Alabama Gal

A Southern United States Play Party
Created by Sanna Longden

Moving: Patterned Movement

INTERACTIVE LEARNING AND PRESENTATION OPTIONS
• Movement Activity Instructions (Animated)
• Movement Activity Instructions Notation (Printable)

AUDIO OPTIONS
• Song Vocal Track
• Song Accompaniment Track
• Movement Activity Practice Track
• Movement Activity Performance Track
• Movement Activity MIDI File

RECORDING ROUTINE
Introduction (8m); Verse 1 (8m); Interlude (4m); Verse 2 (8m); Interlude (4m); Verse 3 (8m); Interlude (4m); Verse 4 (8m); Coda (8m)

MOVING: PATTERNED MOVEMENT

INTRODUCTION

The song "Alabama Gal" is traditional to the southern United States, and has been enjoyed as a play party for more than 150 years. The play party is not considered to be a dance but a singing game, begun in frontier areas of the country about the middle of the 1800s. It developed because of the prohibition by some pioneer communities against what they perceived as the social dangers of dancing for young people. Moving to the accompaniment of singing, rather than instrumental music, seemed to be acceptable—now the kids were just playing a game instead of dancing. Soon the older and younger generations joined in.

Play parties continued to be one of the main forms of recreation for all ages through the 1940s, and they are still enjoyed today. Several versions of "Alabama Gal" have developed over the years. This one was arranged to fit the musical and interactive form of this lesson.

FORMATION

The formation is two lines with partners facing across from each other, a longways set. It begins with the first pair, #1, at the top of the set, and the last pair, #3, at the bottom. (See the Starting Position on the opening screen).

Teaching Tips:

• Using the word "pair" instead of "couple" will avoid some silliness.

• In the classroom, it may be helpful to start with the three pairs shown on the screens, but later, perhaps, have six pairs in each set, repeating the song so each pair has a turn to be the leader. Originally, the game was for "as many as will."

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- In the old days, males and females danced as partners—this is how they got to know one another; however, mixed-gender pairs may not work in the classroom and are not necessary to enjoy this play party.

MOVEMENT SEQUENCE

Introduction: Elbow Turns, 16 beats

<u>Right-elbow turn</u> -- Partners move toward each other and hook R elbows, walking in a full circle back to their starting places (8 beats).

<u>Left-elbow turn</u> -- Partners hook L elbows, walking in a full circle back to their starting places (8 beats).

Verse 1: Cast-off and Arch led by Pair #1, 16 beats

"Come through 'na hurry . . . . Alabama gal."

Starting the cast-off (also known today as "peel the banana"), the two top people (#1) turn away from each other to lead his/her own line to the bottom of the set.

When they reach the bottom, they make a two-hand arch as high as they can.

The following two partners (#2) meet under the arch, join inside hands, walk up to the top of the set, and pause there. Now Pair #2 is in the top position.

Pair #3 follows, meets under the arch, and proceeds to the middle position. The figure finishes with Pair #1 remaining in the bottom position.

Interlude 1: Forward and Back, 8 beats

Partners take 4 steps toward each other (nod and smile on beat 4), and then move backward 4 steps into their current position.

Verse 2: Cast-off and Arch led by Pair #2, 16 beats

"I don't know how, how . . . . Alabama gal."

Now Pair #2 starts the cast-off, turning away from each other to lead his/her own line to the bottom of the set where they make the two-hand arch.

The following two partners (#3) meet under the arch, join inside hands, walk up to the top of the set, and pause there. Now Pair #3 is in the top position.

Pair #1 follows, meets under the arch, and proceeds to the middle position. The figure finishes with Pair #2 remaining in the bottom position.

Interlude 2: Forward and Back, 8 beats

Partners take 4 steps toward each other (nod and smile on beat 4), then move backward 4 steps into their current position.

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Verse 3: Cast-off and Arch led by Pair #3, 16 beats

"I'll show you how, how . . . . Alabama gal."

Now Pair #3 starts the cast-off, turning away from each other to lead his/her own line to the bottom of the set where they make the two-hand arch. The others continue under the arch, ending with Pair #1 back in top position, Pair #2 again in the middle, and Pair #3 at the bottom.

Interlude 3: Forward and Back, 8 beats

Partners take 4 steps toward each other (nod and smile on beat 4), then move backward 4 steps into their current position.

Verse 4: Do-Si-Do past right and left shoulders, 16 beats

"Ain't I rock candy . . . . Alabama gal."

Partners move toward each other and pass by R shoulders, then pass back-to-back, and move backward to place (8 beats).

They repeat this figure passing by L shoulders and finishing back in place.

Note: Traditionally, people did not fold their arms in front in the Do-Si-Do; their arms hung naturally at their sides, swinging a bit with the body's movement.

Coda: 2-Hand Turn, Forward and Back, Bow and Curtsey

Partners join both hands and walk clockwise (to the left), returning back to place (8 beats).

They do a brief Forward-and-Back, taking 2 steps toward each other and 2 backwards into place (4 beats).

Finally, each acknowledges the other with a bow and/or curtsey (2 beats), then finishes by smiling and saying, "Thank you, partner!" (2 beats)

Teaching tip: If you have six couples in a longways set, repeat the entire song so each pair has a turn to be the leader.

INTERACTIVE OPTIONS GUIDELINES
The Song Notation (Interactive Practice), Song Notation (Interactive Performance), and the Movement Activity MIDI File options may be used to adjust the tempo to facilitate teaching and learning the dance.

• Experiment with different tempos as students practice the dance steps.

• Select a tempo at which students can be successful at performing the dance steps.

• Have students practice each section of the dance sequence until they master the steps at the selected tempo.

• Gradually increase the tempo until students can successfully perform the dance with the Song Vocal Track or Song Accompaniment Track.