

Welcome to Tech Squares

1 General Information

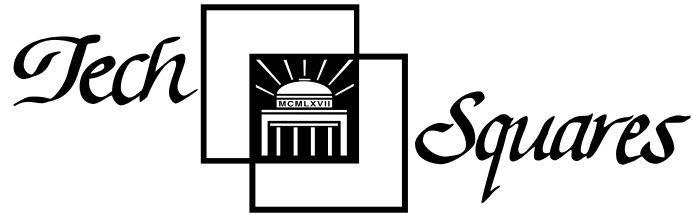
Now that you have graduated from our class, you are an official member of Tech Squares. Congratulations! We've prepared this information packet for you to help your transition from the class to the club. If you have any questions, please ask a club member or refer to our website tech-squares.mit.edu or our wiki wikis.mit.edu/confluence/display/techsquares/.

1.1 Email Lists

You will automatically be added to our club mailing list tech-squares@mit.edu. This is a moderated announcement-only list. It gets a weekly email with announcements including where we are dancing and what is being taught in early rounds.

There are also other club mailing lists that you may be interested in, including the following:

- tech-squares-discuss@mit.edu which is used to discuss club issues
<http://mailman.mit.edu/mailman/listinfo/tech-squares-discuss>
- tech-squares-rounds@mit.edu which gets round dance announcements
<http://mailman.mit.edu/mailman/listinfo/tech-squares-rounds>
- tech-squares-social@mit.edu which is for non-club and even non-dancing social events
<http://mailman.mit.edu/mailman/listinfo/tech-squares-social>



Dancing Club Tips

When a class is not in session, Tech Squares dances club level the entire night (8:00-10:30) alternating squares and rounds.

1 Getting better

Since our class moves so fast, you may feel uncertain about your dance ability, especially on calls that were taught in the last few weeks. Attending regularly and dancing a lot are the best ways to get better quickly. Club-level squares are open to all club members.

If you feel weak, try to square up with a strong partner in a strong square. If there are calls you don't know or are rusty on, you can ask other club members to tell you the definition or walk you through them during breaks. Tech Squares is here to support all its members so everyone can learn and get better.

2 Squaring Up

At Tech Squares, we find partners first and then a square. Once you have a partner, find a square to join that you think will be successful. You should avoid walking through a square you are not joining. If nearly everyone is squared up and the square in the back is still looking for people, you can join that square without a partner.

Now that you're a club member, you will need to be proactive about finding your own partners. Your classmates are a good resource, as are all of the club members you met during the class. Just ask, "Would you like to dance the next tip?" If someone turns you down, don't take it personally. Do not feel obligated to dance with anyone who makes you uncomfortable. A simple "No, thank you" will suffice. If their asking becomes a problem, please talk to an Executive Committee member (see officers section of How Tech Squares Works) and they'll address the problem.

If you have trouble finding partners, feel free to talk to your Class Coordinator or any other club member.

3 Getting back up to speed

If you stop dancing for a while and want to start again (after being away for the summer, or for longer), Tech Squares is here to support you. You can show up on a Tuesday and dance. Try to find a strong partner and a strong square that will support you. If class is in session, you can dance class tips, but if you're feeling rusty at what is being called, please partner with another club member.

If you want review before you come to a Tuesday dance, there are several club members who are happy to schedule review sessions. We can also run review sessions at the end of summer for everyone who's been out of town. You can ask an officer or email squares@mit.edu and we'll tell you who to ask.

4 Call Backs and Flourishes

You may notice that Tech Squares has a lot of call backs and flourishes. You've learned some of the more common ones in the class, but some people may have different ones. If you're curious about the origins of a call back, you can always ask the people who use it between tips. You might also see some people doing flourishes you're unfamiliar with; as always, flourishes are optional, but they can make dancing more fun. If you want to learn these flourishes, you can ask someone to teach it to you during a break. If you dance with other clubs or at conventions with people from other clubs, you may notice that they have different flourishes and call backs.

