

Interlocked Squares Member and Guest Dancing Standard

How Do I "Get There" ?

How can members and guests achieve the Interlocked Squares dance standard?

Some members and guests already meet or exceed this dance standard. However, for some member and guests, achieving the Interlocked Squares dance standard may require significant additional effort, even for dancers who have danced at C-1 or above for many years. Success will require studying, practice and, for some dancers, a new way of thinking about the calls. Our goal is to make Interlocked Squares a club we can be proud of because the dancers are all competent at C-1. **Here are suggestions to help you achieve what is expected of all members and guests:**

Know the definitions!!

A thorough knowledge of the definition of all calls is **required**, not just at C-1 but at all lower levels. Unfortunately, many C-1 dancers don't have a firm grasp of definitions for Advanced or Plus, because they were never taught these calls by definition. At C-1, calls can be made from a variety of starting positions, and concepts such as "Finish" require knowledge of not just the call, but its various parts. Successful C-1 dancers don't just study a call to "get through a class" but periodically will review any call that they don't "have down pat". This is an ongoing process that takes both time and effort. Use your Ceder Chest, Taminations, flash cards or any teaching aid you may find helpful to get to the point where you know the definitions "forward and backward". If it helps, repeat the definition out loud, or to yourself, as you execute the call. If you are not willing to put in the study time to reach this point and maintain it, or if you depend on cuing from the caller, then you probably will not be successful at the Interlocked Squares floor level. Also, many dancers attempt to dance by feel. It is highly unlikely that you will meet the club dance standards if you depend solely on "feel" alone to dance.

Don't be afraid to ask for help!

All of us encounter calls and/or concepts that cause us difficulty, so don't be afraid to ask for help. One of the Board Members, an experienced dancer, or one of the callers will help you by reviewing the call/concept with you after a tip, even if we need to pull a square together. If a call or concept drives you nuts, ask the caller to workshop it at a future date. Chances are that seeing it from a different person's perspective will help your own (and perhaps others') understanding of the call. If something was called during a tip that you didn't understand thoroughly, make a mental note of it and someone will go over it with you after the tip. Helping each other become better dancers benefits everyone.

Work to improve reaction time

Thoroughly knowing the definition of all calls is only the beginning. Reaction time is critical. As you progress through the various levels, you must be able to react almost instantly to more calls and modifications to those calls by various concepts. If you have to think about how to do a call, then it

may very well be too late. Some of this comes with practice and "seeing calls from non-standard positions" a few times. However, some dancers, regardless of how well they know the definitions, may constantly struggle to achieve the necessary reaction time. One suggestion is to focus on the first step, turn, or even half-step of every call. Practicing this will help you put yourself in the proper flow direction to finish the call, give you a bit more time to think, or at least put you into a position where another dancer may be able to offer assistance. If, after months or years of dancing C-1, you are consistently a step or two late, then C-1 is probably not the level for you.

Get as much floor time as possible

Dance, dance, dance....it can't be stated more simply. Try to attend as many C-1 dances as possible and, if they are not available, as many Advanced and APD Plus dances as possible. Getting sufficient practice will help the definitions you study become more ingrained. We will attempt to keep all members and frequent guests advised of dance opportunities as we become aware of them. Check the flyer display at Club night for potential dances. Stanford Quads (Sundays in Palo Alto) and Belle Swingers (Wednesdays in Sunnyvale) both dance APD, with calls done from unusual positions, so they are great practice, and both offer a C-1 star tip.

Recovery ability

Even the best C-1 dancers occasionally make mistakes. We all do. However, successful dancers have the ability to quickly recognize that they (or perhaps another dancer) made a mistake and can fix the mistake before it causes the square to crash. Knowledge of the ending formation for calls will also help a square that has crashed to get in that formation so they can continue dancing as opposed to standing around or just squaring up. This means you need to know the definition, and the ending position, not just how to execute the call.

Use your opposite as a check point, not a crutch

Good C-1 dancers are aware of their opposite and glance at him/her periodically as a check point. This may be helpful when dancing phantom formations, triple boxes, lines, waves, and columns. However, do not use your opposite as a crutch because you don't know the definition of a call. That is depending on someone else and not focusing on dancing your part of the call. If you must constantly refer to your opposite because you are not sure of where you should be, you probably should not be dancing C-1.

Counterparting is not dancing

"Counterparting" is watching the dancer in an adjacent square who started in the same position as yourself. Focus on what is happening in YOUR square and only look at your counterpart if your square has broken down and you are trying to recover. If a dancer is watching another square, then they aren't paying enough attention to their OWN square. If you need to counterpart regularly in order to dance, then you need to drop back a level.

Periodically do an objective self-assessment

Are my squares constantly breaking down? If so, is this just bad luck or might I just be the cause? Herein lies the need for periodic self-assessment. Whether at club night, at PACE, or at other

dances, we all need to look objectively at our successes and failures. Am I only successful when I am in an extremely strong square or does my square continue to dance when there are weaker dancers in it? Am I frequently unsure of where I should be, or am I constantly scrambling to complete a call? Can I dance my part without depending on my opposite or counterpart?

Certainly, most new dancers who have just completed a class will require many months and much floor time to become competent at dancing C-1. These dancers principally need to focus on continued study, and request help when there are calls/concepts that they find difficult. If a dancer has taken several C-1 classes, has sufficient floor time, and is still struggling, then that dancer should drop back a level.

Members and guests who are long-term C-1 dancers particularly need to evaluate whether their dancing ability has declined. This is difficult because such declines can be very gradual. We all like to believe that we can continue dancing C-1 forever, and find it difficult to accept the fact that we may no longer be able to "keep up". Are you having difficulty with the pace (speed) and/or are you having difficulty remembering definitions? We all will eventually experience a decline in our ability to dance at C-1, and eventually the lower levels. This can be caused by a multitude of factors including physical problems (like arthritis or not dancing for months due to illness) or a general decline in our ability to "think as fast on our feet" as we once did. Fortunately, we don't need to give up square dancing. We can drop back a level and dance at other clubs where the pace and complexity are more suited to our current capabilities. We all need to keep in mind that when we cannot hold up "our end of the bargain" we are negatively affecting the other seven dancers in our square. It takes only two to tango, but it takes eight dancers working together, each doing their part, to square dance successfully.

Where do we go from here?

Beginning in June 2014 and through the end of the year, the Board, the Membership Committee and our club callers will make every effort possible to help EVERYONE who dances at the club to achieve the stated club dance standard. We will counsel those that may be struggling to meet the club standard and, if necessary, will provide them with additional help.

While this is our goal, we all must recognize that some dancers may not succeed. At the end of the year we will do a thorough assessment of progress toward our goal and, if necessary, allow additional time. Where the Board of Directors and the callers feel that even additional time will not help a dancer reach the standards, those dancers will be requested to seek other venues that are more suited to their skills. While this may seem to be insensitive, if a standard is set then it must be administered as uniformly and as fairly as possible. Please be assured that the Board will take very seriously the need to make such a recommendation to any member or guest. Such a recommendation would only be made after thorough consultation with the callers, and membership committee.

Any member, guest or recent student that has any questions regarding the stated dance standard or how the club will proceed over the next seven months are encouraged to speak to any Board member or membership committee member. Our goal is to help each of you achieve the club goal.

Sincerely,

Your Interlocked Squares Board of Directors