

# Dancing In Sicilian Circles

Calvin Campbell

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Dancing in formations other than the standard four couple square used to be common practice at square dances. The most frequently used formation was the Sicilian Circle.



A Sicilian Circle Formation is a big circle composed of facing couples of four. In the graphic shown to the left, there are three sets of facing couples. The big circle would probably contain 6 to 8 sets of four.

If you don't have that many couples, just straighten out the curve and stack the mini sets in a long line stretching away from the caller.

A third option is to scatter the mini sets randomly around the floor.

There are several advantages to using Sicilian Circles.

- 1) Everyone dances all the time.
- 2) By Passing Thru facing couples and proceeding to the next couple to form other sets of four, the caller can mix and match dancers skills if needed. This is a great way to drill on timing.
- 3) Teaching any facing couple square dance "basic" in a Sicilian Circle Formation, isolates the action to just the four dancers. This takes away any distraction from other dancers such as seen in the square formation.
- 4) It allows the caller to easily see what is happening to the entire dance floor much easier than in multiple squares.
- 5) Sicilian Circles provide another form of variety in square dancing. They are fun to dance.

I have attached a paper by Daryl Clendenin that provides several more reasons to use Sicilian Circles for teaching. I will discuss using Sicilian Circles at regular square dances.

Any time you change a formation, the dancers perk up. Presently, the standard practice is to move from the square formation to an Eight Chain Thru Formation and run dancers back and fourth across a 2 by 4 grid. This is essentially two facing couples stacked. Moving to a Sicilian Circle Formation just includes more facing couple sets in the stack.

The primary dance routines used with facing couples are called a **Facing Couple Zero**. At the end of each FCZ modules, everyone is in the same geographical position where they started. If the caller decides to not call a **Facing Couple Zero**, then the progression around the big circle mixes partners. This is the caller's choice. Keep everyone with their partner or mix and match.

As couples progress on to dance with other couples they

get to dance with many more other dancers than can be done in the square formation. It's up to the caller to decide whether to return everyone back to the original set of four or end the dance with everyone mixed. I sometimes leave the couples mixed and move to squares for a singing call.

As with most of what I done with modules, I keep the **Facing Couple Zeros** short and progress the couples to new couples frequently. There are several ways to "progress". The most obvious is to **Pass Thru** the facing couple and move on around the set to a new couple.

A nice way to vary the feel of this progression is to use a **Pass Thru Equivalent**. One of my favorites is **Right and Left Thru with a full turn and move on**. Dancers like that action.

**Square Thru 3/4 and move on** can be used to move couples to reverse the progression from CCW to CW.

Once your dancers have the idea of how "progression" in Sicilian Circles work, there are several other options for "progressing".

**Veer Left/Right ... Veer Right/Left ...** and move on

If you are willing to teach a little bit.

**Veer Left ... Veer Left ... Veer Right ... Veer Right ...** produces a weaving action that the dancers will enjoy. It progresses the dancers two positions in the big circle.

**Swing Thru ... Men Run ... Couple Circulate** will move each couple to a new pair. Then **Bend the Line ... Circle Left 3/4** will finish the module.

**Slide Thru ... Two Ladies Chain ... Roll Away ... Touch 1/4 ...** This sets up two single file columns. Each man is leading their partner. **Single File Circulate two places ... Face the one beside you ... Circle Four Left 3/4** will finish the progression.

Finally, if you are willing to teach something that the dancers may find is hard to do at first, **Star 4 Right 1/2 ... Go onto the next couple and Star Left 1/2 ... Go onto the next and Star Left 1/2 ... Go onto the next and face them**. Once the dancers learn to do this one, they really like dancing it. It's called a "Grand Star Circle". A prompted dance of the same name is called by Susan Morris on the video at the following URL. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oL8xVLA1l-s>

If you listen to Susan in the above video, she is prompting the "basics" of the dance. By prompting the action, the dancers get to dance to the phrase of the music.