

Teachers' Association Scotland

Leaflet 4

Guidance on providing good
recaps at a dance

Making Recaps for Dances

It is advisable to read this leaflet in conjunction with Leaflet 3.

1. Thorough preparation is essential

If the person making recaps knows the dances well and has analysed the tricky formations/transitions, they will be able to give a comprehensive and confident recap. Although mini-cribs or hand written notes can be used at the time of the recap, preparation should be done using the original publication.

2. Communicate with the MC and the band

Be ready and available as soon as the MC has made the announcements and assembled the dancers into set. The MC should make decisions about encores and adjustments to the programme. See notes on the "Role of the MC" Leaflet 3. Before starting your recap always quietly remind the band if the dance is not the standard 8 times through or should it require two chords.

2. Check the use of the mike

Before the dance starts, test the volume of the amplification to ensure it does not boom or cause feed-back. Immediately before giving the first recap ask the dancers if they can hear you clearly. Remember most microphones are designed to give best results by speaking into the end of the microphone not the side of the microphone head.

3. Stand where you can be seen.

Use the stage if available. Although notes of the dances/dance books should be available during the evening, they should only be used as an aide memoir. If possible, dances should not be read word for word from the instructions, which often contain too much detail. Hand gestures are acceptable in 'showing a picture' of the dance but should not be over dramatised. Use a microphone if available.

4. Look out over the dancers

Speak to the dancers at the end of the hall and avoid talking to those just in front of you.

5. Use of voice

Talk normally when using the microphone; remember it does the projection for you. If you have no microphone, then project your voice but do not shout.

6. Speak steadily

Talk steadily but not too slowly, using inflection and the tone in your voice to provide the phrasing of the dance.

9. Story connected to a dance

Give this before starting the recap and keep the pace of the programme going by only having one or two stories in the evening. If the deviser of the dance or composer of the music is present, welcome them and mention them by name.

10. At the start of recap

Give the name of the dance and its tempo (reel, jig or strathspey).

11. Use Standard RSCDS terminology

Be aware of your audience – experienced dancers will require less information than beginners. Try to find a happy medium! Avoid using abbreviations and localised jargon such as “teapots” for hands across, or reflective reels instead mirror reels / reels of three on the opposite side, so that dancers from other areas can follow the instructions. Break the dance down into eight bar phrases and make a slight pause at the end of each phrase. Only explain formations if they are less well known. Use barring within the phrase for such movements as stepping up, so avoiding incomprehensible comments, such as second couple step up on bars 27 and 28.

12. Geographical position of dancers

If dancers are away from their original positions in the set and possibly not even opposite their own partners, then use their geographical position to describe who is doing what. Eg. in The Road To Mallaig bars 13 –16. It is preferable to say ~ top three women and bottom three men dance half reels of three on the sidelines with the ones and fours passing right shoulder to begin, rather than ~ 2nd, 1st, and 4th men and at the same time 1st, 4th, and 3rd women dance half reels of three on the sidelines, 1st and 4th men and 1st & 4th women pass right shoulders to begin.

13. Give salient hints

Give brief salient hints. e.g. Mrs Stewart’s Jig bars 17-24: 2nd, 1st & 3rd couples grand chain, 2nd and 1st men finish facing out ready for a ladies chain.

14. End of recap

Remind dancers of the first 8 bars of the dance if it has been a long recap, or dancers have been walking it through. Announce if no encore is to be taken and give a reason.

15. Dance instructions

Have your own notes beside you as a prompt if your memory fails, so that you do not read verbatim from the book instructions. You may

give the impression that it is a difficult dance, if you are actually reading the instructions.

15. Walk through

This depends on the ability of the dancers present, whether it is a beginners' dance evening or a new local dance and there are a lot of visitors. Bands hate sitting while dances are walked because it affects the liveliness and spirit of the evening. You need to assess the situation. If the dance is primarily for beginners, the programme choice should be appropriate. Otherwise keep walking through to a minimum, and indicate a walk through will only be taken when it is a difficult or unfamiliar dance. Also say when a recap will not be given e.g. Ian Powrie's Farewell to Auchterarder, where the recap is longer than the dance! If allowing dancers to walk the dance avoid sets walking ahead of the instructions.

General

Dancers now rely more and more on recaps because there is such a large repertoire. Many have the expectation that every dance will be walked through, though this should be discouraged. Those called upon to do recaps should be aware that they are not there to entertain the assembly by telling jokes etc., but should take charge of giving the dancers a brief summary of the formations in the dance and letting the dancers get on with the dancing.

Be prepared ~ you and the dancers will enjoy your evening

Leaflets in the series

Leaflet 1 What makes a good programme?

Leaflet 2 Modern developments in recorded music

Leaflet 3 The Role of the MC

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