

# "To be or not to be"

## Advanced! (in Scottish Country Dancing)

This discussion seems to crop up every time there is to be an advanced class and people are considering applying.

Many dancers seem to have the idea that there is a natural progression from Beginner to Elementary to Intermediate to Advanced. **Not so!**

I think that the title "**Intermediate**" is part of the problem! **Intermediate** encompasses a wide range of abilities, from people who have only just completed the Elementary level, all the way up to a small number of people who are "footwork ready" for Advanced, with a huge group in the middle who are still working away at the multitude of skills within that level.

Most dancers can get all the satisfaction they want out of dancing within the **Intermediate/Upper Intermediate** level. They can enjoy Balls and club nights in an entirely competent manner, for the rest of their dancing lives without going any further.

**An advanced dancer** has to be consistently keen on getting the **footwork** as close to perfect as possible, as well as mastering: the transitions in steps and formations, hands, phrasing, covering, and challenging dances. **Footwork** is a physically demanding skill. It is **not** good enough as an advanced dancer just to be able to dance from the knees up!

**Advanced classes** are for a minority of dancers who have the physical attributes necessary to produce great footwork and want to move to a higher level of performance. Most dancers do not have that sort of ability and don't need it to get what they want out of SCD.

The other advanced classes that have emerged in the past few years have arisen out of the thorny problem of what classes to provide for those who used to be advanced dancers, but who are no longer able to cope with the physical demands of consistently producing great footwork. I think that that is where the **Advanced Senior/Advanced low impact class** comes in. These people can still manage all the other skills of an advanced dancer like: phrasing, hands, covering, being aware of their partner and other people in the set, and so on. As well as these skills they can still cope intellectually with challenging dances.



So for me there two kinds of Advanced classes:

- **Advanced** - includes emphasis on footwork
- **Advanced senior/Advanced low-impact** - all of the skills included in the above, except the footwork

Dancers who operate at the Intermediate level and who are also finding their previous performance too physically demanding should go to a **General Social Class** where a range of dances are taught from Elementary to challenging Intermediate.



In conclusion then I think that there should only be the following classes in RSCDS New Zealand Branch schools:

1. **Beginners** - first timers who have never danced before
2. **Elementary** - have had some experience as a Beginner and now want to learn more - a long course of learning the basics.
3. **Intermediate** - wide range of ability and achievement - may take several years including the Upper Intermediate.
4. **Upper Intermediate** - preparing for the rigors of Advanced.
5. **General Social/Low Impact General Social** - used to be Intermediate, but are now unable to meet the physical demands of the Intermediate level.
6. **Advanced** - all about mastery including **footwork**.
7. **Advanced Senior/Low Impact Advanced** - used to be advanced, but are now unable to meet the physical demands of the Advanced Class.
8. **JAMS** - as per the age limitations.



**Organisers** of Day Schools, Weekend Schools, or Summer Schools need to set up classes to fit all, some or one of these categories and forget about some of the other categories that have been appearing of late: Very Advanced or Very Advanced Senior. You're either Advanced, or you're not!!

I am sure that every dancer in New Zealand can place themselves in one of these classes without too much trouble.

This is my own personal opinion and not necessarily that of the Waikato Bay of Plenty Region, or the RSCDS New Zealand Branch.

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