

# BASIC TECHNIQUES IN CIRCUS ARTS



## ACROBATICS



FONDATION  
CIRQUE DU SOLEIL™



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\* The masculine form is used in this text generically and for readability purposes only.

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# FOREWORD

## NATIONAL CIRCUS SCHOOL

Based in Montreal, the National Circus School is an institution for secondary and higher education whose primary mission is to train circus artists. It is the only institution in North America to offer a complete training cycle in circus arts, starting with the preparatory program, followed by the Circus and High School Studies program, and culminating in the higher education program (leading to the Diploma of Collegial Studies in Circus Arts). Since 1981, more than 400 artists have been trained at the School. A pioneer in the revival of circus arts in Canada and North America, the School has contributed to the emergence of Quebec's great circuses, which were to become *Cirque du Soleil*, *Cirque Éloïze* and *The 7 Fingers*, and has lent a helping hand to numerous foreign circus companies.

Today, the National Circus School enjoys a unique position in the world of circus arts instruction. With a team of more than 60 teachers providing a wealth of educational and artistic experience in circus arts, acrosports, performing arts and education, the School is regularly invited to share its expertise at educational exchanges, meetings and symposia in Canada and abroad, especially those organized by the International Network for Social Circus Training (INSCT), the European Federation of Professional Circus Schools (FEDEC), the European Youth Circus Organisation (EYCO) and the American Youth Circus Organization (AYCO).

With the enthusiasm for social circus, the spread of circus arts as a recreational activity and the overwhelming demand for qualified personnel, the School believed it was essential to support the development of services providing high-quality, safe introductory courses and training programs in the circus arts. Since 2004, its Instructor and Trainer programs – leading to an Attestation of Collegial Studies and recognized by Quebec's Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport (MELS) – have trained some 100 teaching professionals. These teachers are actively involved in all areas of circus instruction, the education of young people, leisure activities, social circus and even the specialized training of professional artists.

In addition to the skills needed to introduce circus techniques, the role of a circus arts instructor – whether for recreational activities or social outreach purposes – requires particular knowledge of safety issues and of an individual's stages of motor, psychological and social development as well as the ability to organize and manage a class. This manual is intended as a useful and relevant educational tool, but it certainly does not replace actual training for teaching the circus arts. Although these techniques are essential for performing circus arts, these disciplines also need creativity and poetry in order to be truly artistic and meaningful, and this is true at both the professional and amateur levels.

On behalf of the teachers and professionals who were so enthusiastic and thorough in putting together the content of this manual, I would like to thank *Cirque du Soleil* for its generous contribution to the development of an educational work of this magnitude. By taking part in circus arts and with the help of qualified personnel, it will certainly help a great number of young people to achieve their potential more easily.

**Daniela Arendasova**  
Director of Studies  
National Circus School  
Montreal







# INTRODUCTION

The practice of circus arts implies knowledge of and proficiency in one or several techniques, which usually requires progressive and ongoing learning. Use of these techniques opens up a wide range of possibilities intended to develop physical abilities, as well as creative potential and social skills.

Today, there is growing interest in using circus arts for purposes other than performance and shows. Professionals involved in the fields of leisure and recreation, humanitarian development, mental health and physical rehabilitation are watching the development of current initiatives with great interest.

As the learning of these techniques is set to develop in various areas, and with rising interest in circus arts as a recreational pursuit, it seems appropriate at this time to develop a document that fulfils the need for technical knowledge, while also ensuring that learning is done in safety and progressively, according to the basic techniques in the circus arts.

We also believe that this document will be useful to all those organizations involved in the teaching of circus techniques. Circus schools, recreational circus programs, acrobatic gymnastics federations and the educational sector in general can use the knowledge and information contained here to improve their own teaching.

## **Collaboration between National Circus School and *Cirque du Soleil***

This multimedia educational kit brings together 17 circus disciplines and 177 technical elements. Written with the help of teachers at the National Circus School, it recommends and outlines the principles of teaching basic circus arts techniques. Illustrated by NCS students, this work recommends gradual development of skills and the mastering of various basic circus techniques.

## **The work comprises two main parts: written documents and video documents.**

**Written documents:** The written part of *Basic Techniques in Circus Arts* comprises 17 chapters, each corresponding to a colour-coded discipline. Every chapter is divided into two sections. The first section introduces the terminology specific to the discipline, the equipment required and, specific information, as well as advice about safety and the prevention of injury. The second section illustrates in detail the different technical elements that constitute the discipline. This section comprises a description of the technical elements, detailed explanations of the movement, educationals enabling step-by-step learning of each component, tips for manual aids, corrections and corrective exercises addressing the most common mistake and variants of the movement.

