

# A Generalized Chicken Plucker

## With Application to Progressive Squares (with facing lines)

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**(DRAFT – not for general distribution)**

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The “chicken plucker” module can be used as a framework for hoedowns by incorporating zeros and equivalences. It has its origins in some traditional dance sequences. An extension of the “chicken plucker” module can be used to call to any regular or irregular arrangement of progressive squares. Examples are given.

## A Generalized Chicken Plucker

From a 0-box the classic chicken plucker module is:

*right and left thru; dive thru, pass thru; right and left thru; dive thru, pass thru*

It is a zero and can be used as a frame work for a hoedown by the use of equivalents and interspersed zeros.

There are two ways to extend it:

- 1) Use other call sequences in place of *dive thru, pass thru*
- 2) Apply it to other formations than a box.

The **generalized chicken plucker** is *right and left thru*, then **any sequence of special calls**, then *right and left thru* again, followed by that *sequence in the reverse order*.

What are these special calls? They are calls similar to *dive thru, pass thru* that

- preserve the formation and
- produce a zero calling: *right and left thru; special call; right and left thru; special call*

For example, *Pass thru, trade by* is special because it preserves a box formation and *right and left thru; pass thru, trade by; right and left thru; pass thru, trade by* is a zero.

Similarly *Ladies chain* is special because it preserves a box formation and *right and left thru; ladies chain; right and left thru; ladies chain* is a zero.

Likewise you can check that *Box the gnat* is also special in this sense. By using these calls we get the following example modules.

### Example<sup>2</sup> – starting in 0-box

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<sup>1</sup> My interest in this was stimulated by discussions with Jerry Jestin and Brian Hotchkies, both professional callers adept at calling progressive squares.

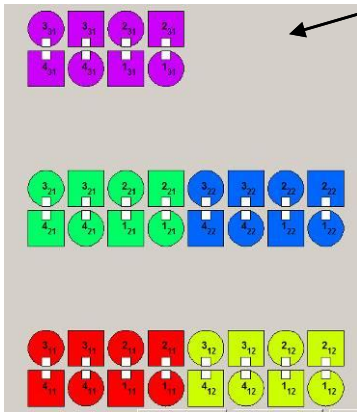
<i>Right and left thru;</i>	<i>Right and left thru;</i>
<i>Pass thru, trade by;</i>	<i>Pass thru, trade by;</i>
<i>Ladies chain;</i>	<i>Reverse Flutter Wheel;</i>
<i>Pass thru, trade by;</i>	<i>Veer Right, Veer Left, trade by;</i>
<i>Box the gnat;</i>	<i>Box the gnat;</i>
<i>Right and left thru;</i>	<i>Pass thru, partner trade;</i>
<i>Box the gnat;</i>	<i>Box the gnat;</i>
<i>Pass thru, trade by;</i>	<i>Right pull by, trade by;</i>
<i>Ladies chain;</i>	<i>Reverse Flutter wheel;</i>
<i>Pass thru, trade by;</i>	<i>Dive thru, pass thru;</i>

Other formations can be used for the generalized chicken plucker.

**Example – starting in 0-line**

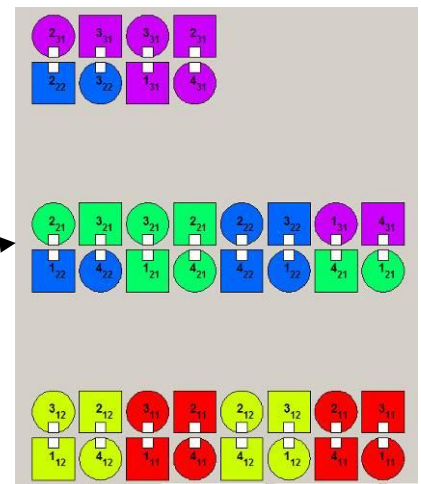
<i>Right and left thru;</i>	<i>Right and left thru;</i>
<i>Pass thru, tag the line in;</i>	<i>Pass thru, tag the line in;</i>
<i>Box the gnat;</i>	<i>Box the gnat</i>
<i>Shift boys anticlockwise;</i>	<i>Pass the ocean, recycle, veer left, partner trade, centers circulate, bend the line</i>
<i>Right and left thru;</i>	<i>Pass thru, partner trade;</i>
<i>Shift boys anticlockwise;</i>	<i>Boys step to wave, swing thru, back up</i>
<i>Box the gnat;</i>	<i>Pass thru, U turn back;</i>
<i>Pass thru, tag the line in;</i>	<i>Pass thru, tag the line in;</i>

**Example – any progressive square setup<sup>3</sup>** with squares into 0-lines (e.g. *sides lead right circle to a line*). For example 5 squares, where 3 squares are down the left side of the hall, and 2 squares down the right.



*Right and left thru*  
*Pass thru move on with a pass thru or partner trade*  
*Pass thru bend the line*  
*Two ladies chain*  
*Pass thru move on with a pass thru or partner trade*  
*Pass thru bend the line*  
*Pass thru move on with a pass thru or partner trade*

*Right and left thru*  
*Pass thru move on with a pass thru or partner trade*  
*Pass thru bend the line*  
*Pass thru move on with a pass thru or partner trade*  
*Two ladies chain*  
*Pass thru bend the line*  
*Pass thru move on with a pass thru or partner trade*



<sup>2</sup> The first column is a literal example, but the calls to the right in blue are equivalents that would flow better.

<sup>3</sup> Gene Trimmer’s book (pg. 52 and 53) discusses such setup. He mentions how to call ladies chains in progressive squares for certain rectangular setups. This generalization makes this precise.

