

## **When is the Right Not Right?**

**by Dean Rath**

Many calls in various Callerlab Dance Programs require that dancers move from one position to another in a formation and must pass by another dancer moving in the opposite direction on the same path to get to their new position. In order to provide consistency in understanding, documentation, teaching, and practice, Callerlab generally defines that dancers who meet as the call proceeds are to adjust their paths so that they will pass right shoulder to right shoulder and continue onward as-needed to complete the call. This has been summarized as the Passing Rule and is stated on page 7 of the Basic Definitions Document dated March 6, 2023. The wording of the rule is shown below from that document.

### **Passing Rule**

If the definition of a call has two dancers on the same path and requires them to walk past each other, they should pass right shoulders (unless otherwise specified) and continue. The mirror image version of a call has dancers pass left shoulders and continue (e.g., Left Double Pass Thru).

Similar wording is contained in the Mainstream Dance Program Definitions document dated February 22, 2020 and the Plus Program Definitions document dated June 15, 2023, and it is still called the Passing Rule in these documents. However, in the Advanced Program Definitions document dated March 29, 2023, the wordings of the separate Passing Rule and Position Rule of these other programs are combined into one rule and is termed the Right-Shoulder Rule. This combined definition is also repeated in the Basic Challenge (C-1) Definitions document dated November 2, 2023. Either name provides the same guidance regarding meeting and passing dancers. The wording for the Right Shoulder Rule from the Advanced Dance Program document is provided below.

**Right-Shoulder Rule:** Whenever two dancers are moving toward each other and would otherwise collide, they pass right shoulders instead. If two dancers facing opposite directions must occupy the same spot on the floor at the same time, they step to form a Right-Hand MiniWave instead. You may not have two dancers who are facing the same direction, or at right angles, try to occupy the same spot.

The existence of the rule ensures that two dancers moving in opposite directions can pass each other in a simple, effective, and consistent manner. Since both dancers adjust in the same leftward direction as they approach, they pass right shoulder to right shoulder as they meet and then adjust back so that they continue on their original path or end exactly back-to-back when the call is completed.

For a high percentage of calls where dancers will be passing at some point during the call, the application of this rule is adequate. Of significant note, however, is the parenthetical phrase “unless

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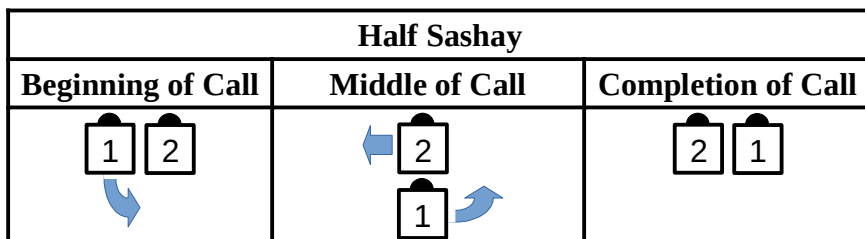
otherwise specified” provided in the Basic Definitions document for the Passing Rule. There are specific cases where the call definition or the defined circulation path supersedes the Passing Rule.

Before discussing calls where this exists, it is necessary to discuss the call Half Sashay. The wording of the Dance Action provided for this particular call from the Basic Definitions document is shown below.

### 11.a. Half Sashay

*Dance action:* Dancers exchange places without changing facing directions. Dancer on the right side steps to the left while the dancer on the left steps back, side steps to the right, then steps forward, ending as a couple.

In order to perform this call, the right side dancer slides to their left without any turning action to take the left side dancer’s position while the left side dancer moves slightly backward to avoid a collision and slides to the right, passing behind the right side dancer without any turning action, and then steps forward at the end to take the original right side dancer’s position. Neither dancer turns or rotates in any fashion during this call. This is illustrated in the following sequence.



Obviously, the Passing Rule does not apply to the dancers in this case. One could argue that the dancers are not walking toward each other and so the term “walk past” is not applicable as these two dancers are never facing each other during any part of the call.

However, there is a call in the Basic Definitions document that includes the Half Sashay call in its definition and dancers do need to pass each other to complete the call when in a certain formation. The call is named Cross Run and the situation occurs when the centers of a Line are both facing the same direction and become the active dancers (i.e., the specified call is Centers Cross Run).

The Basic Definitions document defines both the calls Run and Cross Run in the same section of the document (topic #39). Only the section for Cross Run is pertinent and the wording from that section is provided below. The specific statement identifying the use of Half Sashay has been highlighted in the wording (highlight does not exist in the original document).