**Video documents:** The video part of *Basic Techniques in Circus Arts* is intended to promote a better understanding of the written material and to provide a visual aid to learning. To make it easier to find information, the colours used for the disciplines in the written documents correspond to those on the video documents. Similarly, the photos shown alongside the explanations of the movement, the educationals and the variants are taken from the video documents. When necessary, close-ups and slow motion are used to make it easier to understand more complex technical positions and quick sequences. When movements are displayed, extra information or warnings about safety or injury prevention will pop up onscreen.



For practical reasons, the section on “Common Mistakes” is not included on the DVDs so that the focus is on showing the correct way of performing the movements. The educationals required for learning the various technical elements however, are presented in the video documents. In any case, the written document must be consulted to see the complete list of educationals.

All the exercises contained in the written documents and videos are presented in such a way so as to ensure they are performed as safely as possible (ideally under the supervision of an instructor or coach), with proper preparation and using the right equipment.

**The written and video documents included in *Basic Techniques in Circus Arts* are complementary: they were designed to be used together. The written documents contain information that is not available on the video documents. Likewise, the video documents allow a fuller understanding of the movements that is not possible from consulting the written documents alone.**



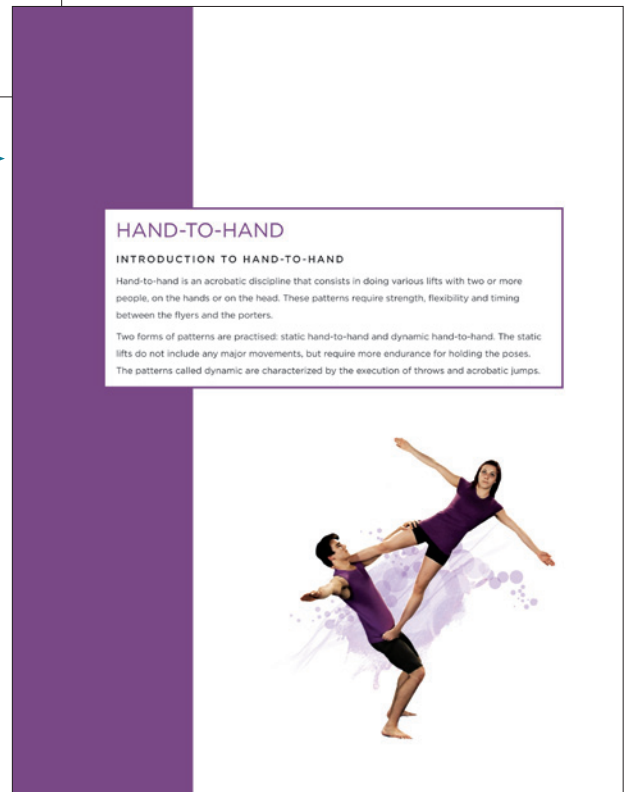
# INSTRUCTIONS - WRITTEN DOCUMENTS



## Introduction

The first page of each chapter describes in general terms the specifics and characteristics of each discipline.

Each discipline is colour-coded. The different colours, corresponding to those used on the video documents, make it easier to find what the user is looking for.



**TERMINOLOGY**

**Centre of mass (COM)**  
Point in an individual's body where the body mass is considered to be concentrated and where the three axes of rotation meet.

**Closed foot**  
Position with the foot straight on the wire.

**Demi-pointe**  
Maintaining a standing position on the balls of the feet.

**Frame**  
A-shaped structure that allows anchoring the wire while lifting it off the ground.

**Open foot**  
External rotation of the foot of approximately 45°.

**Retirés**  
Action of flexing a leg, bringing the foot up and placing it on the knee of the opposite leg.

**Wire**  
Cable on which one walks.

**EQUIPMENT**

- A cable (the wire) to walk on;
- Two A-frames to anchor the cable;
- Side cables;
- A hand-operated winch to tighten the wire;
- A spring;
- Shackles for assembly;
- A floor mat the length of the wire and at least 1.40 m wide.



Side cables      A-frame

2      Basic Techniques in Circus Arts - TIGHTWIRE - © 2011 Cirque du Soleil

## Terminology

The technical terms essential to understanding the elements specific to each discipline.

In-depth terminology research was carried out in conjunction with teachers at the National Circus School in Montreal to determine the most commonly used expressions and terms in circus and acrobatic communities.

## Equipment

The equipment needed to practise the different disciplines covered.

## Specific Information

Specific information needed to practise the discipline and essential for performing the technical elements properly, bringing together such topics as identifying the dominant side when performing twists and body positions in aerial phases.