5 Shenanigans

Another thing you may notice is that club members sometimes dance in strange formations. There are several variants to square dancing, which are collectively referred to as shenanigans. Some of these variants are danced within a normal square, such as snap switching or cutting in and out. Others are danced in a separate formation, such as a mirror square, a bigon (with only 4 people), or a hexagon (with 12 people). Shenanigans tend to be harder than normal dancing, and sometimes a lot harder, so you shouldn't attempt them until you're a strong dancer. If you're interested, you can talk to the people who dance in them. Tech Squares also sometimes holds introductory workshops for hexagons or bigons.

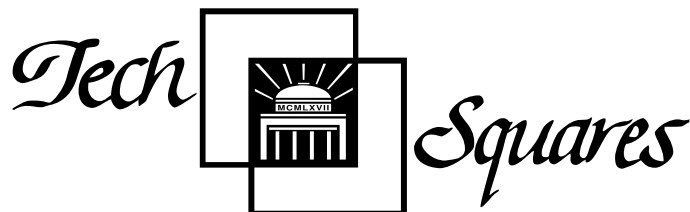
6 What Next?

Now that you've completed the Tech Squares class, some of you may be feeling like you're not sure what to do next. You don't need to do anything next; a number of club members enjoy dancing Plus with us regularly and don't feel a need for a 'what next'.

But if you do feel this need, you have a few options. One obvious option is to learn rounds (see the [Dancing Rounds](#) page for more information on that). Other possibilities are learning and dancing variants (see [Shenanigans](#), above), learning to call, or learning higher levels.

If you want to learn to call, we hold an Amateur Night once a year in August, where club members can call a tip. The club has a number of knowledgeable people that you can ask for advice on learning to write choreo or learning to call. You can ask an officer or email squares@mit.edu if you're interested and we'll point out who to talk to.

You now know Plus, but square dancing does go higher than that. If you're interested in learning higher levels, you can ask around; a lot of club members dance higher levels and will be happy to talk to you about them. Advanced classes are held once every year or two. You should be a strong Plus dancer before you try to learn Advanced.



Dancing Rounds

Tech Squares alternates square and round dances. Now you know how to dance club-level squares—if cued partner dancing looks like fun, you should give round dancing a try, too!

If you have any questions about round dancing, you can find one of our rounds coordinators — they wear dangles under their Tech Squares badges. The current rounds coordinators are Andy Latto (andy.latto@pobox.com) and Rachel Downing (tetafray@gmail.com).

They can also be emailed at tech-squares-rounds-coordinator@mit.edu.

You can also subscribe to the tech-squares-rounds mailing list (<http://mailman.mit.edu/mailman/listinfo/tech-squares-rounds>).

Rounds classes are offered every week just before Tech Squares, from 7 to 8 PM. Unlike the squares class, which takes a 13-week commitment, we break the rounds classes up into month-long pieces. Just like the squares class, you don't need a partner, and you should expect to change partners frequently. We normally ask new dancers to take one of the beginners' classes (September, January, or February) first, but if you're interested in starting rounds earlier than that, talk to one of the rounds coordinators, and they will help you find an appropriate class to start with.

Rounds includes a variety of dances, or “rhythms”; At Tech Squares, we dance Two-step, Waltz, Cha-Cha, Rumba, Foxtrot, and occasionally Tango, Jive, or Slow Two Step. Round dances have cues instead of calls and are organized into phases instead of levels. We dance rounds at three levels of difficulty: Phase II (easy), Phase III (intermediate) and Phase IV (advanced). There is no phase I.

Each month of lessons covers a different rhythm/difficulty combination. The schedule of classes is available on the web at <http://tech-squares.mit.edu/schedules/rounds-sched.html>.

If you miss the first week of the month, talk to one of the rounds coordinators; we can often catch you up on the classes you've missed. Please try to arrive for rounds classes promptly at 7 so that we can begin on time and avoid unnecessary review.