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### 39.b. Case 2: Cross Run

Dance action: Dancers work in a 1x4 Formation, where the cross-runners (designated dancers) must both be centers or both be ends. The others are the non-runners.

The cross-runners walk forward in a semi-circle into the spot vacated by the farther non-runner (ending with the opposite facing direction). That is, each cross-runner will cross the center of the four-dancer formation.

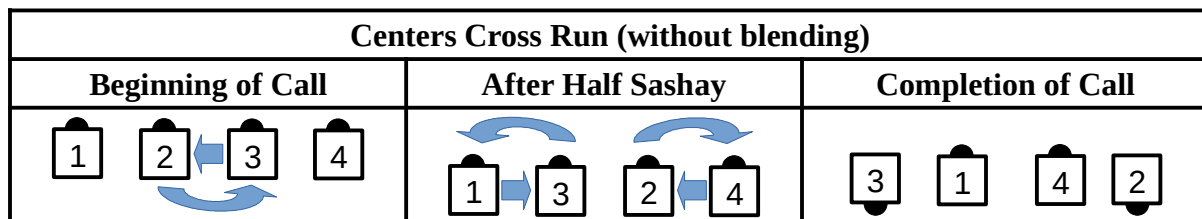
Simultaneously each non-runner moves into the spot of the closer cross-runner without changing facing direction. This position will be on their half of the four-dancer formation. That is, a center non-runner moves into the nearer end position; an end non-runner moves into the nearer center position.

*Comments:* From a Tidal Wave (or other 1x8 Formations), callers must carefully identify centers and ends. See the Tidal Wave command examples above and "General: Ways of Naming Dancers: Centers / Ends".

If the cross-runners are centers facing the same way, they Half Sashay, blending into a Run around the original far end.

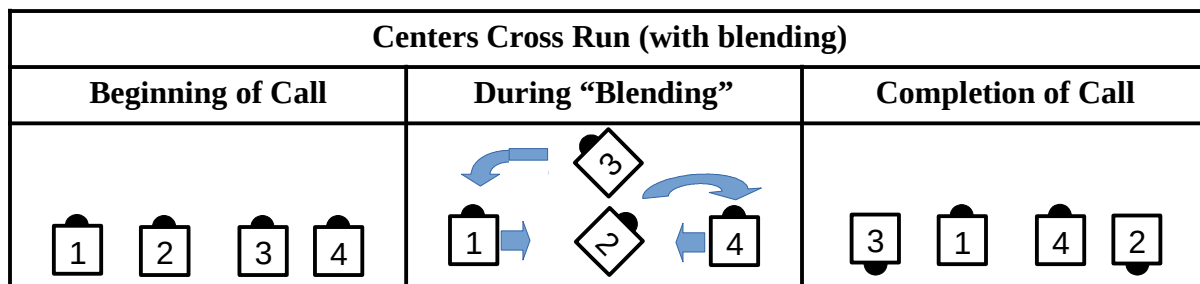
If the cross-runners are ends facing the same way, they pass right shoulders with each other.

This motion of the Centers could be treated as shown below if the actions are performed one at a time. Once the Half Sashay is completed by the center dancers, they each then complete a Run around the adjacent end dancer as the Ends slide together to become the new Centers of the line. The arrows in the left cell of the figure below shows the motions for the initial Half Sashay. The center cell of the figure indicates the directions of motion for the dancers after the Half Sashay is completed.



Of course, this is not exactly how the call is performed and is due to the term “blending” used in the highlighted statement. Instead of the completed Half Sashay shown previously in the intermediate step of the call, the actual positions of the center dancers during their passing looks more like what is depicted in the following figure. As they do the Half Sashay, they also begin rotating to perform the Run portion of their action.

