

*How To Be
A Successful
Teacher
By Jeff Priest*

Teaching - Presented by Jeff Priest

- **The dictionary says to teach is:**
 - *To impart knowledge or skill*
 - *To provide knowledge*
 - *To condition to a certain action or frame of mind*
 - *To cause to learn by example or experience*
 - *To advocate or preach*

Elements to be aware of while you teach!

- **Effective teaching techniques include;**
 - *Know “who” your students are*
 - *Use true CALLERLAB definitions*
 - *Styling*
 - *Timing*
 - *LOTS of Patience*
 - *Don’t Over-teach*
 - *Add Some Humour*

- **There are four main methods of learning:**
 - *Visual*
 - *Auditory*
 - *Reading*
 - *Kinaesthetic or Tactile (Doing The Action)*

Teaching - Presented by Jeff Priest - Con't

Know “Who” your students are

- *It is important that you gear your teaching to your students*
- *30 somethings learn much faster than retirees. Teens learn much faster than 30 somethings.*
- *What type of terminology will you use? Do your students speak English fluently? If not, how will you minimize the confusion? Remember to be concise in your definitions. Don't ramble or add unnecessary words or phrases.*
- *Do you have women dancing as men? Will you use the term boys and girls, men and ladies or beaux and belles?*
- *Remember Square Dancing is a language all of its own.*
- *You are teaching more than just calls. You are teaching a new language that contains many words that each have their own action. Your dancers have to hear a new word, decipher what it means and get the message to their feet to perform the action that goes with it. Not easy for all people.*
- *Also remember that you may have some folks in your group who don't want to be there. They have been “forced” into it by a partner, friend or other individual who had some control.*

What learning method do your dancers fit into?

- *Visual (Show and Tell)*
 - *These dancers must see the action completed to understand it.*
- *Auditory (Your words must be correct)*
 - *These dancers will pay very close attention to you when you are speaking. They will remember what you say. Words said over the microphone are very hard to take back from auditory learners.*
- *Reading (Offer the written definition)*
 - *These learners require a written definition to really learn what you are telling them. They don't fully understand until they can read it for themselves.*
- *Kinaesthetic or Tactile (Doing The Action)*
 - *These dancers must do the action for themselves. They don't get it until they do it!*

Teaching - Presented by Jeff Priest - Con't

Use True CALLERLAB definitions

- *Always use the true written definition when teaching a call. Develop a **CALL ANALYSIS SHEET** for each call that you use.(samples are below) This will give you all the required information to teach it properly and effectively. If you have shortcuts or hints you want to give the dancers, that is fine but use the definition first. Your “reading” dancers may well look it up and will challenge you if you stray from the written word. Better to offer your personal hints after they have heard what the real definition is. AND be sure they know these are YOUR personal hints. The dancers will create their own definitions but best you tell them the correct way right from the beginning.*

Styling

- *Styling seems to have been placed on the back burner in recent years. I realize that class times are shorter, however our dancers will enjoy the dance much more if they are doing the calls properly with style and finesse. Styling is part of every definition that CALLERLAB provides. You should be teaching it as you work with your dancers. Maybe not on the initial teach but once they have learned the fundamentals, then teach them the style and flow of the call.*

Timing

Give your dancers the name of the call before they learn it. Always be sure to tell your dancers where the call starts and where it ends AND how many beats it took to get there. This is critical to them understanding how the timing works. You also need to use music that has a very clear beat so the dancers can identify when to step. There is lots of good music available for workshopping. Some of the more modern music available today is not the best for workshopping as there is too much “stuff” to get in your way. Pick a solid piece of hoedown music that doesn't fight with your voice and doesn't offer too much distraction to the dancer. You also need to use a singing call in each tip and the figure should include your new teach.

Many callers say I can't get my dancers to dance the calls in the correct time. Their solution is to give them more time. The better option, in my opinion, is to slow your tempo down, and count out the beats so your dancers know what the timing is. Once they are dancing the new call in time then put your tempo back to normal.

Often times new sight callers forfeit timing for choreography. You should always use modules when teaching, in my opinion, so you can flow the call and the dancers can achieve the correct timing and a result that works.

Teaching - Presented by Jeff Priest - Con't

LOTS Of Patience

Patience is very important. Yes, they are all adults and yes they should be able to learn this but YOU need to understand – this is their recreation not their job. You also need to understand that your dancers are learning not just new calls but a new language and new actions to go with the words. This is all foreign to them. To learn they need to be relaxed not frustrated. Be very complimentary to your dancers even if they are not as successful as you had hoped. There are times when you will have problems with a new call. Drop it for the night. Many callers experience difficulties when there is a full moon. Also, party nights are not good for teaching either. The mindset is different. Be prepared to change your program!!

