

We were not expected to dress up, and comfy shoes are the norm

*Hi, my partner and I have been dancing a few years now and we really enjoy it. We've made new friends, had many laughs and kept ourself fit at the same time How did you find out about our club? What do you think so far? We do hope you continue to come -- it gets better every week as you learn more moves. **That's the sort of greeting I remember from my first night. I felt very welcomed, very wanted***

*Having moved to a new area we were looking for a social activity that would also help us get a bit fitter **on limited stamina***

*But I can't dance!
Can you walk? --then you can square dance.*

*I was given a personal invitation. Arriving with no partner I was quickly found one. The first dance was so simple it inspired confidence and I felt quite relaxed and happy. I learned that even mistakes are not disasters. **I felt this was an experience to be repeated again and again.***

*The caller kept the calls very easy and his partner was very helpful as she guided us through the initial moves. **We remember many members were very welcoming and encouraging.***

My friends persuaded me to come three years ago and I had no idea what to expect I remember laughing a lot while learning, and loving how the moves connected.

I could see it would increase my fitness -- and my social life

Our beginners group soon made friends, and the 'experts' were always willing to welcome us into their squares.

*It was a great relief to find there were no complicated steps and that **mistakes added to the fun.***

It now has to be a major event to make us miss our Friday night at square dancing.

The quotes are from some of our club members - ranging from last year's recruits to dancers of many years standing. As a club we have enjoyed considerable success both in recruitment and retention of new dancers over the years. We tend to recruit every two years. Our basic pattern each recruitment year is:

We hold a Hoe Down a month before recruitment, advertising widely. We follow with three consecutive club nights that are open for people to come and try square dancing free of charge. After the three open nights we hold the first 'closed' club night for those who want to commit. At all these nights our caller has the newcomers dancing, laughing a lot and learning moves consistently throughout the night. Beginners dance every-other-dance, with tips and dances for Mainstream or Plus dancers in-between. When 'single' dancers join, we pair them up on the first night. We have found no problem with ladies being assigned to take the man's role.

THE FIRST NIGHT

**First impressions are vital
Put a clear and welcoming sign on the outside door
Be prepared for some people to arrive early
Have photos and literature on display for the visitors to look at
Set the hall to look its best, with music to set the scene
Greet each person and ask them to sign in with a phone number
Exchange names, and try to remember their names—and use them
Start on time, using experienced dancers in the squares
Get them moving to music without delay
If more arrive, make the tip short and get them involved without delay
Do not make people stand through long explanations or sit out too long
Never present an *expert* display before asking beginners to get up to dance.**

Last year our club recruited 30 new dancers. We have just graduated 21 of these. This success rate would not be possible but for the skill of our caller and the full support of our experienced dancers:

OUR CALLER has the newcomers dancing to tips and singing calls from the very first night. He manages to teach at a level that suits both fast and slow learners. He misses no opportunity to bring in humour - how many times can circle RIGHT catch people out!? Anyone missing for a week or two knows they will be brought back up to speed.

OUR EXPERIENCED DANCERS give their full support on all the open nights - in fact throughout the full learning period of the new recruits, joining in the squares for the simplest of dances.

They mix with the newcomers, both in the squares and during the refreshment break.

Aware that square dance clothes can be an acquired taste, our experienced dancers tend not to wear their dance outfits for the first few weeks of the new dancers attending.

We understand that some clubs are reluctant to recruit because of the effect this might have on their Mainstream and Plus dancing. Our experience has been:

The increase in numbers has added considerably to the 'atmosphere' in the dance room. A full dance floor - and occasionally standing room only between dances - is really quite special.

The increase in revenue has meant that we have been able to pay a second caller to come to our club night at least once a month, sometimes twice. We use a second room on these occasions and everyone has extra dancing.

We have booked top callers for our forthcoming dances.

Each month *Let's Square Dance* lists yet more clubs that are closing. We hope this booklet will help those of you who decide to try to reverse this trend.

SQUARE DANCING KEEP IT ALIVE

Publications you may find useful :-

How to **RAISE FUNDS** for recruiting By Zoe Bremer 2006 (Re-issued 2008)

How to **MARKET** Square & Round Dancing to **RECRUIT** New Dancers by Linda Gill 2008

How to **RECRUIT** By Eric Curtis 2008

How to **ARRANGE YOUR FIRST NIGHT** of class By Joan Black Lune Valley Ocean Wavers 2005 Re-issued 2008)

How to **RETAIN** Square Dancers By Irene Dimmer 2006 (Re-issued 2008)

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How To

ARRANGE THE

FIRST NIGHT

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■ recruit ■ promote ■ maintain ■

SQUARE DANCING

KEEP IT ALIVE...RPM

In order to keep Square Dancing alive we need a way to bring in a steady flow of younger people.