## A Larger List of Special Calls

These first ones in black are two couple calls, so apply to any of the formations illustrated in the examples

- right and left thru
- ladies chain = reverse flutter wheel
- flutter wheel
- box the gnat
- half sashay

These next two calls are appropriate for a box formation

- Dive thru, (centers) pass thru = pass to the center, centers pass thru
- Pass thru, trade by

The previous two calls are equivalent, but pass thru, trade by makes sense for lines and progressive squares in lines. An important observation is that *trade by* is really a *circulate*, i.e. it means for those who can (the centers to *pass thru*) and the others to *partner trade* to face back into the formation. So for lines it could be interpreted *pass thru, partner trade*. More importantly when working with progressive squares (in lines), one way the dancers are moved from square to square is by getting them to *pass thru*, and then *pass thru* again with the people they see from adjoining square with the proviso, that if they see no one, they must *partner trade* to face back in. As this is very important, the caller must make sure all dancers understand this, and it is usual is give the call a special name such as:

- **Pass thru, move on**

So the previous call and

- **pass thru, bend the line**

make sense for lines and more importantly are used in calling progressive squares in lines.

There are other calls that can be used, but are too complicated for use in progressive squares.

## Progressive Squares (with facing lines)

### 1. Modules for fixed regular and irregular configurations

For fixed configurations certain combinations of *ptbtl* and *ptmo* are small period zeros and can be used as the framework of a progressive module.

Some rectangular arrangements:

- $1 = 1 \times 1 = ptbtl \times 4$

Interesting arrangements of Heads and Sides. Half way same numbered dancers together.

- 2 = 1x2 (*ptmo*, *ptbt*) x 4
- 3 = 1x3 (*ptmo*, *ptbt*) x 4
- 2x2 or 2x3 or 3x2 or 3x3 = (*ptmo*, *ptbt*) x 4
- 15 = 3x5 ((*ptmo*, *ptbt*), (*ptmo*, *ptmo*, *ptbt*))x2;
- 4x4 or 4x5 or 5x5: (*ptmo*, *ptmo*, *ptbt*) x 4

Girls exchange squares (period 2) could use for SC

- 2 = 1x2: *ptbt*, *ptmo*, *pttin*, *bg*, *rlth*, *lc*, *ptmo*, *ptbt* (timing – 50)

Girls move to different squares (period 2) (could use for SC)

- k = 1xk; same as above

Girls move to different squares (period 4) (could use for SC)

- 4 = 2x2; *ptbt*, *ptmo*, *rlth*, *lc*, *ptmo*
- Any rectangle too.

## 2. Rectangular Configurations

Gene Trimmer states in his book (pg. 49) when keeping partners together, “It is not absolutely necessary to take your “key Couple” around the outside as we have done ... You can take them through the middle, zig zag or any other way you wish.” This is not correct<sup>4</sup>. The generalized chicken plucker does allow for any path which must be traversed both ways (turning round with a *rlth* at the ends). Also section 5 discusses what can happen when any path is used and how to fix things up. Also when using ladies chains to separate partners, he states, “ you must ... (get them back) ... by performing the ladies chains in the reverse order.” Again this is not true, there are other ways too.

However the following always works when keeping couples together. Working with lines across the hall, choose the key couple at the lower left. Using *ptbt* or *ptmo* to move them around the outside of a sub-rectangle to come back home and all will be back. In fact moving them clockwise to get home will always work.

## 3. Beginning and Ending with an unusual move

Such a journey is a zero, so can start with a routine, then do a progressive squares module, then resolve the first routine.

For example, the following (which does not fit in the above scheme) can be used first, then move the key couple around, then get out after squares come back together.

Interesting boy vs girl competition can be set up. For example once the lines are set up, have *centers half sashay*, then one of the routines from section 1 that mixes Heads and Sides (e.g. (*ptmo*, *ptbt*) x 4 for 2x2, 2x3, 3x2, or 3x3), *centers half sashay* restores the zero lines.

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<sup>4</sup> Examples that fail: On any grid with at least 2 squares; *ptbt*, repeat *ptmo* to go across and back, *ptbt*, *ptmo* will take key couple home, but not all. Another example (*ptbt* x3, *ptmo*) x 2.

## References

Gene Trimmer – Specialized Squares and Crowd Pleasers

### Appendix – Classic Dances

Little Red Hen by George Perry

Sets in Order Year Book of Square Dancing No. One (1956) page 128.

1st and 3rd go forward and back  
Forward again, pass Thru, U-turn back  
Box the Gnat across from you  
Face the sides, right and left Thru  
Duck right back to the middle of the pen  
Box the Gnat with your little red hen  
Face the middle  
Right and left thru and hear me say  
Face to the middle, do a half sashay  
Box the Gnat across from you  
Face the sides, then right and left Thru  
Duck right back to the middle of the pen  
Box the Gnat with your little red hen  
Face the middle  
Right and left thru across the land  
Then trail thru to a left allemande.

Chicken Plucker by Bill Shymkus (Cal Campbell's version)

Sets in Order Year Book of Square and Round Dancing No. Two (1958) page 12.

Bill Shymkus probably got inspired by the "Little Red Hen"

First and third Bow and Swing, go up to the middle and back again  
Forward again and Pass Thru. Separate around one  
Into the middle, Pass Thru and Circle Four, half way around and Dive Thru.  
Pass Thru, and a Right and Left Thru, turn your girl and you Dive Thru  
Pass Thru, and a Right and Left Thru, turn your girl as you always do  
Dive to the middle and a Right and Left Thru  
Turn your Pretty Girl and you Circle up Four  
Half way around to the rhythm of the band  
Pass Thru, Left Allemande.