

Courtesy Turn in Mainstream

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English Abstract

As the title leads to assume, this document shows some possibilities and intricacies of the call within the square dance program where it is defined. The call is only rarely used although its derivatives are beyond the most common calls. Nevertheless *Courtesy Turn* offers some interesting possibilities.

An excursus tries to explain why the call is so often used as a workshop theme but also why this might possibly not be a good idea.

Deutsche Zusammenfassung

Dieser Artikel zeigt einige Möglichkeiten und Grenzen des Calls innerhalb des Programms, das ihn definiert. Trotz der Häufigkeit der daraus abgeleiteten Calls wird *Courtesy Turn* als eigenständiger Call nur selten verwendet; der Artikel versucht, eine Reihe reizvoller Möglichkeiten vorzustellen.

Ein kleiner Exkurs über Workshops beantwortet die Frage, warum uns *Courtesy Turn* aus anderen Arrangements so häufig als Workshopthema begegnet und begründet, warum dies vielleicht gar keine so gute Idee ist.

Introduction

This call is one of the first a student learns, and which really has to be learned, as it can not be understood from the name only, as e. g. *Circle Left*. As soon as it is mastered, it is used as part of other calls, including *Two Ladies Chain*, *Four Ladies Chain*, *Right and Left Thru*, *Do Paso* and – much later – *Eight Chain Thru*. At this point in time, *Courtesy Turn* has usually already been forgotten as a stand-alone call. In usual Mainstream Calling, the derived calls are some of the most often used ones, while *Courtesy Turn* itself is much neglected.

The Voice of Callerlab

Before we start it might be a good idea to recall the definition (in the version from 2006, October 10):

Definition – 16. COURTESY TURN:
Starting formation – couple, facing dancers. (Limited at Mainstream to couples with man on left, woman on right.) The man (left hand dancer)

Definition – 16. COURTESY TURN:

takes the lady's (right hand dancer) left hand (palm down) in his left (palm up) and places his right hand in the small of the lady's back. Working as a unit, the couple turns around with the left hand dancer backing up and right hand dancer walking forward. Unless otherwise specified, the couple faces the center of the set or the center of the formation in which it is working.

STYLING: Men, the extended left hand serves as a direction indicator and the man uses his left hand to lead, not pull. Place the right hand in the small of the lady's back. Ladies use the right hand to work the skirt. The call courtesy turn is limited to turning a woman on the man's right.

TIMING: 4 steps.

Independently, the reader at this point is invited to also check the definitions of *Right and Left Thru*, *Ladies Chain*, *Eight Chain Thru* and *Do Paso*.

Choreographical Effect

Although *Courtesy Turn* itself is not used frequently, the derived calls are, and both callers and dancers apparently love them. One effect is that the call perfectly supports a subsequent 'beau/belle call' such as *Half Sashay*, *Flutterwheel*, *Dixie Style*, *Girls Walk*, *Boys Dodge*, and so on.

From normal arrangement, many calls have a tendency to produce a constant flow to the right at least for the boys (think of standard sequences such as *Heads Square Thru*, *Swing Thru*, *Boys Run*, *Ferris Wheel*, *Centers Square Thru Three*, *Dosado*, *Touch a Quarter*, *Scoot Back*, *Boys Run*, etc.). *Courtesy Turn* can give relief to this insane flow as the boys not only turn left but also move backwards.

Arrangement

The definition is crystal clear here, and the styling description even duplicates it. Nevertheless it seems that the limitation on normal couples has always provoked callers. *Courtesy Turn* from other arrangements than [0] is not really uncommon in folk dances, and even in square dancing we have local traditions that allow it. For example, callers in Holland have detected that the arrangement restriction on normal couples is defined for *Courtesy Turn* but not again repeated in the definitions of *Right and Left Thru* and *Eight Chain Thru*, and from this fact they derive the adequacy of calling the latter calls for any arrangement. They usually feel obliged to say 'Right and Left Thru – who turns who?' as a

stereotype so I understand that there is still a bit of a bad conscience which has to be overcome by a healing magic formula...

