

Scottish Country Dancing

Auckland and Northland New Zealand



Your guide to progressing through the levels

Modified 2014 - 2016

*Based on guidelines prepared by teachers
in the Auckland Region, May 1997*

What class should I go to?

***How do I know if I'm
an Intermediate dancer?***

***What do I need to be able
to do to go to Advanced?***

Sound familiar? Everyone who dances asks the same question – keep reading.

This leaflet of guidelines has been designed for dancers in the Auckland Region. It is intended to help both dancers and teachers in answering such questions.

The description of each level shows what you need to know to dance with others of the same level. The guidelines do not include exhaustive lists of formations, just some of the more common ones.

The level that dancers achieve cannot be measured only by their knowledge of formations and dances. It is the way in which they dance, the QUALITY of their dancing - that is the major factor. Phrasing, technique and teamwork are all important aspects of dancing:

- Phrasing - means listening to the music and matching your steps and formations to the bars – working with your partner and dancers in the set from one formation to the next
- Technique - means dancing the steps and formations well, correct use of hands and correct body posture and making it look easy (when we know it takes effort)
- Teamwork – means being “nice to dance with” – being aware of your partner and the other dancers in the set; watching the progression of the dance to know when to move and when to stand; maintaining the size and shape of the set; covering with other dancers.

How long do you need to stay at each level?

As long as it takes to feel confident with your dancing – usually a year is ideal at the starting levels, but it does depend on how often you dance and how many classes you attend – again your teacher is there to help (they watch you dance). Each level offers just what the dancer needs and that is why we have levels – it makes for an enjoyable experience rather than an anxious one. After all, the music is always willing you to dance your best.

Intermediate levels are intended to provide a realistic and satisfying level of attainment for many dancers. Having achieved these levels, dancers should be able to enjoy dancing in most social situations. Advanced levels provide a further goal for dancers who wish to achieve a higher degree of personal excellence. Social classes cater for dancers who have attained the specified level and seek less emphasis on footwork.

Use of these guidelines

These guidelines are to help you evaluate your own dancing and make a selection you are comfortable with. The guidelines apply only to the area covered by the Auckland Region. Classes at dancing schools run by other regions and by the New Zealand Branch may have different names for the levels. Ask your teacher or the organizer for their assistance.

These guidelines can be used:

- to help you to evaluate your own dancing and to identify aspects you wish to improve
- as a basis for discussion between you and your club teacher in identifying an appropriate class.

We hope that you find this leaflet helpful.

ELEMENTARY

The class is designed for dancers who have usually been dancing for about one to three years and who want to improve their knowledge and execution of the basic steps and formations and be introduced to some of the more advanced formations. Classes at this level will develop footwork, covering, handing, and phrasing.

Dancers wishing to go to classes at this level have usually danced for a minimum of 12 months. They are also expected to:

1. Be able to dance the simpler formations taught at basic skills / beginner level, showing some knowledge of phrasing, with basic foot positions and good use of hands. Examples of formations are:
 - a) Rights and lefts
 - b) Four hands across and back
 - c) Four, six and eight hands round and back
 - d) Figures of eight on the side and across the dance
 - e) Allemande for two couples
 - f) Casting off for four steps and casting back to place.
2. Be able to dance the following steps without hesitation: slip step, skip change of step, pas de basque, strathspey travelling and strathspey setting.
3. Form longwise and square sets and have an understanding of progression within the longwise sets for a two or three couple dance in a four couple set.
4. Endeavour to maintain good deportment and stand in first position whilst waiting to dance.
5. Have some knowledge of the importance of phrasing and teamwork (including covering, eye contact and stepping up and down).
6. Have some knowledge of formations taught at basic skills/beginners level including:
 - a) Poussette for two couples
 - b) Reels of three beginning with right shoulder and left shoulder
 - c) Reels of four
 - d) Petronella turn
 - e) Grand chain for three couples.

INTERMEDIATE TECHNIQUE

This class is designed for intermediate dancers (usually three or more years) with a solid understanding of basic steps and formations who want to improve their standard of dancing. Classes at this level will focus on the improvement of all aspects of technique, including attention to transitions between formations.

