

INTRODUCTION

Graduation from a square dance class is a very special occasion for a new dancer and signifies the successful completion of a series of square dance sessions that are necessary prior to entering the square dance activity as a qualified square dancer. The Graduation ceremony should be a most memorable event and should be designed to "bridge the gap" between the student and a club member.

ADVANCE PLANNING

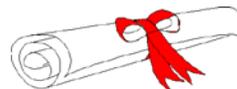
Advance planning is the key to a successful graduation party. The sponsors of a class should start planning the graduation party several months in advance to allow for proper preparation of all the props and special planned activities. The committee or group designated to be responsible for the graduation should meet to develop a thorough plan for the graduation.

GRADUATION PARTY

The party should start the minute the new dancer walks through the door. Decorations should immediately establish and encourage a party atmosphere. Plan the party so that there are no lags in the program. The program must be continuous and packed solid with fun activities. Have several mixers, graduation games, and a graduation ceremony planned. Arrange the hall facilities to encourage unity between the students and the club members. Have sufficient assistants appointed and readily available to help out with the games and props. Have diplomas prepared in



advance. When they are presented to the graduating class, it should be the most important event of the evening. The graduation activity just before the diploma presentations should set the mood for this event.



DECORATIONS

The Hall: The hall where the graduation party will be held should be well lighted, decorated to fit the occasion and present a radiant appearance. This is the first thing that the class and club members will notice when they enter the doors and the best opportunity to make an outstanding first impression of the fun, fellowship and happiness that will follow.



Decorations should fit the graduation theme. Large colorful wall decorations always make a great impression when entering a hall. Small decorations have a tendency to get lost in the crowd and fail to be impressive. Balloons, ribbons, dancer poster board cutouts, arrangements of square dance attire, large imitation diplomas, mortarboards, flowers, etc. can provide the sparkle that attracts the eye and sets the stage for a super evening.

Large flat diplomas for the walls can be made of large thick butcher paper, wrapping paper, poster board, cardboard or lightweight plywood. Cardboard cores, that rugs are rolled on, can be decorated and used for large stand-alone diplomas. Satin ribbon or a black bow made of paper or cardboard can be used to simulate the ribbon tied around

the diploma. A bag, jar or can, filled with sand, dirt or rocks may be inserted in large self-standing decorations for stability.

Lively colors should be used in the hall decorations. Decorations should also be designed with cost, ease of set-up and take-down, storage, future use, etc. in mind. It is also recommended that the club banner, scrapbooks and club historical documents be placed on display for the new dancers to view.

Tables: Tables used in the graduation party should be decorated to fit the occasion. Centerpieces may be composed of living or artificial floral arrangements, square dance figurines, or fabricated graduation props.

Stage: The stage, or caller area is the center point of focus for dancers and on this special occasion, decorations should be applied to fit the theme and the other decorations used in the hall.

Dancers: Mortarboards can be made very easily from poster boards.



GRADUATION CEREMONY

The graduation ceremony is naturally the highlight of the Graduation Party. There are many different types of ceremonies and may be elaborate or very simple. The caller and/or officers may perform the ceremony.

GRADUATION DIPLOMA

The diploma should be attractive and desired by the students. Diplomas are available from many commercial sources and only require the blank lines to be completed. The diplomas should be completed by using calligraphy, large bold typing or by fancy printing.

GRADUATION GAMES

Games are fun and an easy way for the club and class to get acquainted. Keep the games simple and fast moving. It's better to have several short fast games than to have one long game. (More graduation games are mentioned in USDA Pamphlet P-023.)

CLUB WELCOME PACKET

The class has completed the graduation ceremonies, now is an opportune time to present them with a "Welcome Packet." The packet may contain many items of interest to the new dancer about the club -- such as bylaws, constitution, roster, club history, square dance history, dance organizations, National Square Dance Convention, etc.

REFRESHMENTS

Refreshments can range from light finger foods to a sit-down dinner as deemed appropriate.

INVITATIONS TO JOIN THE CLUB

Graduation is a good time to invite the new dancers to join the club or even vote them into the club. A written invitation to the next club dance may be issued to the new graduates by the club or sponsors may be assigned to meet, visit, and dance with each new dancer at the next club dance.

ENDING THE EVENING

Let the new dancer know when and where the next club dance will be held. Give them something to look forward to. There are several special ways to end the evening. The caller may have some ideas, talk to him.

Live Lively -



Square Dance!

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CLASS GRADUATION



This information sheet was developed by the Education Committee of the UNITED SQUARE DANCERS OF AMERICA, INC. and will provide a brief summary of just a few of the topics concerning Class Graduation for new dancers. For additional information concerning Square Dance Class Graduation, see USDA Pamphlet P-023.

Leadership Education material can also be printed directly from USDA web site at www.usda.org

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