

## Call of the Month: Cast Off by Barry Leiba

This month, we'll talk about something that everyone can play with. We all learn to PUT CENTERS IN and then CAST OFF  $\frac{3}{4}$  in Mainstream class. We don't usually learn the finer points of CAST OFF, though, so let's have a look at some now.

There are two very common places that we see CAST OFF. The first place is when, after a DOUBLE PASS THRU (so we're in COMPLETED DPT formation, if you remember from when we talked about terminology), we PUT CENTERS IN, to give back-to-back lines, and then we CAST OFF  $\frac{3}{4}$ . We can CAST OFF  $\frac{1}{4}$  or  $\frac{1}{2}$ , too, but we most often go  $\frac{3}{4}$ . The second place is in calls such as SPIN CHAIN THRU:

- Ends TRADE with centers.
- New centers CAST OFF  $\frac{3}{4}$ .
- Very centers TRADE.
- Those who meet, CAST OFF  $\frac{3}{4}$ .

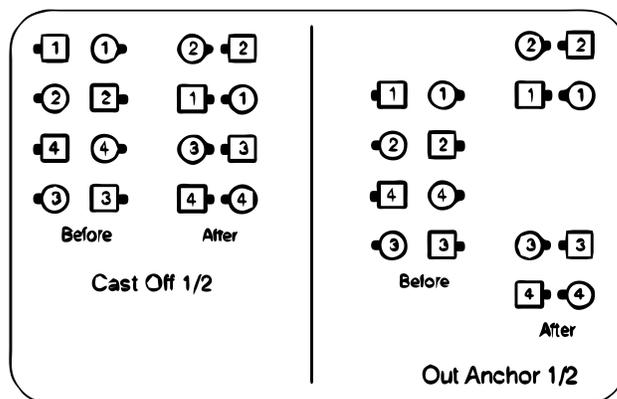
In these two cases we can see the two variations of CAST OFF. In the first, those doing the call are facing the same direction; they're as a couple. In the second, they're facing opposite directions, in a mini-wave. Let's look at the second case briefly, and then spend a bit of time on the first.

When you're casting off in a mini-wave, there's no question about who goes where — you both move forward in a circular path around your handhold. If you're going  $\frac{3}{4}$ , it feels very much like a TRADE and then a HINGE, and it helps some people to think of it that way. The only thing you can really do wrong there is to go too far (more than  $\frac{3}{4}$ ) or not far enough (less than  $\frac{3}{4}$ ), and thinking of it as “TRADE and then go another  $\frac{1}{4}$ ” can help keep you... er... straight. Count walls, and be sure to turn “three walls”. Note that the pivot point — the axis around which you turn — is your handhold. That is, it's the midpoint between the two dancers.

When you're casting off as a couple (also called a PUSH CAST), you likewise use your handhold, the midpoint between you, as the pivot point. But in this case, you can't both move forward; one of you has to back up. Which one? How do you know which way to turn? The answer is that, except in the rare case when the caller specifies otherwise, you always go “around the outside dancer”, which is to say that the dancer closer to the outside of the square *backs up*, while the one closer to the inside goes forward (both in a circle around the midpoint, of course). One result of that is that CAST OFF  $\frac{3}{4}$  always leaves you facing *in*. If you've done a push cast  $\frac{3}{4}$  and you're facing out, you've either gone the wrong fraction or pushed the wrong way.

(Note that the Callerlab definition actually has you pivot around the end dancer, which requires that you adjust when you're finished **as though** you had used the handhold as the pivot point. This can be very sloppy and at higher levels it invites errors in making the adjustment. It's better to use the handhold as a pivot and not have to adjust.)

Now, we all do this automatically, and without thinking about it, in the PUT CENTERS IN case. But suppose we do “SPIN CHAIN THRU, but after the first CAST  $\frac{3}{4}$  those who aren't trading do a U-TURN BACK”. That will make the last CAST  $\frac{3}{4}$  become a PUSH CAST, and you'll have to know which way to go. Usually, as in this case, the body flow, as well as the rule, will tell you — here, the one who traded will move forward while the dancer on the end backs up.



Things get a bit complicated at higher levels, when the formations can get offset. You often have to be very precise about the pivot point, despite sloppy habits from when it didn't matter. It *feels* as though the pivot is around the outside dancer, but it's **not**. Let's look at the call ANCHOR to give some contrast.

ANCHOR is a call that's used in Challenge dancing (at the C3 and C4 levels), and it's very much like CAST OFF, but with two important differences. First, the caller must tell you which direction to ANCHOR (in, out, left, or right). Second, you pivot around that designated dancer, rather than around the midpoint. Note the difference between CAST OFF  $\frac{1}{2}$  and OUT ANCHOR  $\frac{1}{2}$  in the accompanying diagram. Both start from the same back-to-back lines. ANCHOR ends with a two-dancer gap between the dancers, because we're pivoting around numbers 1 and 3. In the CAST OFF, there's no gap, because the pivot is midway *between* number 1 and 2 (and midway between 3 and 4).

So, when you're doing push casts, remember that the outside dancer backs up and you pivot around your handhold. Then count walls to make sure you go the right number of quarters, and you should never make a mistake on a CAST OFF again.