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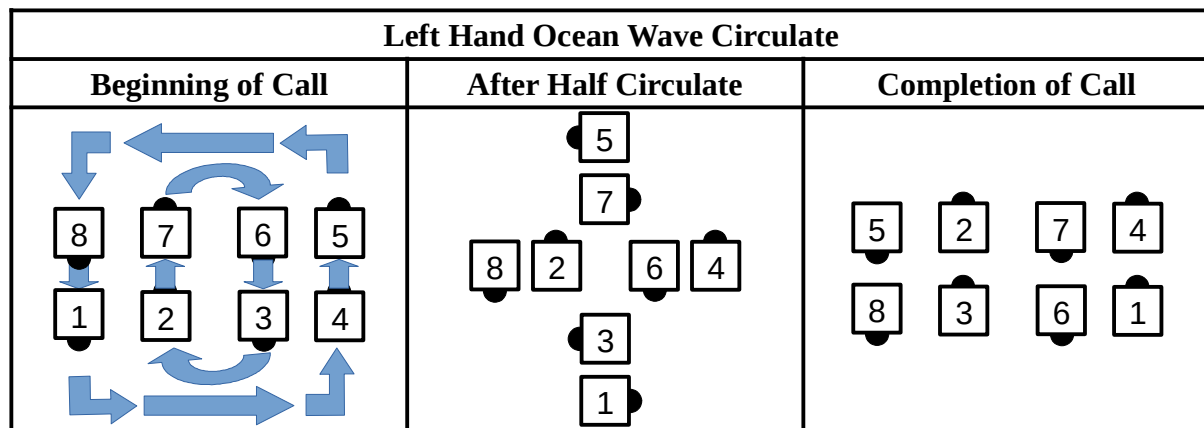


Any number of configurations could be depicted since the exact amount and timing of the “blending” action is not specified. However, any amount of body rotation by the center dancers during the performance of the Half Sashay action results in the LEFT shoulders of the dancers performing the Cross Run action to get closer to each other. This action would seem to conflict with the Passing Rule, but is a natural result of the “Half Sashay” and “Blending” parts of this call as the paths of the two center dancers cross.

There is an entire group of calls where similar actions result under certain formation arrangements due to a “Half Sashay” action being “blended” with other motions for specified dancers in the call. To make these instances easier to follow, they are listed by the Dance Programs where they occur.

These should not be confused with other situations where the circulation paths for passing dancers are actually different so the Passing Rule does not apply. An example occurs with Left-Hand Ocean Waves when the Circulate call is used and is due to the requirement that dancers stay on the circulation path where they begin. This means that dancers who are Centers of the Ocean Waves will stay Centers and the Ends of the Ocean Waves stay Ends as they circulate to the next position. The circulation paths for the dancers in a Left Hand Ocean Wave are shown in the first figure below at the beginning of the call. As each End dancer proceeds to the next End circulation position in either Ocean Wave, they will pass a Center dancer who is also moving to the next Center position in either Ocean Wave. Each End and Center dancer will pass a Center or End dancer circulating in the opposite direction by Left Shoulders as they move to the next circulation position. Under normal circumstances, this isn’t really noticeable to the dancers since they are focused on the final position where they are to go based on their circulation path. However, when fractions of calls are introduced, directing dancers in a Left Hand Ocean Wave to perform a Half Circulate results in the Thar-type figure in the center figure shown below. The dancers are not on the same circulation path, so the Right Shoulder Rule is not applicable. This can cause confusion for dancers until this is made clear. Similar confusion does not occur with Right Hand Ocean Waves as all End and Center dancers will pass by Right Shoulders in all cases.

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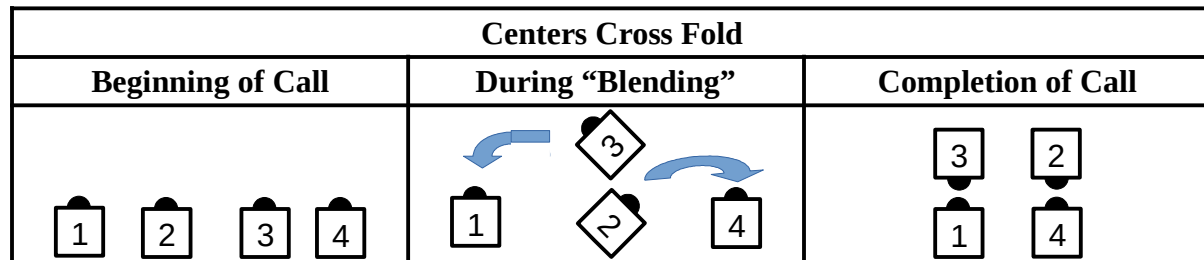
### Mainstream Dance Program

The call Cross Fold in the Mainstream Program has a similar Half Sashay action included in the Comments section of its definition. Cross Fold is listed as a special case under the call Fold in the Mainstream Definitions Document (topic #14) similar to what is done for the Run and Cross Run calls in the Basic Definitions Document. Only the Comments wording for the call Cross Fold is provided below.

#### Case 2: Cross Fold

*Comments:* For Ends Cross Fold when the ends are facing the same way, they pass right shoulders with each other. For Centers Cross Fold when the centers are facing the same way, they Half Sashay, blending into a Fold to face the original far end position.

