



Somerset Schools' Folk Dance Festival

Generic Dance Instructions



Introduction

We are very pleased that you and your school are participating in the **Somerset Schools' Folk Dance Festival**.

OPTIONAL DANCE

This gives the opportunity for teachers and children in each school to create their own dance. The newly-devised dances will all use the same music, so that at the appropriate point in the programme the band will play a tune and dozens of different dances will be performed simultaneously across the Cathedral Green. Special notes on the approach we recommend you adopt in devising a new dance, and the music to be used, are given on page .

Even if you are an old hand at the Festival, please read through the wording for all the dances in the pack. As mentioned above, the majority of dances have been used before, but people's interpretation of dance notation can vary. Please try and make sure you are following our approach to the dances.

GENDER - Those of you who have been involved with the Festival before will notice that we have adopted a somewhat different approach to gender.

Our approach in this pack is not to differentiate between girls and boys. If children feel more comfortable dancing with someone of their own gender, we suggest you let them do so. We have no problem with either all male or all female couples.

If, however, you prefer your children to dance in mixed gender couples, please feel free to do so. Neither approach will be conspicuous at the Festival.

Notes on Teaching Folk Dance

The term “country dancing” is the same as “barn dancing”, “folk dancing” and “ceilidh dancing”.

More people participate in folk dance than almost any other social dance form. Just as folk songs are sung with a natural voice, so folk dances are danced with a natural movement. People's repertoire of folk dances changes over the years, but many of the old traditional dances have survived. Dance styles have changed, quite often as a direct consequence of changes in people's dress.

Folk dances often have traceable regional origins, but they are often danced in other parts of the country.

THE MUSIC - Although it is not crucial for teachers to conquer all the subtleties of folk dance rhythms, you may find the following helpful.

There are a number of other rhythms within the British country dance tradition, but for this Festival we will concentrate on the two rhythms to which children find it easiest to respond - jigs and the polka/reel family (the latter sound very similar to each other).

JIGS are played in 6/8 rhythm. This rhythm gives them a bright, lively, and fairly quick character. Jigs tend to be danced with either a skip step or a light “walk”.

POLKAS, RANTS and REELS are played in 4/4 rhythm. They may sound slower than the jigs (there are fewer notes in each bar) and are danced either with a slower skip step or with a one-two-three-hop step.

FITTING THE DANCE TO THE MUSIC - The building block of an English folk dance tune is a section or phrase of music which is **8-bars** in length. Every dance tune will have a certain number of these 8-bar building blocks put together to construct the complete dance tune. Each 8-bar phrase of music is usually repeated once before moving on to the **next but different** 8-bar phrase of music in the tune. As each dance tune may have two or three different 8-bar phrases of music, it can be seen that the music will last for 32 bars or 48 bars before the entire piece of dance music is repeated right through from the very beginning.

If you listen to a recording of folk dance tunes you should be able to identify the point at which the repeat of a phrase of music starts. This is likely to be after 8 bars of music. Don't worry if this moment is not immediately clear to you. The main thing is get children to respond rhythmically to the music and for what they do to fit the music.

Dance figures fit into the same structure of 8-bar phrases as the music. You will find that the notation of country dances relates to this same music structure. The way to be aware of the phrasing of the music is either by counting the number of bars, or by listening to the music.

Listen to a tune being played. The musician will play the first 8-bar (A.1). When you hear the musician start to repeat this 8-bar phrase, you will know that you are moving into the second section of the dance (A.2). When the musician changes to a different phrase of music you will know you are moving into the third section of the dance (B.1), and when you hear that second 8-bar phrase being repeated you will know that you are entering the fourth section of the dance (B.2). In a 48-bar tune you will then hear the fifth and sixth sections of

the dance (C.1 and C.2). When the musician starts to play the first 8-bar phrase again you will know that you are starting the dance again.

A Typical Dance Plan

This dance has a total of 48 bars of music, which will be played through from start to end before the whole tune is repeated x-number of times (the number of times it is repeated is largely at the whim of the “caller” or dance teacher). A dance which is based on 32 bars of music will only have Phrases 1 and 2, along with their repeats.

Start					End
Phrase 1	Phrase 1 (rept)	Phrase 2	Phrase 2 (rept)	Phrase 3	Phrase 3 (rept)
8-bars	8-bars	8-bars	8-bars	8-bars	8-bars
A.1	A.2	B.1	B.2	C.1	C.2

DANCE FORMATIONS - are made up of a number of couples, and may be of varying sizes. Whenever dancers get to the first phrase of the dance (A.1), they will be in whatever formation is specified for that dance.

The following are the main folk dance formations.

A circle dance is for any number of couples, forming a large circle round the room.

A Sicilian circle dance is made of small circles of two couples dancing with each other around the perimeter of a larger circle.

A square dance is for four couples, each couple forming one side of the square.

