

# **A NEW WAY TO HOOK 'EM**

## **An Approach to Recruiting and Teaching New Round Dancers**

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### **Background**

Years ago our source of new round dancers from the square dance community basically dried up. So we went out to the social ballroom dance community here in State College, PA to look for new class members. We work through the State College Parks & Recreation Department, which has been a big plus for us.

### **Approach**

Over the last 5 years we have developed (and refined) an approach to teaching that uses Roundalab basics and terminology but initially emphasizes social ballroom dancing. We call our Program "**Learn To Dance**", which avoids reference to either round dancing or ballroom dancing. It is basically a social ballroom dance program that changes into a round dance program for those who stick with it.

The first year concentrates on basic figures in waltz, foxtrot, rumba, cha cha, tango and jive (both triple & single.) Since they came out to learn or improve their ballroom dancing, we also teach leading, following, ballroom amalgamations and dancing without cues. But we also teach them a couple of easy choreographed "round dances" because one of our objectives is to get them hooked on round dancing.

The second year is a continuation of the first year with a gradual shift to more and more round dances. Our programs from year three onward are strictly round dancing.

### **Participation**

We typically get 40-50 couples who come out for our free introductory lesson and start the course in September. We keep a big percentage of them for the first 3 months in the fall. By the end of the first nine months in May we typically have about half of the ones who start. Remember some of them only came out to learn a few steps for a wedding. The percentage that continue into the second year and beyond is smaller, but is still enough to maintain nice sized groups at each level. We currently have 5 groups from Phase II - VI.

We charge \$5 per couple per night and people only pay when they come. One nice thing is that we get a wide age range of participants - lots of "young couples" in their 20's, 30's, 40's, 50's.

### **Materials**

The information included here is material we have developed for advertising and for handouts to our students. It is an update of a presentation that we gave in 2000 at the Roundalab Convention on our approach. The material includes our program plans, our advertising brochures and posters, copies of brochures that I have put together on each of the rhythms (giving lists of basics, simplified definitions, ballroom amalgamations, and a little on technique), and samples of 15 minute cassette practice tapes that I have prepared for the dancers for each rhythm.

## Adaptation

Our approach would have to be adapted to each teacher's local situation and source of new dancers. After the first couple of years, "word of mouth" has also been one of our best sources of new dancers. We get very few Penn State students - they have their own excellent programs on campus. In summary, we feel we have built a viable growing program from a "non square dancing" source of dancers in our community. (As a side note, a few couples have come to our square dance lessons after starting in the round dance program. I am also a square dance caller.)

## TEACHING APPROACH

- During the first 3 months (Fall) we introduce all seven rhythms and teach a few basics in each.
- During the next 5 months we go back and concentrate on only two rhythms per night for 4 sessions – the concentrate on two different rhythms. (At the end of each evening we play 90 seconds of all the rhythms so they don't forget.)
- We then take the summer off, but schedule a few dances for them.
- Then we resume in the fall adding figures, rhythms and more technique.
- All during the lessons we pass out brochures describing what they are learning and practice tapes.

## LIST OF MATERIALS INCLUDED

Introduction

Teaching List

Lesson By Lesson Plan

### **Microsoft Publisher Brochures on:**

- Waltz
- Foxtrot
- Cha Cha
- Rumba
- Jive
- Single Swing
- Tango
- Bolero
- Quickstep
- Polka
- Leading & Following

Leading Rumba & Cha Cha Sheet (Publisher)

Practice Tape Index (Tango & Jive) (Publisher)

Practice Tape Index (WZ, FT, CH, & RB) (Excel)

### **Advertising materials:**

Class Brochure (Publisher)

Program Brochure (Publisher)

Poster (Publisher)

Business Card (Printmaster)