## Safety

Essential information to consider when training with the aim of minimizing the risk of injury.

These points are specific to each discipline and are of the utmost importance. They concern both the instructor's role and the work environment.

**TERMINOLOGY**

**Aerial silks**  
Fabric rigging, generally made of Lycra, folded in half and hung from an anchoring point, on which the acrobat executes various acrobatic patterns.

**Flexed feet**  
Position with the ankle in flexion.

**Hip flexion**  
Action of bringing the legs and the upper body together, or decreasing the torso/leg angle.

**Iliac crest**  
Flat bone forming the upper edge of the pelvic bone.

**Pike inverted hang**  
Hip flexion in the inverted position.

**Rope**  
Aerial rigging made up of a twisted or braided cotton rope with a diameter of 3 to 5 centimetres, positioned vertically and from which the acrobat executes various acrobatic patterns.

**SPECIFIC INFORMATION**

The rope and silk practice is performed on a vertical axis, which requires sustained physical endurance. The participant is constantly subjected to gravity; the challenge is to limit the loss of height while executing placements and to find combinations that limit the necessary manipulations and the inevitable need to climb back up again.

The practice of these two disciplines requires general muscular endurance and develops good muscle tone. It specifically requires upper body strength in the arms, shoulders and abdominals, as well as grip strength.

**Note:** In order to simplify the text, the word "rope" will be used in the descriptions to designate both rope and silk, except for the parts specifically dedicated to silk.

**SAFETY**

As rope and silk allow plenty of room for freedom, creativity and exploration, safety remains the only real rule. Consequently, the equipment must be in good condition and properly installed. Also, it is essential to always use a landing mat. The instructor should be aware of his limitations and be able to assess those of the participants.

Rope and silk are practised without a lunge or safety device, but with a landing mat. It is therefore necessary to ensure that an element can be performed completely, which includes controlling both the movement and the release. During the descent, despite the use of a landing mat, the possibility of deliberately falling should never be considered.

Since rope and silk can cause abrasion burns, it is recommended to wear suitable clothing that covers the legs and torso as much as possible. Despite these precautions, it is normal for people new to these disciplines to experience some discomfort. The rope and silk may cause cramping of the feet, thighs and torso, and may sometimes cause minor burns to the feet or other exposed parts. In order to increase grip and limit involuntary sliding, a resin powder is used, applied to the hands and, if necessary, to the feet and back of the knees.

2      Basic Techniques in Circus Arts - ROPE AND SILK - © 2011 Cirque du Soleil



## Prerequisites for the Acrobatics Discipline

This part, specific to the chapter on *Acrobatics*, introduces the positions, body patterns and figures that are essential for performing basic techniques.

### PREREQUISITES FOR THE DISCIPLINE

The following pages introduce the essential positions and figures for executing basic techniques in acrobatics. For each of these prerequisites, body patterns are presented in order to enable the participants to understand them better.

#### Tuck position

Body position with hip flexion and with the legs flexed.

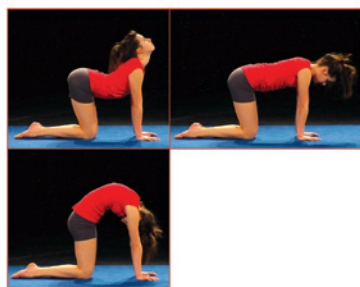
Prerequisite for rolls and saltos.



Body patterns that include the tuck position:

#### • Cat position

From all fours, arch and then round the back and return to the original position.



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## Warm-up Exercises for the Acrobatics Discipline

This part, specific to the chapter on *Acrobatics*, describes the preparatory warm-up exercises needed to ensure the discipline is performed safely.

### WARM-UP EXERCISES

**Note:** Each pattern can be executed for the desired number of repetitions. They can also be executed one after the other as exercises.

#### Arch drop

From all fours, round the back, bend the arms, and arch and extend on the stomach.

#### Back dolphin

From the pike position with the legs extended along the floor, open the pelvis, roll down to the mat and bring the arms to either side of the head. Supporting on the feet and shoulder blades, lift the pelvis and get into the arch position.

#### Forward body rock with a lunge

From the standing straight position, with the arms on either side of the head, extend one leg forward and move the COM over that leg while slightly bending the knee. Rock the torso forward and lift the free leg backwards. The arms, the torso and the rear leg must be aligned. Repeat, alternating the legs.

#### Hurdle for acrobatic elements

With the legs together, jump forward and land on one foot, extend the opposite leg and move the COM over that leg while slightly flexing the knee. Rock the torso forward and lift the free leg backwards. The arms, the torso and the rear leg must be aligned.