Based on the similarity in wording to the Comment section of Cross Run, the same consideration for the passing Center dancers in the call Cross Fold applies when they are facing the same direction. Therefore, this can also be illustrated as shown below. The similarity to the prior Cross Run figure is obvious although the final position of the dancers is different.



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Although not specified within the call definition, unless otherwise directed by the caller, the dancers are expected to slide together and join hands to become facing couples at the completion of the call. This additional action is considered as “Square Breathing” and is mentioned, but not defined in the Basic and Mainstream Definition documents.

This is the only call in the Mainstream Dance Program that has an exception to the Passing Rule identified.

### **Plus Dance Program**

There are no calls in the Plus Program that share this particular characteristic regarding circulation paths. All dancers are expected to apply the Passing Rule when they meet during Plus calls. However, there can be situations where certain dancers will pass Left Shoulders due to their specified circulation paths in certain formations of dancers. This is similar to the Left Hand Ocean Wave Circulate discussion from earlier.

First, due to the call “&Roll” in this program, there is a possibility of creating a situation where the Passing Rule would not apply. From facing normal couples (i.e., man on left girl on right) in a Box as shown in the Beginning of Call figure below, calling a Left Touch 1/4 & Girls Roll results in the arrangement shown in the Completion of Call figure in the first row. Boy dancers are shown as squares while girl dancers are shown as circles and the dot on each indicates the facing direction of the dancer. Although not named until the Challenge Program, this formation is known as a T-Bone since at least one dancer is looking at an adjacent dancer’s shoulder instead of a front or back.

If the next call used is Box Circulate, the movement paths of the dancers are as shown by the arrows in the Beginning of Call figure in the second row. Dancers #2 and #3 (girls) will move straight ahead while Dancers #1 and #4 (Boys) will perform a left-handed semicircular motion to take the spots vacated by Dancers #2 and #3 (Girls). The dancers follow the circulation paths for their specific position and orientation in the formation and the Passing Rule does not apply. Although shown only for a four-dancer arrangement, similar circumstances can exist for other calls Circulate, Split Circulate, or Box Circulate in eight-dancer arrangements when similar T-Bone formations exist.

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Directed & Roll Call		
Calls	Beginning of Call	Completion of Call
Left Touch 1/4 & Girls Roll		
Box Circulate		

An example is shown for the call Centers Run or All Split Circulate in the following figure where the Center dancers are back-to-back facing out of the square and the End dancers are facing the Centers as shown for the beginning of the call. As noted in the "During Call" figure, the Center dancers will travel out and around the End dancers during either of the calls identified to get to their final position while the End dancers step forward to become the new Centers of the formation. Observation of the movements shows that while four of the dancers (3,4,7,8) will pass by their right shoulders during the action, the other four dancers (1,2,5,6) will pass by their left shoulders. This is a by-product of the T-Bone formation circulation paths and can occur often when this type of formation exists.

Centers Run or All Split Circulate		
Beginning of Call	During Call	Completion of Call

### Advanced Dance Program (A1 and A2)

There are two levels in the Advanced Dance Program, identified as A1 and A2. Definitions for calls in both levels can be found in the Advanced Definitions document dated March 29, 2023. As noted earlier, the Passing Rule wording is a part of the Right-Shoulder Rule in this program.

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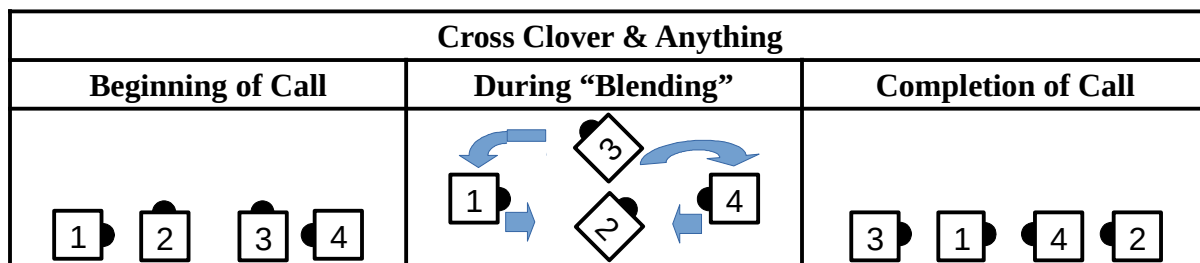
There are four calls in the A1 Program and four calls in the A2 Program that have movements similar to the ones already described when the dancers are in certain formations and these are identified in the call definitions. In fact, some call definitions include specific references to the use of Half Sashay, Cross Run, or Cross Fold in support of explaining the dancer actions in the call, so the circulation patterns previously described for those calls would obviously apply.

