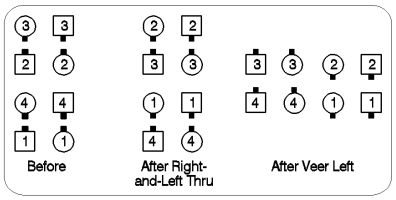
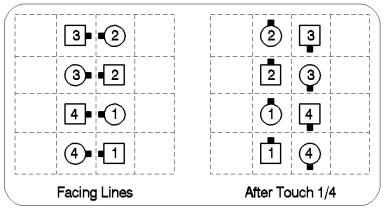
Call of the Month: Shape Changers by Barry Leiba

When one writes as an authority, one should be scrupulously careful that one never misleads; it's gratifying to know that people take what you write seriously and depend upon its accuracy. Accordingly, I almost always look things up before I write them, no matter how well I know what I'm writing about; sometimes I talk with callers about the issues; I **always** have the column reviewed by one or two other experienced dancers before the column finds its way into *Times Squared*. Note the "almost always" above.

"You may be on shaky ground," wrote Steve Messamer after reading the May column (about CAST OFF). Steve then went on to quote two sources that specify the pivot point of a push cast as the end dancer, not as the midpoint, as I said. He finished, "There must be some adjusting going on, since, as you said, you don't end up offset." Well, **that's** certainly right, so I headed for the official answer: the Callerlab definitions. Had I done that before writing the column, I'd have put things a bit differently — there it is, plain as day: "If the adjoining dancers are facing the same direction, the end dancer becomes the pivot while the other dancer moves in a semi-circle around the pivot." I should say my ground was a bit more than shaky, but for the fact that my advice was good nonetheless. The part that Callerlab doesn't say is that after the CAST OFF you must adjust **as though** you had pivoted about the handhold. At Mainstream such adjustments are taken for granted and done automatically. At higher levels, one must often be careful about making unwarranted adjustments. I maintain that it's better to pivot about the handhold, as Callerlab has us do in WHEEL AROUND and COURTESY TURN (yes, I looked them up), than it is to pivot about the end dancer and then try to get the adjustment right in what might be a complicated formation. That said, I'll add that I was certainly wrong to say it as I did without pointing out the difference between my advice and Callerlab's. That'll teach me to look up **everything**, just to be sure.



I want to spend a couple of columns talking about *shape changers*. We'll get started this month and then give you a few months to think about it before getting into why it's important to know about. Understanding shape changing is part of *formation awareness*, which I've stressed several times in this space in the past. A *shape changer* is simply a call that ends in different spots on the floor than it started in, irrespective of the dancers' facing directions. We call those spots on the floor *footprints*, but they differ from regular footprints in that we don't care where the toes are pointing. For instance, if we have the sides lead right from a squared-up set, we're in eight-chain formation. If we do a RIGHT-AND-LEFT THRU from there, we finish in exactly the same footprints. Every dancer has changed spots, but the **same** spots are occupied as before. The call was not a shape changer. Now have everyone VEER LEFT to make two-faced lines. That call **is** a shape changer; the footprints occupied before the VEER LEFT are not the same ones occupied afterwards.



In those two examples, the shape changer changed the formation from eight-chain to two-faced lines, while the call that wasn't a shape changer started and ended in eight-chain. But that's coincidental; many calls change the formation but not the *footprints*, and so they're **not** shape changers. From a squared set, heads LEAD RIGHT and CIRCLE TO A LINE. We have facing lines. Think of the square as having sixteen places the dancers can occupy, and look at the diagram. All TOUCH ¼. We have a right-handed column, and all are facing ¼ to the right of where they were facing before. But look at the footprints (remember that we don't care about where the toes are) — you've traded footprints with the dancer you touched ¼ with, and the same footprints are occupied as when the call started. TOUCH ¼ is not a shape changer!

It's also possible for a call to start and end in the same formation but to change the footprints, and thus to be a shape changer. The most common example of such a call is BEND THE LINE. Let's have the heads LEAD RIGHT and CIRCLE TO A LINE again. That puts us in lines facing the side walls. Now BEND THE LINE. We still have facing lines; the formation hasn't changed. But the lines are now facing the head walls, and the footprints have changed. The ends of the lines after the call are on spots that were unoccupied before the call (try it and see). BEND THE LINE is a shape changer.

Which of the following Mainstream and Plus calls are shape changers? Which aren't? Answers next month.

RECYCLE	SPIN CHAIN THRU	SLIDE THRU	HINGE	TAG THE LINE
LINEAR CYCLE	LOAD THE BOAT	SPIN THE TOP	CHASE RIGHT	CAST OFF ¾

At this point, we should leave the subject for a while and let everyone think about it. As you're dancing (as if you didn't have enough to think about), notice which calls are shape changers and which aren't. See if you can know, before you do a call, whether it will be a shape changer or not. Get used to the concept, and we'll look at it some more later.