#### Hurdle for takeoff

From a run, with the arms extended on either side of the head, jump while throwing one leg forward, block its movement and, by means of a brisk and dynamic movement, bring the legs back together.

#### Moving bridge

From the bridge position, walk or turn in place. Finish the exercise by lowering into the supine position.

#### Pike candlestick

From the pike position with the legs extended along the floor, bring the torso backwards, roll down and bring the arms to either side of the head. Supporting on the shoulder blades and arms, lift the legs and the torso into the candlestick position.

#### Rocker on the back

Lying supine, lift the arms and legs and rock the body forward and backwards in the hollow chest position.

#### Rocker on the stomach

Lying prone, lift the arms and legs and rock the body forward and backwards in the arch position.

#### Snap-down on the feet

In the standing straight position with the arms extended on either side of the head, move the torso backwards into an arch, return to the standing straight position and bring the torso forward into the hollow chest position.

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**ACROBATICS**  
**MENICHELLI**

**Technical Element Description**  
Rotating 180° around the transversal axis, going into a handstand and finishing with a walkout.

**Prerequisites**

- Back walkover.
- Handstand with stride split.
- Walkout.

**Explanation of the Movement**

- From the standing straight position with the arms on either side of the head, rock backwards slightly and lower the arms. Flex the arms until they are in line with the body and extend the legs and hips. **M 1**
- Transfer the COM over the hands and go into a handstand with the legs in a stride split, with the gaze on the hands. **M 2**
- Walk out and get back to the standing straight position, with the gaze forward. **M 3**

**Note:** Once the leg push is finished, the arms should remain aligned with the body.

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## Technical Element Description

A concise description explaining the nature or the key movements of the technical element in question.

## Prerequisites

Figures, body patterns and technical skills to master before starting to learn the element.

## Explanation of the Movement

A detailed description of the different sequences of movements making up the element.

Identified by the icon **M**

These explanations are illustrated by one or more photos. The use of numbers added to the letter **M** allows the user to follow the sequences represented visually: **M 1**, **M 2**, etc.

## Safety Notice

In addition to the information provided in the first section, the safety notices set out essential aspects to consider when performing the movement in order to avoid injury.

**PYRAMIDS**  
**EGYPTIAN PYRAMID**

**Technical Element Description**  
Seven-person pyramid.

**Prerequisite**

- Flyer standing on a porter in a sumo pike position.

**Explanation of the Movement**

- Four porters are positioned next to one another in a sumo pike position, interlacing their legs with those of neighbours so as to stabilize the base of the pyramid and form a straight line. Their backs must be horizontal and all at the same height. **M 1**
- A first flyer gets up on the two central porters supporting himself with his hands on their backs, ascending either directly or by stepping on a porter's thigh. Once up, the flyer puts one foot on each of the central porters' pelvises and rests his hands on their shoulder blades. Two other flyers repeat this sequence, one positioned on the left porters' backs and the other on the right porters' backs. **M 2**
- When the three flyers are stable, they lift their torsos so as to have their backs horizontal. Simultaneously, porters and flyers extend their arms out to the side, resting on their neighbours' shoulders, if they have a neighbour. The porters complete the sequence by straightening their legs. **M 3**
- During the descent, the flyers again put their hands on the porters' shoulder blades, then jump backwards one after the other, from the centre, avoiding any sudden movement.

**Safety Notice:** It is important to have a landing mat behind the pyramid in case of falls. In this case, the participant should fall on the person below. This way, the speed and height of the fall will be reduced.

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**Educationals**


1. One person holds the diabolo with his hands and moves it so that the participant practises corrections with the handsticks. The diabolo is corrected with the hand that provides the rotation speed, that is, the right hand. While correcting it, continue to give it speed by making up-and-down movements with the right hand. **ED 1**

Three corrections:

1. Stand facing the diabolo; if it turns, follow it.
2. If the diabolo leans inward toward the feet, move the right hand forward; the string will then rub the diabolo's cup and the diabolo will straighten out.
3. If the diabolo leans toward the outside, move the right hand back; the string will then rub the diabolo's cup and the diabolo will straighten out.

Corrections should be made more quickly with practice and therefore should become increasingly smaller.