The four calls in the A1 Program that include similar situations are Cross Clover & Anything, Cross Trail Thru, Cross Over Circulate, and Mix. For the Cross Clover & Anything call, the dancers performing the Cross Clover will always be facing the same direction, so the issue will always apply. The others only apply when dancers are in selected formations.

### Cross Clover & (Anything)

From any formation in which 2 couples are facing out and can do a Cloverleaf (for example, Trade By formation): Those facing out Half Sashay blending into a Cloverleaf, while the others do the Anything call.

The “Half Sashay” and “Blending” words used in the definition of this call are a clear indication that the Passing Rule will not apply to the dancers that are facing out. A 1x4 formation is provided as an example in the following figure for this call. Although only four dancers are shown, one can consider that these four dancers represent one-half of a symmetric square where the other four dancers are arranged similarly in a 2x4 arrangement.



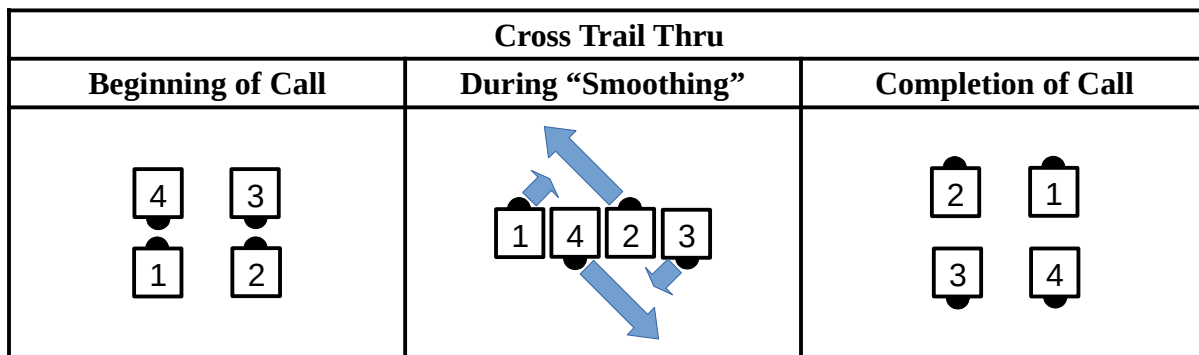
Another call in the A1 program that involves the Half Sashay call is Cross Trail Thru. If done from a facing couples formation, performance of this call begins with a Pass Thru that requires a right shoulder passing of the facing dancers. However, for the completion of the call, a Half Sashay must be performed so that the right side dancer becomes the left side dancer and vice versa. In accordance with the definition of the Half Sashay call from the Basic Program, the right side dancer (termed Belle in the Advanced Program) is to cross in front of the left side dancer (termed Beau in the Advanced Program) to complete the call. This is done even though both dancers continue moving forward until

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standing back-to-back with the dancers they were facing at the beginning of the call. The definition provided in the reference document follows and the figure below it shows how this action is completed.

### Cross Trail Thru

From Facing Couples: As one smooth motion, Pass Thru and Half Sashay. Ends in Couples Back-to-Back.



Another formation-dependent situation occurs with the call Cross Over Circulate. If a Lines Facing In or a Two-Faced Line formation exists when this call is used, dancers are required to do a Half Sashay as they circulate to the next position, although the term is not used in the definition for the call which is repeated below. However, the statement that the Belle goes in front of the Beau if the couple is facing the same direction is the same directive provided for the Cross Trail Thru call.

For a Lines Facing In formation, the couples perform a Pass Thru followed by a Half Sashay motion similar to the description provided with the Cross Trail Thru call. That figure can also be used to show the movements of the couples in the lines.

For Two-Face lines formation, there is no interaction with another couple. The trailing couple performs a Half Sashay as they circulate to become the leading couple of the other Two-Faced Line.