Nobody really tries to adapt *Star Thru* or *California Twirl* to other arrangements, but in case of *Courtesy Turn* it seems all too tempting. I have multiple times been the victim of a workshop on a special dance where the caller thought he had a brilliant idea by choosing *Courtesy Turn*. This happens so frequently that I want to interrupt here for a little excursus:

Excursus: Workshops

What is the sense of a workshop? Isn't it a brilliant idea to workshop *Courtesy Turn* from all arrangements!?

This topic seems to have a lot of advantages:

- A big part of the floor usually consists of female dancers who are used to dance both roles – they already know their parts.
- Another part of the floor usually is formed by Plus dancers who again will not have difficulties.
- As most of the dancers are expected to sooner or later also dance Plus, this might be a great exercise for their future.
- It often feels a bit strange for a male dancer to perform a girl's role – this sometimes leads to sweet little embarrassments but afterwards also to a great feeling of survival, which both can add to a positive tension in the hall. (Yes I know – the erotic subtleties of square dancing rarely make it into our consciousness.)
- For the caller, life will get much easier: He will not have to care for arrangement so much, which certainly can be a big relief when calling for an unknown floor. If he needs prepared material, he can use everything that he has, just replacing every *Partner Trade* by a *Courtesy Turn*.

Doesn't this look like a win-win situation for everybody?

There is one aspect that should make suspicious: As a dancer, I have perhaps been four or five times a victim of such a 'workshop' but not a single time I saw the *Courtesy Turn* really well explained and practiced: All teaching was usually boiled down to a sentence like 'just do it'. This might already lead to the conviction that the caller mainly attempted to have an easy job here.

The basic idea of a workshop for me is to make the participants better dancers in their regular program. This is not achieved by teaching something that they will never need any more.

Example: *Follow Your Neighbor* might make better Mainstream dancers because the details and mechanics of *Scoot Back* will become clearer, and at the same time a turn of three quarters is practiced,

which is a constant problem for many dancers on this level. So I understand that up to here it will make sense to teach this call even within a Mainstream group. But in which sense do you become a better Mainstream dancer by learning to master *Courtesy Turn* with exchanged roles?

Another important effect of a workshop is that it can even out existing differences between the participants. This is what gives sense to the idea of teaching a new call or new application – something that is unknown to the entire group (or at least a big part of it). This way, the actual number of years in the activity will count less but instead some quite basic virtues and capabilities will be required (and rewarded) that are necessary in all dancing levels:

- The ability to listen and to immediately convert into practice,
- The skill to adjust to a new situation; i. e. to abstract,
- Spatial orientation,
- A feeling for rhythm and timing, i.e. to break down the needed way into the available time,
- Elegance of Movement and Styling,
- And, perhaps, even the English language skill.

From this aspect of evening out the dancing experience and concentrating on more basic virtues, I can not think of any worst topic for a workshop than a call or application from the next higher dance program. It is in fact a thoughtless, all-too convenient idea that gives a competitive edge to those participants already familiar with the call. A caller with such an approach should not any longer lament about the rush to the next higher dancing level – he is part of the problem.

I cannot think of any topic less suitable for a workshop – but at the same time it is the one I encountered most often.

Starting Formation

Back to *Courtesy Turn*: We should talk about the starting and ending formations, which is already an interesting and somewhat surprising aspect. The call either be performed from couples or from facing dancers. If done from facing dancers, the boy will go a bit to the right and turn around so that the call is then performed from a couple – this step will of course melt into one with the call itself.

Right and Left Thru and *Eight Chain Thru* are performed from couples, but *Two Ladies Chain*, *Chain Down the Line* and *Do Paso* make use of the facing dancers formation.

I confess I tried to find a situation where a dancer had a choice between someone at his side and a dancer facing, making it unsure with whom to perform the *Courtesy Turn*. Frankly, I did not succeed in constructing such an example.

From facing dancers there seems to be a certain ex-

pectation that the girl moves towards the boy, and that she comes from the inside of the square. Apparently, this preference comes from the well-known *Ladies Chain*.

Ending Formation

This is another interesting question: How far does the turn go? In early class we usually learn 'until we face the center of the square' which is true in a *Four Ladies Chain*. A week later we find ourselves in lines, learning a *Two Ladies Chain* – but how far do we turn this time?