2. Roll the diabolo along the ground using the handsticks and lift it into the air.



**ED 1**

**Manual Aid**

- The spotter stands behind the participant and manipulates the handsticks with him, providing the rotation speed and applying the corrections.

| Common Mistakes  | Corrections and Corrective Exercises  |
|--|---|
| 1. From the beginning, the participant places the diabolo on the wrong side on the ground. | 1. Placing the diabolo on the correct side. If the participant wishes to manipulate it with the right hand, it is placed on the right side. |
| 2. The participant is badly positioned.  | 2. Staying facing the diabolo.  |
| 3. The participant waits too long to make a correction.                                    | 3. Correcting the diabolo from the first signs of instability. With practice, one will be able to anticipate corrections.                   |
| 4. The diabolo becomes unstable and loses speed.   | 4. Always providing speed when applying the correction.   |
| 5. The participant overcorrects and tips the diabolo.                                      | 5. Making small correction movements.   |

6 Basic Techniques in Circus Arts - DIABOLO - © 2011 Cirque du Soleil

## Educationals

Step-by-step exercises and sequences of movements recommended to successfully perform the technical element. They make the principle of progressive learning easier, focusing on coordination and physical preparation as well as concentrating on the movements.

Identified by the icon **ED**

These educationals are often illustrated by one or more photos. The use of numbers added to the letters **ED** allows the user to follow the sequences represented visually: **ED 1, ED 2, etc.**


## Manual Aid

Assistance that the instructor or the spotter should provide when teaching the movements. The images allow the user to see the movements to make and the actions to take to ensure learning is carried out safely.

Identified by the icon **MA**

**Manual Aid**

- To assist the participant, the instructor stands with his arm solidly extended into a fist in front of the participant. The participant supports himself on the fist, trying to let go of it for as long as possible. **MA 1**
- The instructor should not hold the participant by the hips, because he will not control his balance.



**MA 1**

| Common Mistakes  | Corrections and Corrective Exercises   |
|--|--|
| 1. The participant's arms drop during the half turn.       | 1. Developing the reflex of lifting the arms during the half turn. <b>EX</b>   |
| 2. The participant puts too much weight on the right foot. | 2. Keeping the COM over the left foot. The right foot must assist in the turn. |
| 3. The participant bends his body.                         | 3. Bending the knee of the left leg more, lifting the arms.                    |

**Variants**

1. Sequence: Walking, half turn at the end of the wire, walking.
2. Sequence: Four half turns in the middle of the wire.

Basic Techniques in Circus Arts - TIGHTWIRE - © 2011 Cirque du Soleil

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**HANDSTAND**  
**THE "L" SIT**

**Technical Element Description**  
Sitting up straight with the legs extended with support on the hands.

**Explanation of the Movement**

- Press the hands into the ground with the index finger facing forward and the COM over the palms of the hands. Keep the legs together and outstretched with the feet pointed. Press with the arms while contracting the abdominals and using the pelvis slightly backwards.

**Educationals**

- "L" sit on canes or on parallel bars.
- "L" sit with the legs tucked.


**Manual Aid**

- Watch out for possible backwards falls, especially when the exercise is done with balancing canes or when the participant lifts the legs very high.

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <p><b>Common Mistakes</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The participant cannot lift the legs.</li> <li>The participant cannot keep the arms straight.</li> </ol> | <p><b>Corrections and Corrective Exercises</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Performing strengthening exercises for the abdominal muscles. EX</li> <li>Turning the hands toward the outside, the index finger facing front.</li> </ol> |
|---|---|

**Variant**

- "L" sit with legs in a straddle position. V 1



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## Common Mistakes

The most common mistakes to avoid.

## Corrections and Corrective Exercises

Modifications to make either by correcting movements or by corrective exercises.

The corrective exercises are identified by the icon EX

## Variants


Images illustrating the technical elements give the user the opportunity to progress and to vary his learning.

Identified by the icon V

**Manual Aid**

- The instructor puts his hand on the participant's ankle to make sure the angle of his knee does not exceed 90°, otherwise the participant could fall. MA 1



*Note: Avoid pressing too hard on the leg; the angle should not be tighter than that of the double knee hang position. If the trapeze is higher, the instructor puts his hands under the participant's shoulders.*



|  |  |
|--|--|
| <p><b>Common Mistakes</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The participant lets the free hip and leg fall and has difficulty returning the knee to the bar.</li> <li>The participant stays in a pike position and has difficulty maintaining a secure knee angle.</li> </ol> | <p><b>Corrections and Corrective Exercises</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Keeping the hips even throughout the movement.</li> <li>Opening the hips by tightening the buttocks and pressing the pelvis forward; pulling the heels toward the buttocks.</li> </ol> |
|--|--|

**Variants**

- Front leg to the side in a split. V 1
- Arabesque: Leg to the back, foot pulled toward the head. V 2

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# INSTRUCTIONS - VIDEO DOCUMENTS

