

Helpful Hints from Bruce Lowther
From
Silver Spinners Wheelchair Square Dance Club (Oregon)

General:

- People who are pushing a wheelchair are called motors, not pushers.
- Some disabilities affect the memory or cognitive ability, be aware. This may mean that you will have to re-teach a move frequently before it is remembered or that you will have to cue people through it.
- When giving directions, try to address the person in the wheelchair. This helps them be engaged in what they are doing.
- Being pushed in a wheelchair is a passive experience. Try to get them to direct the pusher.
- Reduced head movement in the chair can cause motion sickness if you go too fast. This happens because they cannot turn their head enough to “spot” something as they turn, everything just is a blur as it goes by. This is worsened if the person in the wheelchair is not engaged in what they are doing.
- Allow about twice as many beats to complete the movement. This rule varies with the kind of disability. There is one young man in our group with CP, normally his mother guides the chair, but if he does the moves himself then it can be much more time to complete the move.
- Be careful of forward and back movements. The change from a forward movement to a back movement makes it harder for the person in the wheelchair to stay in the chair.
- “Screwing a dancer into the ground” can cause dizziness and motion sickness. Try not to put too many turning movements together.
- Squares can get big because of the room a chair takes to maneuver. When planning a wheelchair dance I allow a 20 by 20-foot area per square.
- Wheelchair square dancing has an additional challenge in that you are not touching anyone. This means the dancer has to keep track of where they are in a square in relation to others in their head.

SD Moves I do not call:

- Swing – Can cause dizziness and orientation problems.
- Do-sa-do – Wheelchairs do not go sideways. I have done a do-sa-do in a diamond shape, but it really does not add to the quality of the dance.
- Allemande Thar – It is hard to navigate a wheelchair backwards. It can be done, but I believe it does not add enough to the dancing experience to make it worthwhile.
- Box the gnat – This could be done as a pass through and u-turn back. To do it as written is possible, but does not add to the dancing experience.
- Half Sashay – Sideways movements are hard.
- U-Turn Back – Requires too much room for wheelchairs.

Adapted moves:

- Ladies In Men Sashay from a circle Left – Imagine promenading single file reverse line of direction. Have the ladies roll into the center of the circle, looping back so the end up behind the man that was originally behind them.
- Roll away with half sashay from a circle left – Imagine promenading single file reverse line of direction. The ladies accelerate into the center of the circle, men slowing down a little, from the center of the circle the ladies move up in front of the man originally in front of them.
- Circle Left/Right – Single File Promenade
- Recycle – Ends crossfold, Ladies back up.
- Right & Left Thru – Pass through, Partner Trade. You could in fact drop this call and just call the Pass Through, and Partner Trade.
- 8 Chain Thru – Instead of a courtsey turn on the end, do a partner trade.

Moves that are the same:

- Slide Thru -> Star Thru
- Weave & Right & Left Grand
- Stars & Promenades & Circles

Example Singing Call Figure:

Heads Square Thru
Swing Thru
Boys Run
Farris Wheel
Pass Thru
Take Corner
Promenade (short).

Round Dancing in Wheelchairs

General:

- Not like our round dancing at all
- Mostly all forward movements with circles
- We only do waltz – could use other music

Similar moves:

- Twisty Vine – Dancers veer away from partner 2 beats, then veer towards partner 2 beats, repeat as many times as desired.
- Partner Trade (same)
- Hitch is the same only it more beats. (It is a slow forward and back movement)

Examples of Moves:

- Butterfly 8 – 8 measures – Starting positions couples facing same direction line of dance (lod) or reverse lod. Two couples loop away from each other coming back together facing the opposite direction. Couple backs up two measures, then loops away from one another to come up facing the original direction, couples move forward 2 measures.
- Figure 8 – 8 measures – starts from couples both facing lod or reverse lod. Couples circle away from one another when they come back together they cross sides (inside crosses in front) 4 measures, and momentarily are together facing the original direction, the couples continue to circle away from one another, when they come back together they change sides, (inside crosses in front) and end up in their original positions facing the same direction as when they started 4 measures.
- Circle Away LOD – individuals circle away from partner, rolling back, and they end up together facing lod.
- Circle Away Cross over – Individuals circle away from partner rolling back, as they meet they change places with the person on the inside crossing first and end up facing lod.
- Circle Away Lady roll to banjo – Lady: veers away from partner, and then circles in to face the opposite direction (reverse lod) beside partner. Man: Veers away from partner, then backs up coming to rest beside his partner facing lod.
- Wheel left, Lady to line of dance – From banjo, both partners wheel forward staying together. When man is facing lod he stops turning and moves forward, the lady continue on around the man until she is facing lod and then moves up beside the man. Ending position: Normal couples facing lod.