Don't Over-teach

Watch your time with a teach tip. 10 minutes is the most it should be. The human brain will get to a point where it can only hear the same thing so many times before it tunes out. Also remember to be concise and don't offer too much information about any one call. Keep to the definition! Re-teach as required. Also, always remember those sitting out. They need the teach as well, be sure to re-teach/review in the next tip for those who missed it. This also gives those who were having problems a second chance at a first teach.

Add Some Humour

Your humor needs to be light hearted fun, stay away from religion and politics and definitely do not use sarcasm. Sarcasm can be offensive. Be sure not to pick on anyone for any reason. You will find after a while someone who you can kibitz back and forth with - that will be okay but don't go too far. During a teach put in a few simple routines just to give their minds a break. Have lines of four pass thru and say forward and back. No one says you have to be facing in to do that call. They will all smile! You will find humor that suits in your group – be sure to employ it. Allow your dancers to have fun.

Teaching - Presented by Jeff Priest - Cont'd

Okay so how do you teach a brand new class?

Tip # 1

- **First you must make everyone feels comfortable** – try starting with a circle
 - **Understand some people are there because they were cajoled, coerced, tricked or threatened by their partner**
 - **Your enthusiasm and your WANTING to be there comes over the microphone**
 - **If you are not willing to take the time and show patience**
 - Then **YOU shouldn't be there!!**
 - Don't get mad at a dancer on the floor
 - Don't single out or point out dancers on the floor who have made a mistake
 - Kibitzing directed at one dancer is not generally acceptable in a new dancer class
 - **Work with people after the tip or during the break – and do it quietly!**
 - **Always use the show and tell method whenever possible**
 - **Remember this is all foreign to new dancers so**
 - **Use the call's Name**
 - **Identify starting position**
 - **Point out when the call is over**
 - **Identify ending position**
 - **Be aware that Square dancing is a language all its own**
-

Tip # 2

- **Ensure all sit-outs in Tip # 1 also get taught!**
- **Add only one or maybe two more simple calls**
- **Repetition, repetition, repetition**
- **Music is one of your greatest tools:**
 - **How should you choose your music?**
 - **You want your dancers to learn to move to music**
 - **Use music with a strong musical phrase right from the start**
 - **That doesn't necessarily mean heavy fiddle music or old time country music**
 - examples Boogie Beat-ESP421, Kaboodle-SNW506, Road Hog-RYL410, The Entertainer-GMP512, Digitech- CSTL102

Teaching - Presented by Jeff Priest - Cont'd

- **Singing calls should be something they may be familiar with** - like a sing-a-long
 - Examples. When Your Smiling MG-2045, Mr. Sandman BM024, Four Leaf Clover RBS-1282, Heart Of My Heart BS-2143, Hello, Hello, Hello BM-149,
 - **Practice at home! Know your music inside out.**
 - **Develop the ability to adjust your figure if the dancers have problems**
 - **Know some zeros and equivalentents**
 - **Know your CALLERLAB timing charts! (Mainstream & Plus included)**
 - **Timing should be taught at the same time you teach the call**
- **So what else goes into teaching?**
 - **Be clear and concise**
 - **Remove the difficulties - work the components first**
 - **Set up body flow or call pattern if possible**
 - **Teach the call from both sides of the square**
 - *ie: heads then sides*
 - **Offer different terms for the same type of action**
 - *ie: centres trade – centres turn 180” – centres arm turn “foot prints to foot prints”*
- **Be patient!!**
 - **To the dancer, how much YOU know is irrelevant**
 - **Entertain them with how much THEY know!**
 - **If your class is having difficulty with a call – drop it for that lesson**
 - **It is not worth sending your dancers home frustrated and upset**
 - **Always include the newly taught figure in your singing call**
 - **Be reassuring: always tell the dancers not to worry too much about “not getting it”**
 - When they do get it – **be complimentary** – tell them how good they are
Don't say, “ it's about time!”
 - **Be sure to review the calls each week**
 - **Be careful not to get caught in a domestic argument.**
 - Bring out the definitions list and let them read it together!

Teaching - Presented by Jeff Priest - Cont'd

Summary:

So what are the key Elements:

- **Use all methods of teaching:**
 - **Visual**
 - **Auditory**
 - **Written**
 - **Action**
- **Give the name of the call:**
 - **Identify the starting position**
 - **Give the definition**
 - **Give the timing**
 - **Give the ending position**
 - **Give the name of the call**
- **Ensure the sit-outs get a full teach:**
 - **Tip # 2 should emulate Tip # 1**
- **Ensure good dance music:**
 - **They can't dance if there is no solid beat**
 - **Know your music well**
- **Ensure you know the true definition:**
 - **You can teach "how the call is danced" but you must give the true definition**
- **Be clear and concise:**
 - **Don't ramble or mumble**
 - **Don't be confusing or ambiguous**
- **Be Patient and Complimentary:**
- **Have FUN!!!**