

Reel

Contra Dance Virginia

Lesson Focus: to sustain active movement while learning about the origins of contra dancing abroad and in America.

What you'll need

- Music and music player (suggested: Virginia Reel by Jack Capon & Rosemary Hallum CD640 Educational Activities, Inc.).
- Poly spots are optional.

Skills to review and demonstrate

Forward and Back: walk 4 steps forward toward partner and clap hands together on the fourth beat and repeat.

Right Hand Around: walk toward partner with right hands extended, turn partner in a circle and return to your place in 8 beats.

Left Hand Around: repeat with left hand.

Both Hands Around: do the same holding both partner's hands in 8 beats.

Do Si Do: cross arms over chest, walk 3 steps toward partner passing right shoulders, without turning around side step behind each other, back up 3 steps to place (all should take 8 beats)

Head Couple Sashay Down: first pair at the top of the line join hands (optional) and slide sideways down the center, 8 counts down and 8 counts back.

Cast Off: all face the head couple who lead their lines down to the opposite end.

Make a bridge: head couple make an arch and everyone passes under the bridge and a new head couple begins the dance again.

Getting started

Lines of students on the poly spots facing each other four paces apart in groups of 10-12.



Student performance objectives

Psychomotor: Students can perform all parts of the Virginia Reel during the dance 80% of the time

Cognitive: Students can name and describe the steps used in the Virginia Reel.



[Watch the Video](#)

Gym or large classroom
activity for grades

3-5

Begin the action

Have the students perform the dance to the caller on the musical recording.

Helpful hints

Talk about the tradition of the handshake. Ask: "Would it be rude to refuse to shake a hand?"

Explain to the students that the Virginia Reel offers lots of opportunities for handshaking!

Let's treat our classmates with respect and good manners!

Allow students to pick partners they are comfortable with.

Teacher dances and demonstrates with the odd numbered student. That student is the designated helper!

Recap

How do you think we found out that people danced before we were able to write down our history?

Can you give me an example of a circle dance that people might have done long ago or one we still do today?

What is a tradition?

Can you think of any traditions we keep today that have been passed down from our grandparents?

Background

Almost everyone dances. From before we could write down our history people have danced. Sometimes dance is part of a ceremony but often it is just a fun social or party event. One of the oldest dances enjoyed in America today is the contra dance The Virginia Reel. It was said to be George Washington's favorite dance! Contra dancing is a kind of country dancing that was popular during colonial times. Dances and their songs are handed down from one generation to the next - from grandparents to their grandchildren - like a tradition.

National standards

Standards 1&2 : Dance steps; Moving to the beat.

Standard 3: Cardiovascular fitness.

Standards 4&5: Working with and respect for class mates; Cooperation; Appreciates and enjoys rhythmic activities.