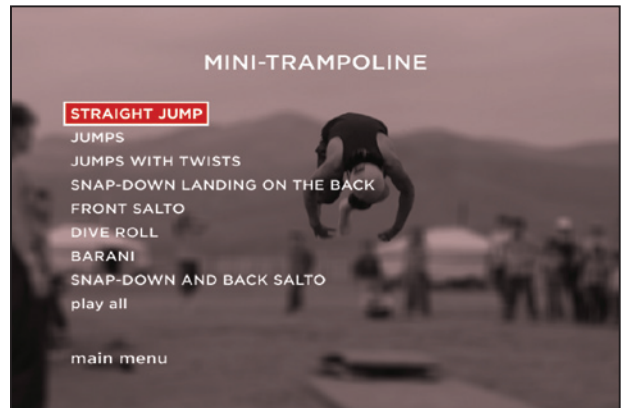


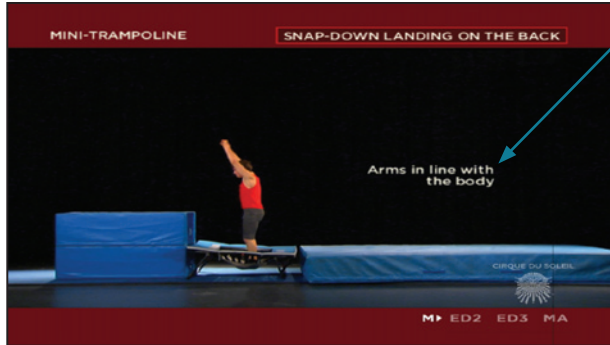
## Main Menu

After the opening sequence, a first window presents the disciplines covered on the DVD.

## Elements Menu

Once a discipline has been selected, a second window allows the user to go from one technical element to another. The “play all” button, at the bottom of the window, provides the option to watch the elements one after the other.



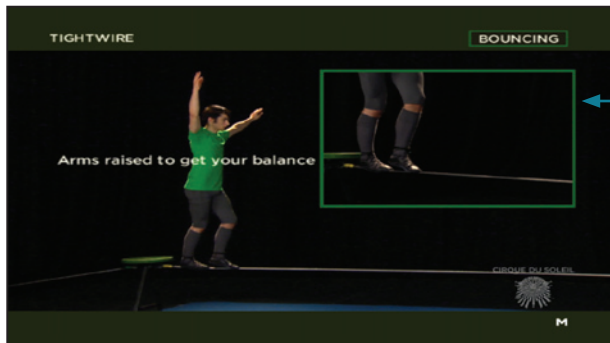


## Warnings

Extra information or warnings about safety or prevention of injury pop up onscreen at key moments while the movements are being viewed.

## Icons

When highlighted, the icon corresponding to the one in the written document indicates the technical element component being played.



## Close-ups

In some cases, special attention is given to an image, part of the body or manual aid as a movement is being demonstrated by showing a close-up or by showing the movement from a different angle.

## Technical Notes

The different parts of the element may be viewed out of sequence using the "Skip" function to select the icons at the bottom of the screen. The slow-motion function, available on most DVD players, also allows the user to watch each movement more closely.



# ACROBATICS

## INTRODUCTION TO ACROBATICS

Acrobatics is a fundamental discipline in learning circus arts. It consists in doing body movements that generally include an aerial phase, multiplying and diversifying rotations of the body around numerous axes. Acrobatic patterns can be performed directly on the floor or using support equipment.

The practice of this thousand-year-old discipline requires strength, coordination, balance and flexibility.



## TERMINOLOGY

### **Amplitude**

Performing a movement with a maximum angle.

### **Anterior-posterior axis**

Imaginary line crossing through the body from the navel to the middle of the back.

### **Arch position**

Position in which the body forms a slight curve to the back, with the arms extended on either side of the head or of the torso and the pelvis in an anterior tilt.

### **Arm abduction**

Moving the arms out to the side.

### **Body pattern**

Elementary muscle action and various postures required for executing an acrobatic movement.

### **Bridge**

Position in which the body is bent backwards in dorsal hyperextension, with support on the hands and feet.

### **Candlestick**

Inversion supported on the shoulders.

### **Centre of mass (COM)**

Point in an individual's body where the body mass is considered to be concentrated and where the three axes of rotation meet.

### **Distal hand**

During manual aid, the spotter's hand furthest from the participant in action.

### **Downward arms swing**

Moving the arms, with the arms outstretched, from a raised to a lowered position in a synchronous and parallel movement.

### **Forward body rock with a lunge**

Inversion of the body with support on one leg, which leads to the legs going into a stride split or a straddle split.

### **Gaze**

The place where the eyes should be focused.

### **Handstand**

Balancing on the hands in the standing straight position with the arms on either side of the head.