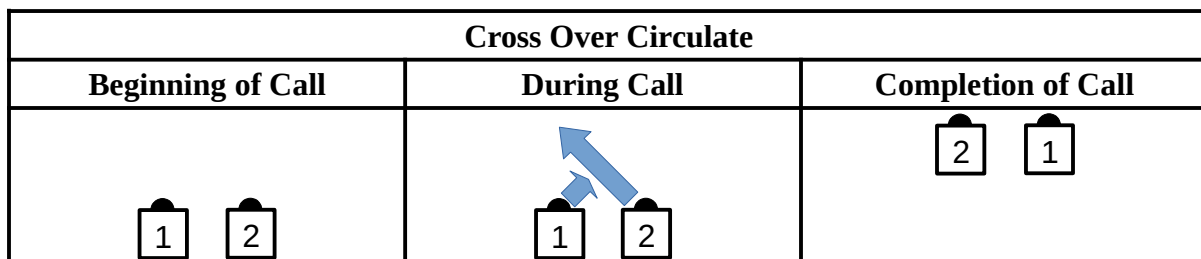
### Cross Over Circulate

From General Lines only: Each dancer moves forward one spot along the circulate path shown below: A lead end Circulates to the far center spot in the same line; a lead center Circulates to the far end spot in the same line; a trailing end Circulates to the near center spot in the other line, and a trailing center Circulates to the near end spot in the other line.

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If two dancers are about to collide and they are facing the same direction, the belle goes in front of the beau; if they are facing each other, they pass right shoulders.

In a case such as a Two-Faced Line, the circulating trailing couple would trade places as shown in the following figure.

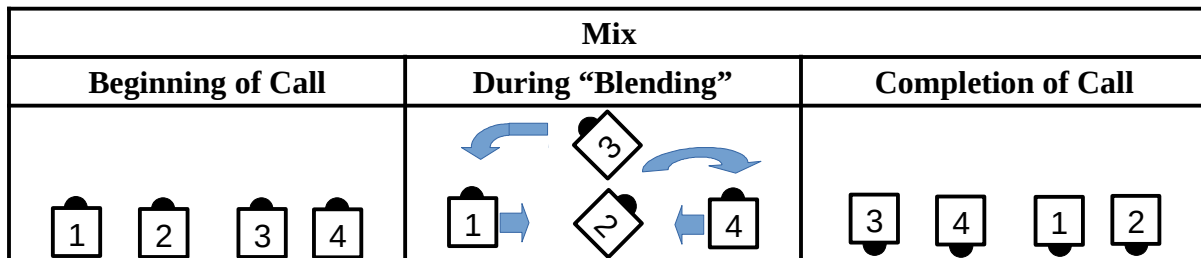


The definition for the call Mix in the A1 Dance Program contains a similar reference to a Half Sashay for the formation where the center dancers are facing the same direction. For this case, the definition references the call Cross Run which has already been described as requiring a Half Sashay and a blending of the dancer actions to complete the Run portion of the call. This is stated in the call definition below from the Advanced Dance Program Definitions document.

### Mix

From a General Line: Centers Cross Run, then the new centers Trade. If both centers are facing the same way at the start of the call, they Half Sashay, blending into a Run around the original far end.

Although the figure below shows the end dancers facing in the same direction as the center dancers, the facing direction for the ends does not matter to the motions of the center dancers.



No other calls were found in the A1 program that require evaluation for exceptions to the Right Shoulder Rule. The definitions for calls in the A2 Program were also reviewed and three similar calls

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were found. The three A2 calls are Swing & Mix, Trail Off, and Peel & Trail. Swing & Mix is discussed first due to its similarity to the Mix call already assessed in the A1 Program calls. Then the call Trail Off is evaluated since the definition of the call Peel and Trail refers to the call Trail Off.


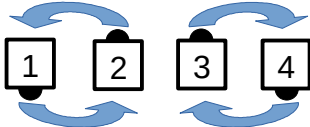

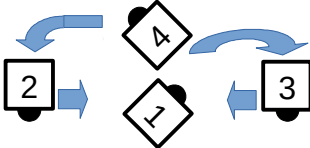

Note that the call definition for Swing & Mix specifically references the Center dancers Cross Run as shown in the call definition below, taken from the referenced Advanced Dance Program Definitions document. Therefore, when called from an Inverted Line formation, the centers will be facing the same direction and the same discussion that applied to the Mix call in the A1 dance program discussed earlier also applies to this call.

### Swing and Mix

From an Ocean Wave or Inverted Line: ends and adjacent centers Turn 1/2; Centers Cross Run; resulting Centers Trade. The Facing Couples Rule applies to this call.

Note: There are two ways in which Swing and Mix is not simply the call Swing followed by the call Mix.

- First, reflecting historical usage, Swing and Mix is a single call with three parts while (Any Call) and Mix are two separate calls.
- Second, from facing couples, Swing and Mix is proper even though Swing is improper.

