

# Goofus and Gallant Take Up Calling.

By Allan Hurst - 1/18/04 (ver 1.7)

Being a “professional” caller does not necessarily indicate that someone calls as a full-time job. Rather, *a professional caller is a person who calls in a professional manner*, and who observes the same courtesies and ethics that any business or entertainment professional would follow.

A caller may only call a few times a year, yet do so in a professional manner.

Conversely, a caller who calls several classes and club nights a week may still do so unprofessionally.

Being a GCA caller, in many circles, is perceived as being less than professional. This isn't the GCA's fault. This is more a case of a few people in the past acting unprofessionally in the name of the GCA in specific circumstances. The solution is simple: *as a group, GCA callers must reinforce professional behaviors, and eliminate unprofessional habits.*

Remember "Goofus & Gallant" from the old "Highlights for Children" magazine? Over the years, I've arbitrarily divided callers into two groups for which this metaphor is quite useful.

The first group ("Goofuses") is composed of people who like being the center of attention. These are people who call because they want to prove how smart they are, or who just want to be noticed. This condition is also sometimes known as "new-caller-itis".

The second group ("Gallants") is composed of people who like entertaining other people. Everything they do is framed in terms of pleasing the dancers. They may enjoy being the attention received while calling, but their primary focus is keeping the floor moving, and keeping the dancers happy.

Here are some examples of unprofessional ("Goofus") versus professional ("Gallant") behavior that I've observed over the years. It's worth noting that some of the Goofus behaviors have been observed being performed by non-GCA callers.

**Goofus writes choreo that pleases himself**, giving little thought to how the flow or handedness affects dancers.

**Gallant pushes checkers** and/or walks through each card, module, or sequence to ensure that it will please the dancers.

**When Goofus has a card that doesn't work**, he tries it three or four times on the same dancers, insisting that they're just not dancing it correctly.

**When Gallant has a bad card**, he may ask the dancers if they're willing to walk through it once more, and if it still doesn't work, he apologizes and moves on to a new card.

**Goofus feels that the caller is always right.** If the dancers can't dance what he's calling, it's *their* fault.

**Gallant is willing to cheerfully take the blame for any breakdowns**, even if it's not his fault. Gallant never allows dancers to feel stupid, and is careful to happily offer to workshop anything the floor is having a real problem with.

**Goofus lumps his choreo together, regardless of difficulty;** “If the dancers can't dance it, that's their problem.”

**Gallant separates his choreo into levels of difficulty,** starting with easy material and slowly working up to harder choreo, to get to know what the floor level is like tonight.

**Goofus picks singers because he likes the songs,** and/or because his voice blends in so well with the existing vocals and music, which makes it easy for him to sing along.

**Gallant picks singers that will please the dancers,** and take care to choose songs that allow his voice to be heard clearly against the music.

**Goofus books a date, then just shows up months later,** trusting that everyone will remember he's calling that night.

**Gallant books a date, then reconfirms** at least once before showing up.

**Goofus corrects other callers from the floor;** it's his duty to make sure other callers conform to his idea of choreography, and show off how much he knows.

**If Gallant perceives a problem with another caller's choreo,** he approaches the caller quietly after the tip is over to ask about it.

**Goofus corrects and calls to other dancers when he's dancing in a square.** As a caller, he feels he always knows best, and it's his job to correct all the other dancers in his square because he's only trying to help.

**Gallant dances in a square with a big smile, saying nothing.** He's content to relax and dance and let the *contracted* caller do the calling,

**Goofus doesn't have time to socialize with the dancers,** especially in a new club or venue where he's never called before. He just walks in, sets up, and cues the music at precisely the right time. It's the club's responsibility to introduce him to the crowd.

**Gallant arrives and sets up early, so he can spend time getting to know all of the dancers individually.** He walks around the room introducing himself to each dancer he doesn't already know, and acknowledges all of the dancers he's met before. He knows that you only have one chance to make a good first impression.

**Goofus takes being a caller very seriously,** and points out his status to others at every opportunity.

**Gallant doesn't make a big deal to other dancers about being a caller.** He allows others to discuss that he's a caller, or mentions it only in passing conversation when appropriate.

**Goofus is deadly serious about being a caller;** he figures he's entitled to a great deal of respect from the dancers at all times.

**Gallant knows that respect from dancers can only be earned.** He's not afraid of making a mistake or appearing less than infallible, especially if making a little fun of himself puts the dancers at ease.

What Goofus & Gallant calling behaviors have *you* noticed in *your* calling?

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