **dance** program that people **enjoy**. Encourage dancers to bring their friends to the next beginner group. Square dancing's numbers have declined constantly for many decades. A better product can reverse that trend.

According to a famous quote, "build a **better mousetrap**, and the world will beat a path to your door". The square dance scene needs a **better mousetrap**, and SSD is it.

How do I encourage people to bring their friends to the next SSD beginner class?

Word-of-mouth advertising is **very** powerful. Surveys show that it's the single most powerful recruitment technique for square dancing. Word of mouth can happen on its own. Yet we get far **better** results if we **ask** (and **remind**) people to bring their friends to the next beginner group.

What do I do when a nearby caller tries to recruit my SSD dancers?

Anyone who tries to recruit your group into an old-style year-of-class program faces an uphill battle. SSD appeals to a **different** target audience than Mainstream/Plus. SSD enthusiasts enjoy the **fun** and **excitement** of SSD. They probably **won't** enjoy Mainstream and Plus as much. SSD dancers enjoy the smooth, flowing action of **Dance Mode**. Most old-style programs are in stop-and-go **Learn Mode** for a **year** or longer.

We find that after dancers experience a **smooth**, **flowing**, **fun** and **exciting** SSD **dance** with great timing and styling, they won't enjoy (or even **tolerate**) the **tedious stop-and-go** and constant pressure of a year of Learn Mode. SSD is simply a more **fun** product.

As leaders in a **leisure** activity, we must focus on our customers' **enjoyment**. **Entertain** your dancers. Give them a good **dance**. Include other **social** activities (birthday celebrations, occasional non-dance events) so that people are attracted by the **social** aspects in addition to the physical dance aspects. The very **best** way to prevent your dancers from being siphoned off is to convince them that your group is a **lot** more fun.

Still, we as leaders are sometimes forced to **politely** yet **firmly** keep the **wolves** at bay. You definitely have the **right** to ask other groups to grow and harvest their **own** crop. If you were a farmer, you would plant your **own** crop, **tend** to it, **grow** it and eventually **harvest** it. You'd keep some of the best seeds for next year's crop. It's the same in square dancing.

You would **never** go to a neighbor's farm, dig up **their** nearly-ready-to-harvest crop, take it back to your farm, then harvest **their** crop as **if** you had grown it yourself. Let's all do the **right** thing, and encourage others to do the right thing also. Sustainability is important (not just in square dancing, but in everything we do). When we **all** act sustainably, we can **all** enjoy the fruits of our, and each other's, labors.

You will know for sure that **your** program is successful when other leaders drop by to try to poach your dancers. To prepare for the inevitable, we can learn from Contra dance groups. If **you** go to a local contra dance and try to recruit **their** dancers into **your** square dance program, you will be unsuccessful.

First, Contra dancers truly **enjoy** what they do. They **love** dancing to live music, with **no** classes required, with brand-new beginners welcome every night, at a **lively** and **energetic** pace, in constant **Dance Mode**. They get what they **want** from Contra, and they **cannot** get what they want from square dancing's year-long constant Teach mode.

Secondly, and perhaps **more** importantly, if **you** try to poach dancers from a contra group, they will **quickly** tell you, in **no** uncertain terms, that such efforts are **not** welcome.

Still, your **primary** defense is to provide your customers with a **fun**, **exciting**, **flowing** and **friendly** dance.

My question is not answered in this FAQ. Where can I ask additional questions?

The Facebook Group "Social Square Dancing" has over **500** members and is a virtual "Who's Who" of today's square dance leadership. You can ask questions and get answers from experienced SSD enthusiasts who sincerely want **you** and your group to **succeed**.