<b>Swing &amp; Mix</b>		
<b>Beginning of Call</b>	<b>Swing Portion of Call</b>	<b>Completion of Swing</b>
		
	<b>Mix Portion of Call</b>	<b>Completion of Call</b>
		

The call Trail Off is also evaluated where both couples are facing in the same direction (i.e. Tandem Couples) since the Half Sashay requirement from the definition will apply to each couple as they perform their portion of the call. Although not specifically stated in the definition for this call, the lead dancer actions are the same as what would occur for a Cross Run and the “blending” action for that call would be followed, although not explicitly stated. For the trailing dancers, the movement is similar to the call Partner Trade, but the right-hand dancer (Belle) is to cross in front of the left-side dancer

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(Beau) which is the opposite of the usual Partner Trade action. The reference to Half Sashay in the definition makes this clear. This altered action is depicted in the figure which follows the definition. This is explained in the highlighted statement in the definition that follows (highlighting does not exist in the origin document).

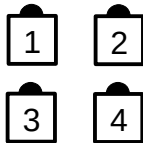
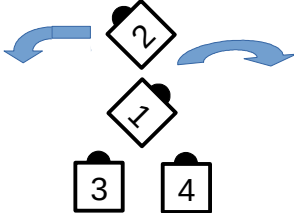

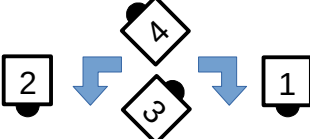

### Trail Off

Starting Formation: Tandem Couples, Box Circulate, or Tandem Dancers in a Z (for example, from a wave after the Ends Fold)

Lead dancers, turning toward the center of the formation, walk in an approximate wide semicircle to become the far ends of a four-dancer line. Trailing dancers step forward as necessary and walk in a small semicircle around the center point of the starting formation to become the centers of the forming line.

For Tandem Couples each couple must begin their semicircles by crossing paths. The dancer on the right has the right-of-way so the Beau allows the Belle to cross in front (Half Sashay).

The Tandem Couples situation is depicted below as the Half Sashay (and “blend”) requirement applies to each couple as they perform their portion of the call from this formation.

Trail Off		
Beginning of Call	Lead Couple Cross Run	Lead Couple Completion
		
	Trailing Couple Action	Completion of Call
		

Now that the call Trail Off has been evaluated, it is a simple extension to evaluate the call Peel and Trail since the motion for a Trailing Couple in the same starting formation is identical to that already provided in the Trail Off definition. The only difference from the prior figure is that the members of

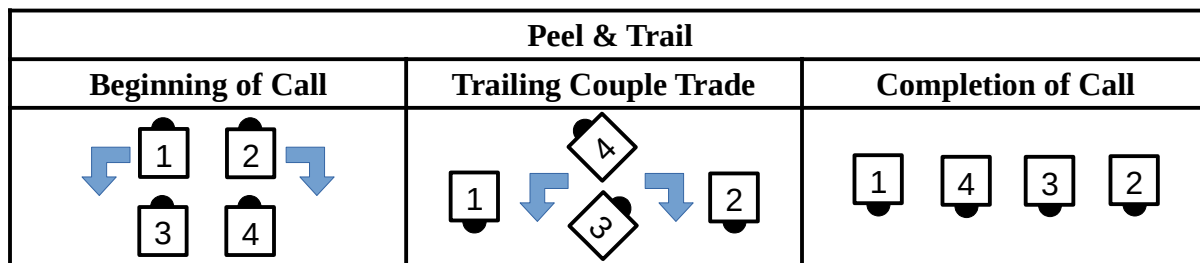
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the lead couple (#1 & #2) above do not trade, but Peel Off (by turning away from the center of the formation) and each will remain on the same side of the formation.

### Peel and Trail

Starting formation: Tandem Couples, Box Circulate, or Tandem Dancers in a Z (for example, from a Wave after the Ends Fold)

Lead dancers do their part of a Peel Off turning away from the center of the formation and walking in an approximate semicircle to become the ends of a four-dancer Line or Wave. Trailing dancers do their part of a Trail Off stepping forward as necessary and walking in a small semicircle around the center point to become the centers of the forming Line or Wave. When the trailers are a Couple and must cross paths, the dancer on the right has the right-of-way so the Beau allows the Belle to cross in front (Half Sashay). When the trailers are facing opposite directions they step forward as necessary to the centerline and Trade with each other (using the same hand as the handedness of the formation)



One additional call in the A2 program where compliance results in a Left Shoulder pass instead of the normal Right Shoulder pass is the use of Split Counter Rotate with Right-Hand (Center Dancer) Facing Diamonds.

In the Plus Definitions Document dated August 20, 2025, in the Section on the call Diamond Circulate has specific wording regarding how the circulate is to be performed in a Diamond regardless whether all dancers are circulating in the same direction or in opposite directions as in a Facing Diamond. The portion of the Diamond Circulate that is pertinent to this discussion is provided below. The emphasis for the Facing Diamond scenario has been provided by the author.

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DIAMOND CIRCULATE

Timing: 3

Starting formation: Any Diamond

Each dancer moves forward to the next position in his diamond, changing his original facing direction one-quarter (90 degrees) toward the center of the diamond. Points become centers, and vice versa. **If the call is directed to facing diamonds, all must pass right shoulders.**

However, in the call Split Counter Rotate in the A-2 Advanced Dance program, a modification to this circulation path is identified. Due to the length of the Split Counter Rotate definition, only the portion pertinent to this discussion is provided below.

Split Counter Rotate [fraction] and related calls

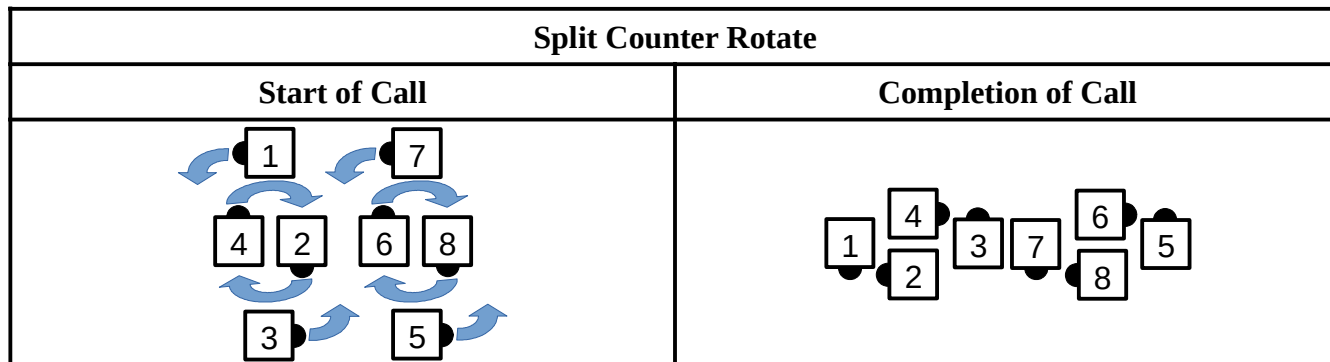
Timing: 1/4: 4

[At Advanced these calls are proper only from Boxes or Diamonds as described below.]

When in a Diamond, the centers of each Right-Hand or Left-Hand Diamond maintain their handhold and all four dancers simultaneously rotate the designated fraction around the center point of the Diamond. From a Facing Diamond, the centers of the Diamond maintain their handhold and stay in the center as dancers pass. For Split Counter Rotate, Twin Diamonds become Point-to-Point Diamonds and vice versa. Handedness is maintained.

As described, when the Center Dancers are in a Left Hand (for the Center Dancers) Facing Diamond, the circulating points will pass by the Right Shoulder with the Centers as they do the Split Counter Rotate call. However, when the Center Dancers are in a Right-Hand Facing Diamond and maintain their handhold to rotate the specified fraction during a Split Counter Rotate, this forces the Points who are circulating in the opposite direction to pass by the Center Dancers by their Left Shoulders. An example of this using parallel facing Diamonds and a Split Counter Rotate by the default 1/4 fraction is shown in the table below.

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### Summary:

There are a number of calls and circumstances from the Basic Dance Program through the Advanced Dance Program where dancers pass or trade positions in a manner where the Passing or Right-Shoulder Rules do not apply. In some other cases where the question could be raised, the dancers are not actually on the same circulation path as they pass, so the Passing or Right Shoulder Rule does not apply. In at least one case, the normal Right-Shoulder circulatory path is altered when the specific call, Split Counter Rotate, is used.

Calls in Challenge Dance Programs have not been evaluated, although additional calls with the word “Cross” in the name may well result in similar circumstances. Any call definitions referencing Half Sashay, Cross Run, or Cross Fold will certainly require evaluation for exclusion to the Right Shoulder Rule. Use of T-Bone formations can also result in similar situations with differing circulation paths.

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