We turn to face the center of the part formation we are just working in. As a *Two Ladies Chain* is a two couples move, the two couples will usually face each other afterwards. Therefore it can also be done from [B] which otherwise would have an unexpected result. This means that for a simple *Courtesy Turn* we must also consider the preceding call as the dancers will turn to the center of the sub-formation involved. In a static square, *Walk Around Your Corner and Courtesy Turn* will eventually have the couples facing to the center, except if *Promenade* or a similar call interrupts the turning and leads the dancers into a new direction. In this example (or in a *Do Paso*) both dancers have worked with their corners, so they afterwards can only turn to the square center.

One last detail: In the multi-part calls that finish with a *Courtesy Turn*, callers seem to often cue what to do, often only addressing the boys (and be it just by something like 'boys, you turn 'er'). Dancers have to learn that this is never a distinct call, partly because two *Courtesy Turns* never can follow each other.

Sequence and Relationship

Courtesy Turn certainly does not rely on a particular sequence or relationship, but its derivate *Do Paso* does – we expect it to be done only with partner and corner. It is an open question for me if the call

also **makes** the participating dancers corners and partners, similar to *Swing* or *Allemande Left*. Apparently, *Do Paso* is used not frequently enough and in far too standardized routines to allow an easy answer on this question. For example, I never encountered a singing call routine that did end with *Do Paso and Promenade*. (BTW: If *Do Paso* is used for a get-out, it is regularly the following routine from zero box: *Right and Left Thru – Ends Half Sashay – Dive Thru – Do Paso*).

Active Dancers in Ladies Chain?

In Mainstream we have a number of calls that are called and understood in such a way that only particular dancers are active although more dancers do contribute; *Boys Run* is one of them – the girls have an important part although they are considered inactive. Now the wording in *Ladies Chain* is not perfectly consistent; all the following samples seem legal wording:

- *The Heads Do a Ladies Chain*
- *Head Ladies Chain*
- *Head Boys, Chain the Ladies Back Home.*

The wordings look different, but the dance actions are identical. I am convinced we must not assume any particular dancer as being active after the *Courtesy Turn*. To say it clearer: If we append ...and *U Turn Back* to any of the three sentences above, the results will be completely incidental.

More Uncertainties

The call allows a wide variety of starting formations, which can lead to a big unsureness in some situations. While in most call the dancers will know right from the start that if it is possible or not, calling for example from normal lines *Center Two Ladies Chain* will usually mean that the girls start but then being unclear which boy should *Courtesy Turn* them.

Courtesy Turn From Normal Couples

Enough theory – let us now find some choreo that uses *Courtesy Turn*! We will start from normal couples, i.e. where the two dancers are standing side by side.

1. **Right Pull By – Courtesy Turn:** *Right and Left Thru* is possibly the most common application of a *Courtesy Turn*. This means that it is a quite expected call after *Right Pull By*. As a consequence many callers use the sequence *Square Thru Three and Courtesy Turn* (a zero module).

Here is a get-out from zero box using the same

idea: *Right and Left Thru – Dive Thru – Centers Left Square Thru – Centers Courtesy Turn, and Lead to the Left – All Veer Right, and Promenade Home.*

2. **Turn Thru – Courtesy Turn:** *Turn Thru* also uses the right hand, and can therefore be followed by *Courtesy Turn*. In fact, *Turn Thru and Courtesy Turn* one of the best ways to convert a half sashayed line into a normal one – delighting by the use of two calls that are not often encountered.