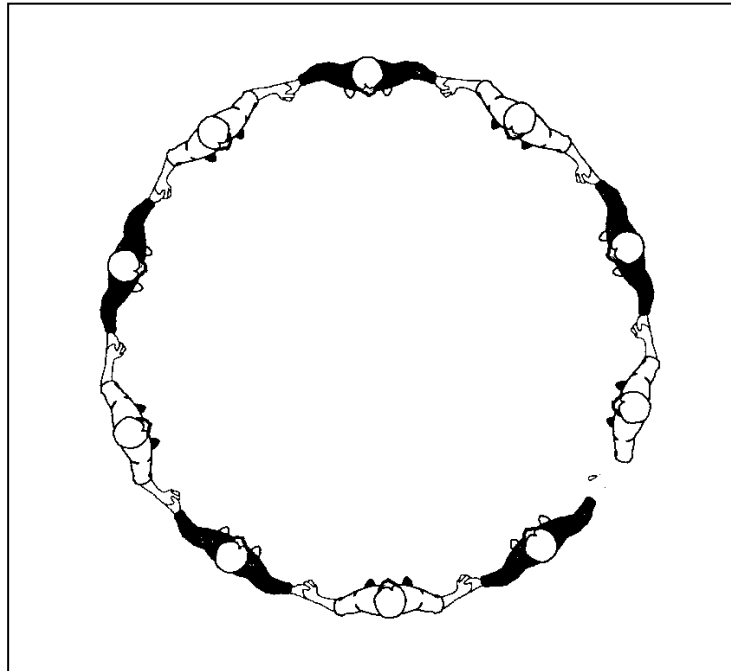
A longways dance is in a line formation, with each dancer facing their partner on the other side of the set.

A couple dance is just danced by any number of pairs of people.

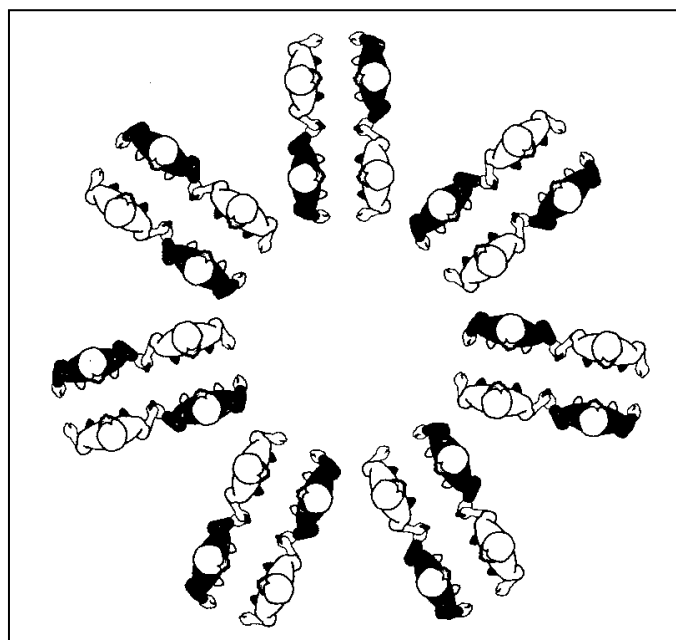
Dance Formations

(These diagrams are taken from Folk South West's dance resource for teachers *Up the Sides and Down the Middle*, see page 2).

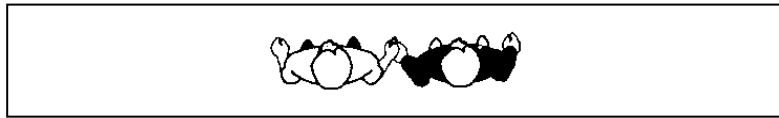
A **Circle Dance** is for any number of pairs, forming a large circle round the room:



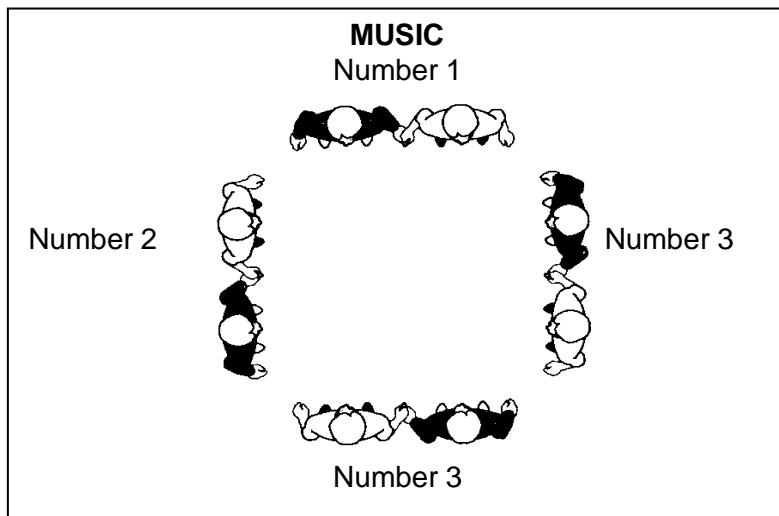
A **Sicilian Circle** dance is made up of a series of small circles of two pairs dancing with each other at the edge of the room. One pair faces anti-clockwise round the room, the other faces clockwise, so that the effect is of a large circle with pair facing pair all the way round its perimeter:



A Couple Dance is where each person dances with the same partner, with any number of pairs dancing at the same time. Couples usually move anti-clockwise round the room:



A Square Dance is normally for four pairs, each pair forming one side of the square. The pairs tend to be numbered according to the position of the dancers in relation to the musicians, thus:



A Longways Dance is in a double line formation, with partners dancing on opposite sides of the set:

