

## How We Form a Square

If you've not danced with us before, we want to make sure you understand the plan we have for forming squares at our fly-in.

### **The Early Bird Gets the Worm**

Our squares are formed strictly on a first come, first served basis. This is true for all eight positions in any given square. Each of the eight spaces in a square is available to anyone who arrives there first.

### **We Love Couples and Singles All the Same**

We place a high value on making sure everyone has an equal opportunity to dance.

We are sure you know other square dance groups and events that expect dancers to come as an established couple. In such cases, single dancers typically are assigned (or required to find another unpaired single) to "partner up" in a couple. Such pairings may last for the entire duration of that dance session. Singles which are paired in a couple in this arbitrary manner will sometimes end up finding themselves blessed, while at other times, they experience more of a curse. This "opportunity" may be the only concession organizers of the dance make to singles, if they're even welcome on the floor at all.

In contrast, our approach to square formation best ensures singles do not have any lesser status or any more difficulty joining an open square than dancers who are part of an established couple. We don't require a single person to find their own partner. Instead, any single dancer can secure their space as an accepted individual in the square by simply being one of the first ones to arrive to that square. Couples secure their place in the square in the same fair manner, by arriving early and assuming a spot where no one yet occupies either of the two spaces in that pre-defined couple's location in the square.

### **Singles are Much More Common Here**

Most members of the gay square dance community prefer to be able to dance with a different partner from tip to tip. Even those of us that come to a dance as an established couple will frequently dance with someone other than our normal partner. We find this adds to the fun of our events by encouraging more mixing within squares.

We encourage all established couples to exercise their own preference for dancing, whether that is dancing with the same person all night long, or changing things up on an occasional or even frequent basis. We will never ask you not to dance with your preferred partner. Rather, we strive to ensure every dancer (single or couple) feels like they are being treated as fairly as every other person on our dance floor.

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### **Extending a Hand Will Signal Other Prospective Dancers**

If you are single and arrive early to the square, you can hold out your right hand from your side as a signal that you are planning to dance as a boy, and as a signal to other dancers that you are seeking someone to dance as a girl with you. Likewise, if you arrive and extend your left hand to your side, you are signaling that you are planning to dance the girl's part and are seeking someone to stand on your left to dance as the boy. Next, you simply wait for someone else to join the square and fill the void next to you. Unless you are in the last square to form for that tip, someone will almost always step in to help.

If you arrive at a square and are planning to dance with a specific partner that has not yet arrived to the square, you have the right to decline others seeking to occupy the space next to you, if you arrived there first. Make sure you do not have hand extended in this case! As long as your preferred partner's arrival is imminent, you can hold your missing partner's space for him/her up to the time the caller is ready to begin the tip.

### **Accommodating Others, So We All Can Dance**

If an established couple arrives late to the square, two singles there that are not already paired up will often be willing to do so, in order to allow the established couple to dance together. However, the two singles that arrived earlier to the square are entitled to remain uncoupled separate individuals, if that is their preference (since they arrived to the square sooner). Being that square dancing is a cooperative activity in and of itself, experience has shown that these simple negotiations tend to work themselves out quickly and easily, (as we all have a priority on just getting down to dancing).

### **Our Diversity Makes Us Stronger**

Additionally, many of us consider ourselves to be "bi-dansual" (meaning we strive to be equally adept at dancing either the boy or girl role in a square). We may opt to change partners with each new tip for this reason alone. At the same time, we find squares form easier and faster, if we are willing to switch boy/girl roles, and offer to work with whomever else arrives later to the same square, (if that later dancer has a strong preference for one role over the other).

Most individuals that are "bi-dansual" are seeking to challenge themselves, while not unnecessarily challenging you in return. Recognizing that if we dance in the role of the opposite gender that our visual appearance is in obvious conflict with the role we are dancing, we will often seek to help other dancers in our square with this visual mismatch. Bi-dansual dancers will frequently audibly declare "boy" or "girl" as appropriate to assist others in the square, if a sex dependent move like "boys run" is called (and we are a guy dancing the girl's part in your square).