3. **Walk and Dodge – Courtesy Turn:** *Walk and Dodge* is another call where we do not have many good follow-ups. But from left hand waves, *Walk and Dodge – Courtesy Turn* is an exceptionally good flow. Of course we need the correct arrangement (girls facing in). Here are some examples that can initiate this sequence *Walk and Dodge – Courtesy Turn*:
 - [0B]: *Left Touch a Quarter* →
 - [0B]: *Left Swing Thru – Single Hinge – Scoot Back* →
 - [5L]: *Pass Thru – Girls Trade* →
 - [0L]: *Pass Thru – Boys Trade – Scoot Back* →
 4. **Those Who Can Pull By – Courtesy Turn:** *Slide Thru* is a call that is rarely done from same sexes facing. It can e.g. be called from lines or from an eight chain thru formation (the arrangements numbers are [3] and [4]). It is interesting that the resulting formation (inverted lines or magic columns) always allow following it by *Those Who Can Pass Thru – All Courtesy Turn* to end in normal couples facing. The resulting flow is acceptable for half of the dancers
 - [0B], [0L], [0W]: *Swing Thru – Single Hinge* →
 - [5L] *Touch a Quarter* → (use *Girls Pass Thru*)
 5. **Diagonally Pull By – Courtesy Turn:** Similar to the preceding, a right hand boxes circulate formation with girls facing in allows to call *Girls Diagonally Pass Thru – Courtesy Turn* (the following variant may be a little bit safer: *Girls Right Pull By – Boys Courtesy Turn Them*). Here are some choreo examples leading into *Girls Diagonally Pass Thru – Courtesy Turn*:
 - [0B], [0L], [0W]: *Swing Thru – Single Hinge* →
 - [5L] *Touch a Quarter* → (use *Girls Pass Thru*)
- Note** (off-topic): Most of the choreo of this chapter can of course be adapted for any arrangement using *Wheel Around*, also by exchanging boys and girls (for other arrangements be aware that Mainstream dancers do not relate to terms like *infacers* or *out-facers* as well as they do to *boys* and *girls*). Similarly, much of the material might be 'mirrored' and used for *Reverse Wheel Around*.

Courtesy Turn From Facing Dancers

After having discussed some of the possibilities from two dancers side by side, we now will have a look at dancers facing which the definition also allows.

1. We started the preceding chapter by *Square Thru Three – Courtesy Turn*. An apparent variation would be *Square Thru, But On Your Fourth Hand Courtesy Turn*.
Although it seems like a small change, in fact the *Courtesy Turn* is done here from facing dancers.
2. [1P] (= double pass thru formation, girls in the center): *Girls Square Thru Three, Boys Courtesy Turn Them*.
3. Consequently, from [3L] (= girls in the center): *Girls Left Square Thru Four – Boys Pass Thru, Face In and Courtesy Turn Them*.
4. In analogy, again from [1P]: *Girls Turn Thru – Boys Courtesy Turn Them*.
5. And again similarly, from [3W] (= girls facing in): *Scoot Back – Courtesy Turn*.

In the last four examples the girls are coming from the inside of the square. An attentive reader immediately might want to try the opposite, such as from [2P] *Boys Square Thru Three and all Courtesy Turn*. Experience shows that this feels quite unexpected to the dancers – but why?

My answer is that whenever *Courtesy Turn* is done

from facing dancers, it is (or feels like) a *Ladies Chain* where the girl is actually moving towards the boy who is standing at the outside of the part formation, facing in. Therefore all the examples above feel quite natural, even if unexpected. By contrast, when we have the boys in the center exchanging these two roles, the *gestalt* of the call is not met any more, leaving the dancers confused.

Ladies Chain From Non-Couples

A variant of some of the above is possible by still using the term *Ladies Chain*. As long as the girls are coming from the inside, the boys should actually not hesitate to *Courtesy Turn* them:

- From [0B]: *Touch a Quarter – Scoot Back (Boys Go) – Boys Fold, Two Ladies Chain...*

Do Paso

When calling in the ring it happens more often than anywhere else that we get tired of the *Allemande Left and Swing* routine. Exchanging hands, we can often make use of *Walk Around Your Corner – Do Paso*. Apparently, *Do Paso* can also be abbreviated to *Courtesy Turn*. In this case, often *Promenade* will follow; old recordings show that in the past callers used the term *Roll Promenade* here to signify that the *Courtesy Turn* had to be interrupted to lead seamlessly into the *Promenade*. Today this wording would most likely more confuse than help.

