

Middling Thank You – strategies for teaching classes in smaller branches, where only one class exists to cater for all levels of dancer.

What does a beginner or less experienced dancer look for in a class?

- New hobby for winter – some only attend classes not dances
- Eager to learn but apprehensive
- Overwhelmed by the number of dances
- Want to dance in narrow/smaller sets
- Want to go over same dances week after week
- Feel they have achieved at the end of the class
- Satisfaction when they have danced a dance correctly
- Pleased when the name of the dance is familiar
- Enjoy watching more experienced dancers
- Not made to feel they are a hindrance

What does the more capable dancer look for in a class?

- Want to dance socially for enjoyment
- Revise/learn new dances for forthcoming dances
- Appreciate phrasing and dancing well but not technically able/interested.

Some dancers who have danced a while think they are experienced dancers. An experienced dancer might not be a good dancer.

What does the experienced dancer look for in a class?

- Want more challenging dances – difficult/tricky movements
- Want to dance technically well
- Want good-sized sets to be able to dance to the best of their ability
- Dance with others of the same standard

The disadvantages of the one-class-for-all for the beginner

- Feel they spoil dances if they are not sure
- Can be put off by a look/comment/sign/being pushed
- Can feel intimidated by experienced dancers in a set
- Terrified to go to a dance where they won't know people

The disadvantages of the one-class-for-all for the experienced dancer

- Don't dance well if in a mixed group
- Get annoyed always having to help less experienced
- Bored/frustrated by walking through dances they know

Points to keep in mind

- Impossible task to teach all that is required to dance well in a short time
- People start to dance later in life so perfect footwork is probably not an achievable outcome – don't labour/dwell on steps
- Don't expect too much too soon – acceptable if they have rhythm/know where they're going

- Aim for sociability/teamwork/enjoyment
- What works for one class may not work for another
- What works for one week may not work the following week
- Lots depends on the personnel in class on a particular night
- We were all beginners once
- Everything seems easy once you know what you're doing!
- We mustn't forget that it took us many years to build up the knowledge/experience that we all have today

How does the teacher ensure everyone is happy and achieving their aims?

- Ask yourself what the class should offer and include?
- There will be different objectives for different classes
- Some classes will want to revise/learn new dances for dances
- Depending on availability of hall, have 30 minutes before main class for beginners/have 30 minutes after the main class for the more experienced
- Start with easier dances so that inexperienced are not put off
- Include popular dances and class favourites
- Use popular dances that are danced a lot so that they become familiar – not ones that never see the light of day
- Dancers get more satisfaction from dances they enjoy and like
- Choose a particular formation – have a few dances using this formation to reinforce and also some with variations
- Use a dance for step practice rather than going up and down or round the hall – the less experienced can be embarrassed being watched
- Have a variety of set formations- 2/3/4/5/6/7 couples sets/squares/round room/2 face 2/3 face 3
- RSCDS Graded book 2 has a good variety of easier dances
- Avoid having two beginners dance together
- Have experienced dancer dance with less experienced dancer
- Stand beside beginner and quietly tell them what comes next
- Try to avoid too many people telling someone where to go next
- Shadow
- Eye contact
- Walk through dance once or twice with less experienced – not with every couple
- Ask who would like a walk through

Other tactics

- Beginners/less experienced sit out for more difficult dances and watch – then join in
- As you teach formations – serves as a refresher for more experienced- remind dancers of phrasing
- Inexperienced learn from dancing with experienced dancers – sometimes better being thrown in at the deep end

- Dances where a partner can help and beginner is not on their own through the dance too much e.g. EH3 7HF see list below
- Simpler dances – can be used for less experienced and for step practice for more experienced
- Use some dances that are new or unfamiliar

As a teacher

- Make everyone feel welcome
- Good preparation and planning – although that can go out of the window if you have six beginners appear unexpectedly!
- Create a relaxed atmosphere
- Balanced programme – something for everyone
- But be adaptable – there’s no “one size fits all”
- Know your class’s capabilities
- Know who will be good with less experienced in a helpful, pleasant way
- Know who not to rely on for helping others
- Be enthusiastic/understanding/tolerant
- Encourage and praise- be positive, patient and don’t show annoyance
- Build everyone’s confidence
- Simple, clear instructions
- Use experienced dancers to show/demonstrate formations/phrases – make them feel valued and needed
- Walk and talk
- Be aware of dancers’ reactions when they’re asked to do something – is more explanation/demonstration needed?
- Prompt throughout dance – as long as necessary
- Quietly comment on steps to individuals – don’t single people out
- Easy dance to begin/popular dance to finish – variety in between
- Movement skills for tricky bits
- Try not to abandon a dance but be realistic
- Repeat dances the following week(s) to reinforce
- Frustrating for teacher if people don’t attend every week
- Ensure class feel they have been challenged, achieved and have fun.

Dances suitable for beginners with experienced partner

<i>EH3 7AF</i>	J32	Book 40	no setting
<i>Round Reel of Eight</i>	R88	Book 27	square
<i>Wild Geese</i>	J32	Book 24	
<i>Back to the Fireside</i>	R32	Book 38	
<i>Deil Amang the Tailors</i>	R32	Book 14	
<i>The Frisky</i>	J32	Book 26	
<i>Joe McDiarmid’s Jig</i>	J32	Book 5/82	4 couple
<i>Linton Ploughman</i>	J32	Book 5	
<i>Summer Assembly</i>	R88	Book 35	square

<i>St Andrew's Fair</i>	J32	Book 5/82	
<i>Tribute to the Borders</i>	J32	Leaflet	
<i>West's Hornpipe</i>	R32	Book 5/65	4 couple
<i>The Dancing Bees</i>	R32	Goldring	
<i>Anna Holden's Strathspey</i>	S32	Book 42	
<i>Fair Donald</i>	S32	Book 29	
<i>Gardener's Fantasia</i>	S32	Book 46	3 couple
<i>Miss Gibson's Strathspey</i>	S32	Leaflet	
<i>Miss Milligan's Strathspey</i>	S32	Leaflet	

Dances taught at workshop

The Ferryboat, Prince of Orange, The Irish Rover, Moving On, The Wee Three, Craven Twelvesome, Domino Five, Twa Auld Hens, The Deveron Reel.

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