### **Hip extension**

Action of moving the legs and the upper body away from each other, or increasing the torso/leg angle in the standing straight position or a handstand.

### **Hip flexion**

Action of bringing the legs and the upper body together, or decreasing the torso/leg angle in the standing straight position or a handstand.

### **Hollow chest position**

Position in which the body forms a slight curve to the front, with the arms extended on either side of the head or of the torso and the pelvis in a posterior tilt.





**Hurdle**

Movement that allows transition from a run to either a takeoff or any other acrobatic movement.

**Jump extension**

Lifting the body into the standing straight position, with the arms on either side of the head, from a movement of complete extension of the legs and lifting the arms.

**Landing**

Action of absorbing a movement upon contact of the hands or feet with the floor. In order to stabilize and control the landing, the arms or legs should be flexed.

**Leg fouetté**

Energetic and dynamic movement of the legs to initiate or increase a rotation or body movement.

**Longitudinal axis**

Imaginary line through the body from the head to the feet.

**MT**

Mini-trampoline.

**Pike position**

Body position with hip flexion and the legs straight.

**Posterior tilt**

Action of tilting the pelvis backwards without flexion.

**Proximal hand**

During manual aid, the spotter's hand nearest to the participant in action.

**Push-off**

Action of pushing the body upward from contact of the hands with the floor, then an upward arms swing.

**Shoulder extension**

Downward arms swing, that is, decreasing the arm/torso angle.

**Shoulder flexion**

Upward arms swing, that is, increasing the arm/torso angle.

**Snap-down**

Movement of the body going from the arch position to the hollow chest position, and vice versa, during a handstand or standing on the feet.

**Spotter**

Individual who manually assists the execution of a movement or a position.

**Standing straight position**

Straight alignment of the body with the legs extended and the arms extended on either side of the head or of the torso.

**Takeoff**

Action of pushing the body upward from contact of the feet with the floor, extending the legs and raising the arms.

**Toc-toc**

Action of pushing off from handstand with the shoulders and walking out with the legs in the standing straight position, arms on either side of the head.



**Transversal axis**

Imaginary line through the body from the right hip to the left hip.

**Tuck position**

Body position with hip flexion and with the legs flexed.

**Upward arms swing**

Moving the arms, which are outstretched, to a raised position from a lowered position in a synchronous and parallel movement.

**EQUIPMENT****Landing mat**

Cushioned surface for absorbing the shock of landing.

**Mini-trampoline (MT)**

Device made up of a canvas attached to a frame by springs on which jumps and acrobatic patterns are performed.

**Platform**

Surface providing raised support.

**Wall bar**

Wide ladder attached to a wall used for performing gymnastic movements.

**SPECIFIC INFORMATION**

Acrobatics promotes the development of physical awareness, coordination and spatial orientation. When executing an acrobatic sequence, the participant must establish and isolate multiple body movements to be able to simultaneously perform numerous actions and move his body around several axes.

Knowing and controlling one's body allows acquiring physical, technical and mental skills that contribute to broadening the possibilities for bodily expression.

**SAFETY**

For safe and sound practice, it is vital to train in an environment favourable to concentration and with constant attention to safety. Naturally, it is essential to work rigorously on flexibility and to be physically prepared for the technical level practised.



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## ACROBATICS

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## PREREQUISITES FOR THE DISCIPLINE

The following pages introduce the essential positions and figures for executing basic techniques in acrobatics. For each of these prerequisites, body patterns are presented in order to enable the participants to understand them better.

### **Tuck position**

Body position with hip flexion and with the legs flexed.