Dancers wishing to go to classes at this level are expected to be able to:

1. Dance with accurate foot positions during step practice. Footwork may not always be maintained when dancing formations.
2. Maintain rhythm (with perhaps occasional lapses) whilst dancing to music with a strong beat.
3. Demonstrate good use of hands and maintain correct arm positions. For example:
 - having supportive arms during turning movements
 - maintaining the even angle of arms during a turn.
4. Dance all formations mentioned in elementary but with more ease and better footwork, with a minimum of explanation and with reasonably accurate phrasing.
5. Dance formations such as the following, showing thorough knowledge of the pattern of the formation, but may need to improve on technique:
 - a) Diagonal reels of four
 - b) Ladies' chain
 - c) "Cross-over" reels
 - d) Advance and retire and back to back
 - e) Turn corner, partner, corner, partner
 - f) Set and link for two couples.

UPPER INTERMEDIATE

In the Auckland Region there are very rarely classes specifically for this level alone. If a class is for Intermediate/ Advanced, dancers are expected to be at least an Upper Intermediate standard.

Dancers wishing to go to classes at this level should be able to:

1. Dance with a level of fitness to sustain good flight and ease of movement for a programme of dancing (e.g. a technique class or an evening's dancing).
2. Dance with accurate foot positions most of the time.
3. Maintain an upright and controlled, yet relaxed, posture at all times.
4. Demonstrate teamwork, covering and maintenance of set size and shape, without reminders.
5. Dance all formations mentioned in Intermediate but with more ease and better footwork, with minimal explanation and with accurate phrasing.
6. Dance the following additional formations with ease:
 - a) Reels with corners, from all entry positions
 - b) Reels of four - full, half and diagonal reels.
7. Dance formations such as the following, showing thorough knowledge of the pattern of the formation, but may need to improve on technique
 - a) Set to and turn corners
 - b) Set to corner and partner (hello-goodbye setting)
 - c) Strathspey poussette - half and right round
 - d) Rondel and Knot.

ADVANCED TECHNIQUE

This is a class designed for advanced dancers who can consistently execute steps and formations to a high standard of accuracy showing excellent phrasing, handing, and covering. Dancers are expected to be able to dance for the full duration of the class.

Dancers wishing to go to classes at this level should be able to:

1. Show sustained good flight and ease of movement.
2. Dance with accurate foot positions at all times.
3. Maintain rhythm when dancing to all types of music, including medleys and slow airs, and display the difference between jig time and reel time.
4. Appreciate dancing as a team, from either the women's or men's side of the dance, demonstrating light and shade when dancing.
5. Have the ability to learn new or modified formations easily, and dance correctly with a minimum of teaching.
6. Dance all formations mentioned in previous levels with a minimum of explanation but with more ease and better footwork, and with accurate phrasing and the ability to correct one's own errors unobtrusively.

VERY ADVANCED/HIGH ENERGY TECHNIQUE

A level achieved by some dancers, only for the very peak of their 'dancing career'.

This class will be suitable for dancers who are capable of dancing at a very high standard of accuracy while sustaining a high level of performance. Dancers will be expected to meet the challenge of a physically demanding class throughout the entire duration of the class.

Dancers wishing to attend classes at this level should meet the criteria for advanced level and in addition:

1. Have a very high standard of fitness and stamina that can be sustained throughout a class and be free from any injury that can be noticed when dancing.
2. Show ability and patience to fine-tune formations and dances.
3. Demonstrate technical accuracy which can be relied upon.
4. Show skill in all transitions between steps.
5. Show the ability to dance to various types of music (e.g. piano, fiddle, etc.) with ease.
6. Show an ability to portray and react to the style of music, reflecting the tempo and rhythm of the music when dancing.
7. Show an awareness that Very Advanced dancers can be role-models and observed by other dancers at any time.

SOCIAL

Those wishing to go to social classes should be able to satisfy the requirements of the stated level (e.g. Intermediate or Advanced) in most areas.

These classes are for dancers who do not wish to have the usual strong emphasis on footwork. They are particularly suitable for dancers who are not able to maintain a high degree of accurate footwork, and for those whose level of fitness cannot be sustained.

Most social classes cover a wide variety of interesting dances.

EXPERIENCED DANCING

Class designed for dancers who have enjoyed a long career of dancing and possess the same knowledge and skill level of the Advanced Technique class.

Dancers in this class desire the challenge presented by Advanced level dances but are not physically able and/or prepared to sustain the high level of stamina required throughout the entire period of the Advanced Technique class.

With a reduced focus on footwork and physical demand, dancers are capable of executing any dance and demonstrating excellent phrasing, handing, covering, and teamwork.