I think that from any FASR that allows an Allemande Left, Walk Around Your Corner – Courtesy Turn and Promenade can be an alternative. Often a somewhat better flow can be achieved by ...*Courtesy Turn – Go a Quarter More, and Wrong Way Promenade Home.*

Here is a small collection of get-outs using Do Paso:

From zero box:

- *Box the Gnat – Pass Thru – Do Paso*
- *Box the Gnat – Right and Left Grand Five Hands – Do Paso*
- *Left Swing Thru – Girls Trade, Boys Circulate – Do Paso*
- *Right and Left Thru – Ends Half Sashay – Dive Thru – Do Paso*

From zero line:

- *Centers Left Square Thru Four – Others Walk Around Your Corner – Do Paso*
- *Two Ladies Chain – Girls Walk, Boys Dodge – Do Paso: Turn Partner Left With a Full Turn – Turn Corner Right...*
- *Roll Away, and a Right and Left Grand – On Your Fourth Hand Do Paso*

Orientation Twisted by 90 Degrees

Although the boys expect facing the girls, this does not mean that both have really to face each other right from the start:

- [1P] (= Double pass thru formation, girls in the center): *Girls Touch a Quarter and Circulate [# Times], Boys Courtesy Turn Them*

As I am just reading in his caller notes, Al Stevens seems to prefer the wording: *Boys Reach In and Courtesy Turn Them* at places like this. Note again here the apparent relationship to *Ladies Chain*.

This last example can serve as a basis for a get-out: After reaching normal lines, the boys are either in sequence or not. If so, call *Two Ladies Chain, Do Half of a Half Sashay – Girls in the Center Touch a Quarter*. Now we can have the girls *Circulate* as many times as necessary. If all girls meet their boys, we end by *Boys Courtesy Turn Your Girl and Promenade*; if you find that only two couples are complete, another *Girls Circulate* and *Chain Down the Line* will do the trick. Now all girls are in sequence, either with their partners or half way away from them, so what can follow is either *Promenade*

or e.g. by *Roll Away – Right and Left Grand But on Your Fourth Hand Courtesy Turn*.

If in the beginning the boys were out of sequence, we can replace the initial *Two Ladies Chain* by *Right and Left Thru*.

Head Ladies Chain Three Quarters

This is only used in the first student dances, to practicing the room orientation (by the fraction), the awareness of the (seemingly inactive) side boys, and to reach an unexpected and interesting formation with lines of three. At this early point in time, we cannot squeeze a lot out of it, most of all because the lonesome head boys are limited to some *Forward and Back* and *Dosado* business. – Later in Mainstream, the usage of directionals has much decreased, and still the callers will have problems to do something sensitive with the single boys...

By the way, the *Chain Three Quarters* needs to be defined explicitly as part of the Mainstream Program because this is no 'fractionalized' *Ladies Chain*.

Puzzle to the readers: Can you provide a convincing example for *Three Ladies Chain*? – I found that I can not.

Carousel Promenade

This is a nice old call that can be used as a replacement for *Grand Square*. The sequence *Four Ladies Chain Three Quarter While the Boys Promenade One Quarter (Courtesy Turn), All Promenade One Quarter* is performed two times. It will help if the dancers know that the *Courtesy Turn* is always done with the original partner (the one they just left). The timing is somewhat shorter than a *Grand Square*, and note that the body flow offers more variety to the girls than for the boys. Many dancers will like this nice variation.

At Home Get-Out

A nice and quite unexpected at home get-out is *Eight Chain Thru But on Your Last (or: Fourth) Hand Courtesy Turn*. This will work from a zero box at the place where dancers almost are already at home, or from the opposite place respectively.

Of course, *Right and Left Grand but on Your Fourth Hand Courtesy Turn* is another working variation of this.

Variants and Modifiers

For conclusion we should consider some of the possible modifiers – modifying not only *Courtesy Turn* bit also the calls derived from it.

Arrangement Variation

While *Courtesy Turn* is clearly limited to one ar-

rangement, *Eight Chain Thru* allows a bit more variety: Called from [4B] (i.e. when only the center couple is normal), *Eight Chain One* to *Eight Chain Three* are possible. By the way, this is the most secure way to call *Eight Chain Three*, as many dancers do not believe they should finish as outfacers and therefore tend to add a *Courtesy Turn*.

Reverse, and Similar Gimmicks

Keep calm – I do not intend to reverse the *Courtesy Turn* (by mirroring the movement), although this might be a good challenge for those who sincerely believe that the [5] arrangement does not need to be practiced (see workshop discussion above).