Each month, Phil Gatchell teaches a progressive rounds class for the first three or four Tuesdays of the month. In the final week, Veronica McClure teaches. This sometimes builds on what Phil has taught during the month, but is often an independent class. Check the weekly announcements to see what Veronica is teaching and who its appropriate for. Different teachers have different styles and stress different things, so attending classes from both teachers will speed your learning. Generally, Phil's classes focus on learning the footwork of the standard steps, while Veronica's classes go into more depth on technique, which will help you dance with a better connection with your partner.

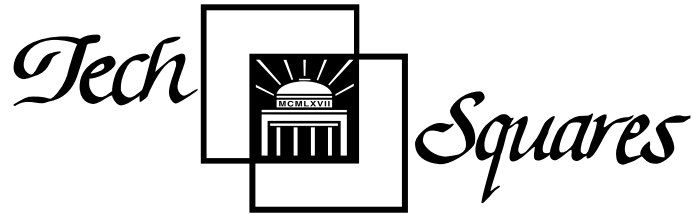
Another way to learn rounds is to just get up and try them! For squares, we discourage dancers who have not learned a level yet from joining a square, because if you can't dance the level, you can decrease the enjoyment of the other 7 people in the square. For rounds, your ability and experience only affect you and your partner. If you get up on the floor and have a good time, as long as you don't crash into any other couples (hint: keep moving counterclockwise around the circle most of the time), that's great! When in doubt, dance; you can always leave the floor if the dance is too hard for you. So don't be shy about trying rhythms or levels you haven't learned yet, but please

be courteous and warn any unsuspecting partners if this is your plan.

Traditionally men dance the “lead” part and women dance the “follow” part in round dancing. Tech Squares isn’t your traditional square dance club, of course, and you should feel free to pick whichever part you want to learn. However, the two parts are very different, much more so than in square dancing, so we strongly recommend that you choose one of the two parts, and stick to it for at least a year before starting to learn the other part.

Many of the more experienced round dancers enjoy dancing with new round dancers and helping them out—feel free to ask.

Each set of two rounds cued are at the same level of difficulty, and progress II-III-IV and back over the course of the evening. Start by trying the easier ones.



How Tech Squares Works

1 Dance fees and gate

Tech Squares offers two ways of paying for dances; paying each night or paying by quarter (subscriptions). Tech Squares dances are always free for MIT students; basically they get a free subscription automatically every quarter. For others, the per night fee is \$2 for (non-MIT) students and \$5 for everyone else. The other option is to buy a subscription. Subscriptions can give you a discount compared to paying every night, and you won't have to bother paying each time you come. Subscriptions are available for the fall and spring terms while the class is going, and the winter and summer terms when there is no class. Due to the different number of weeks in these terms, the cost of subscriptions vary. Subscriptions are generally available for purchase a couple weeks before the quarter starts.

If you don't have a subscription, you should pay gate (the person sitting at the table just inside the door) when you come to the dance. If you do have a subscription (or are an MIT student) you should still say hi to gate so they can check you off as attending. It's useful to us to have accurate records, so please do get checked off. When you go to gate, please either give your name or wear your badge so the gate worker knows who you are.

2 Officers

Be aware that the officers are available to you if you have any troubling concerns, delicate questions, or helpful recommendations. Officers wear badges with their title below their club badges so that you can always find the right person. Any club member can help you find who you're looking for.

The current elected officers:

President: Jason Gross
Vice President: Alex Dehnert
Treasurer: Hans Liu
Vice Treasurer: Kevin Chen
Publicity Coordinator: Ben Rosen-Filardo
Class Coordinator: Veronica Boyce
Member-at-Large: Brittany Huhmann
Member-at-Large: Myles Dakan

You can also email squares@mit.edu which reaches the elected officers and appointed officers.

3 Club Jobs

Tech Squares's weekly dances happen smoothly due to a commitment from club member volunteers. We need club members to help with weekly jobs such as rounds setup, squares setup, working gate, and cleanup. If you are attending weekly dances regularly, we ask that you sign up for a job about once a month. We'll provide complete instructions and any help you need. It's a great way to meet people and to contribute to the club, so we urge you to respond to the call for volunteers.

