

WHAT TO DO IF A CALLER USES AN INCORRECT DEFINITION

Most callers know the definitions of calls. However, sometimes newer callers have not studied the definitions thoroughly, and sometimes more experienced callers may not know that a definition has changed. This is more likely to happen at Advanced and Challenge, but it also occurs at Mainstream and Plus. As a dancer, what do you do?

It is most important to never voice objection out loud from the set. This will embarrass the caller, and your status with other dancers will drop because of your having caused this embarrassment. Simply go along with whatever the caller wants for the rest of the tip.

When the tip is over, go up and talk privately with the caller. Be sure other dancers are not near so as to avoid embarrassment. If you are absolutely sure the caller is wrong, it is best to avoid saying so right away in your conversation. Instead, see if the caller can figure it out for himself/herself, because the caller will accept the idea better this way. Do this by asking what the caller wanted and ask how this fits with the definition as you understand it.

At this point one of two things will happen: (1) The caller will admit that he/she might have been stretching the definition, admit he is not sure of being correct, and will drop the idea until he gets more information; or (2) the caller will defend his position and keep using the call in the same way.

If the caller decides to continue using the call improperly and you know you are correct, then you should point out to the caller how his/her definition is incorrect. Do not hesitate to say you have danced it differently to other callers if you have done so, and even consider naming these callers as your authority. The caller's mind may not change, but you have done your part by planting the idea. The caller may research this after the dance or change his mind later on if other dancers say the same thing.

Dancer responsibility. It is the responsibility of every dancer to tell a caller when material is being used in violation of established definitions.

Some dancers cringe at this idea. They say: "I would never tell a caller he/she is wrong." Unfortunately, such thinking works to the detriment of the square dance activity. If a caller is using material incorrectly, this is adversely affecting hundreds or even thousands of dancers. Every time the caller uses the call incorrectly, the dancers think this is the correct definition, and thus the dancers learn a wrong definition. If a dancer knows the correct definition and refuses to bring it to the caller's attention, then that dancer must share the blame equally with the caller for the spreading of incorrect definitions.

Many dancers today know more about call definitions than some callers. These dancers may dance to many callers and take time to actively study definitions. If these dancers share their knowledge, this can only serve to help the square dance activity, especially when those who don't know (such as callers) are in a position to influence hundreds of dancers.

What if the caller takes offense at being told he is calling something wrong? Too bad. The activity is bigger than any caller. If a caller takes offense at being told a call is being used incorrectly, that is the caller's problem and is a sign the caller is insecure. The activity is best served by the caller being told when incorrect call definitions are being used, so that other dancers do not continue to be taught wrong.

One word of caution: Be sure you know what you are talking about when discussing call definitions with a caller, be able to defend your position, and be sure you are correct. Otherwise, the caller will have you on the defensive instantly. But if you are correct, then it is your responsibility for the good of the square dance activity to alert callers when they have used an incorrect definition. Be sure you are right, then go ahead.