But although on first glance a bit odd, it is possible and has been done with success from a double pass thru formation: *Centers Start, and All Finish a Left Eight Chain X* (preferably insert a small number here for the x).

Although it is not in the focus of this article to avoid the *Courtesy Turn* here is a similar gimmick that you might try in the ring: *Right and Left Grand – Reverse Do Paso: Partner Right, Corner Left, Turn Partner Right to a Wrong Way Thar...*

Of course we might have reached the same by using just arm turns without the word *Do Paso*. But sometimes the wording is just what makes the fun, as in *Dixie Style but Finish with a Courtesy Turn*.

Fractionalizing?

When *Eight Chain Thru* was removed from the Mainstream Program we collected votes to get it back. Two years later it came back, and we wondered what to do with it. Apparently, it has only three possible variants – even number, odd number, and even number plus a half.

Sometimes callers also use *Eight Chain Three and a Half*, expecting the dancers to do a 'half' *Courtesy Turn*. Mainstream dancers rarely seem to be able to implement this at once; usually some explanation is needed and multiple attempts, before all dancers have got it. And even then we basically have a stop and go choreo. But let us assume we were done – what can we do with the 'half-turned' couples? Usually after the inevitable *Left Swing Thru* the next call is *Outsides Bend the Line* – so what was the hassle good for?

Perhaps you find a good solution but until then I understand that *Half Courtesy Turn* is not really a good idea. On the other hand, what works fine and easy is adding to the turn by *and Turn Your Girl a Quarter More*. This way we can reach two-faced lines even with students at a very early stage. Good follow-up calls include *Couples Circulate, Girls Trade, Half Sashay and the Boys Trade* or *Ferris Wheel*.

A similar modifier is *With a Full Turn*, which works after every *Courtesy Turn* done from couples (as it draws on the original facing direction). A sample choreo is *Ferris Wheel – Centers Right and Left Thru With a Full Turn – Walk Around Your Corner, Courtesy Turn Your Own and Promenade Home*.

On the Diagonal

At an early student stage, callers are often confronted with two problems: Squeezing as much as possible out of a few calls, and getting dancers home. In this situation it is – at least where I live – not uncommon to use *On the Diagonal: Two End Ladies Chain* from normal lines with great effect, possibly followed by *Lines Go Forward and Back*. We did this already above when using a diagonal *Pass Thru* or *Right Pull By*, but without necessarily calling it a 'diagonal Ladies Chain'.

On the Diagonal: Two End Ladies Chain allows exchanging two girls. Just by using the two calls *Two Ladies Chain* and *On the Diagonal: Two End Ladies Chain* we can always bring every girl back to her boy. When we afterwards find the square in sequence, either *Circle Left* or *Allemande Left* will bring the dancers home; if not, *Pass Thru and Swing Your Partner* will do the trick.

This method offers a solution even at the earliest student level. Of course, these easy sequences should be spiced up with occasional *Dosados* (for all or e.g. for the boys) and *Forwards and Backs*. And – if already available – some *Pass Thru and Bend the Line* material.

For some of us it is surprising that we dance and call many things in early class that later are forgotten. We will not encounter *On The Diagonal* any more before the C levels.

The *Diagonal* usage of *Ladies Chain* can lead to a second reflection of the amount of turning in the *Courtesy Turn*. It is apparent that the ending formation is a bit ambiguous so that e.g. *Lines Forward and Back* should fix it before the dancers get aware of the ambiguity.

A step further, which I personally never dared, would be the usage of *Diagonal Right and Left Thru* or *Diagonal Two Ladies Chain* from two-faced lines. Again, the ambiguity of the resulting formation needs a fast and firm stabilization of the formation. *Ferris Wheel* will be a possible subsequent call with enough 'healing power' to handle this. But still I do not think a convincing body flow can be established to justify this usage.

Colophon

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Source

Find this article in the internet at www.calling.scootback.de.

Who Are My Readers?

I got some response in the beginning when I started my site but much less in the recent year. Of course I ask myself if what I write can be of any use for somebody else. So I invite you to let me know that you read the article and tell if you did find anything in it that can be of use to you. By writing even a short email, you actually help convincing me of the sense to write an essay like this and motivating me to go on.

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