4 Getting involved

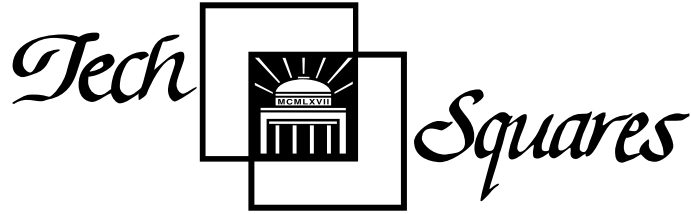
If you're interested in getting more involved in the running of the club, that's great! We're always looking for more people to be involved in the running of the club. We tend to elect and appoint officers each year in the spring, but there are often other things we can use help with. If you're interested, check the weekly emails for calls for volunteers or ask an officer if there's anything you could help with.

5 Club Meetings, Voting, and Elections

You are now a voting member of Tech Squares, and if you continue coming regularly, you'll stay a voting member. The details of voting membership are somewhat complicated (see <http://tech-squares.mit.edu/govdocs/> for details), but basically, club members who attend regularly are voting members.

Tech Squares holds occasional club meetings to conduct club business, such as electing officers. These are held during Tuesday dances, and all club members are welcome to attend.

All voting members can vote. Tech Squares uses a vote-scaling system, whereby votes of MIT students count for 1/2 of the voting power. All voting members are also eligible to run for elected officer positions although some positions have to be held by MIT students.



Resources and Supplemental Information

1 History of Tech Squares

Tech Squares dates its founding as 1967. At that time, the MIT outing club held “One Night Stands” (intro nights), but was not interested in holding regular square dancing. Veronica McClure and Don Beck, among others started a new student group, Tech Squares, to hold regular dances. Don Beck called for the club briefly in the 1960s, and later returned as the club caller from 1986 to 1998. Veronica McClure cued for the club in the early 1970s, and returned as club cuer from 1985 to 1994. She continues to share cuing responsibilities with other cuers. In 1998, Ted Lizotte became the club caller, and in 2002, Phil Gatchell became the main club cuer. Tech Squares has held fast-paced classes since 1971, when the club caller Dennis Marsh ran a class to teach club level in 8 weeks.

2 Other clubs and dances

- New England Convention <http://www.nesrdc.org/>
- Hayloft Steppers in Sturbridge, MA. <http://www.hayloftsteppers.org/>
- Great Plain Squares in Needham, MA. <http://www.greatplainsquares.org/>
- Riverside Squares in Danvers, MA. <http://www.riversidesquares.org/>
- Fairs n Squares in Framingham, MA. <http://fairsnsquares.com/>
- Single Squares in Burlington, MA. <http://www.singlesquares.org/>

3 Online resources

- Our website tech-squares.mit.edu has information such as our dance schedule and locations, definitions of calls, and our club governing documents. There’s also a link to our Google calendar.
- We also have a wiki wikis.mit.edu/confluence/display/techsquares/ which contains a lot of information club members may find useful. You’ll need to create an account to access it. If you have an MIT Athena account, you can log in with that using Touchstone. Otherwise, you’ll want to select Touchstone Collaboration Account when asked for your account provider. This will take you to a login page, where you will usually be able to login. The first time, you’ll need to click on “Not Registered?” and make an account. When you make an account, you need to use your email on tech-squares@mit.edu. If you’re having problems creating an account or logging in, you may want to try restarting your browser or deleting mit or

idp related cookies. If you want a different email to have access, or you're having problems creating an account, you can email squares@mit.edu.

- www.ceder.net contains lists of clubs, callers, links to articles about square dancing, a choreography database, and definitions of higher level calls.
- Callerlab (a professional organization that supports square dancing) maintains official definitions on their website at www.callerlab.org. These definitions may be more technical.
- Taminations has a website and a free app. It has animations of the calls and Callerlab definitions. It is available for iOS, Android, and mobile browser at <http://www.tamtwirlers.org/tamination/info/>.
- <http://tech-squares.mit.edu/resources/cotm/> has articles about square dance calls.
- <http://dosado.com> has links to other clubs.