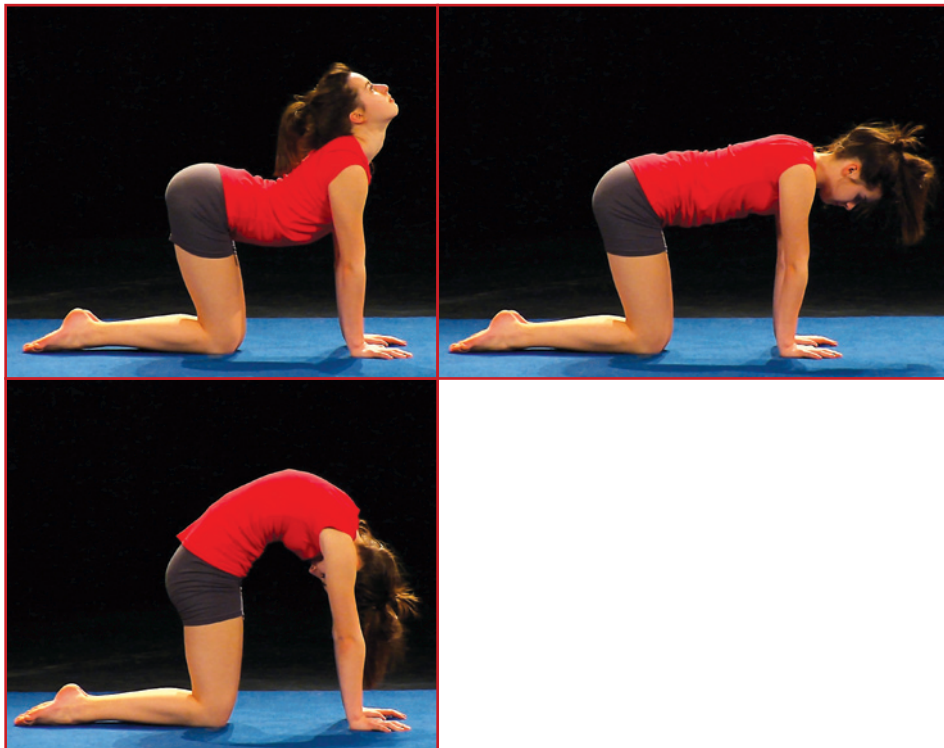
*Prerequisite for rolls and saltos.*



**Body patterns that include the tuck position:**

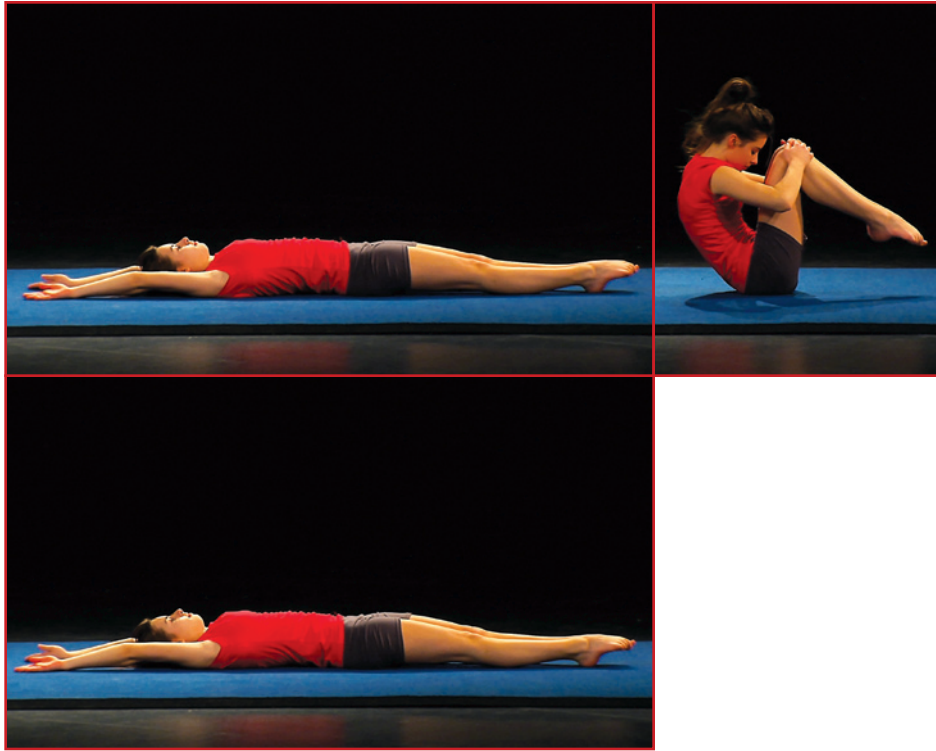
- **Cat position**

From all fours, arch and then round the back and return to the original position.



- **Dynamic tuck**

Lying on the floor, dynamically flex the hips into the tuck position and return to the outstretched position.



- **Tuck roll**

Rolling onto the back in a tuck position, from the feet to the shoulders and back.



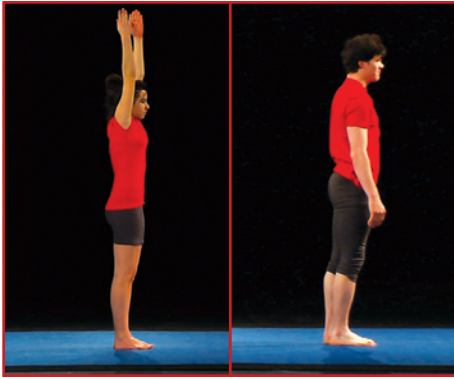
**Standing straight position**

Straight alignment of the body with the legs extended and the arms extended on either side of the head or of the torso.

*Prerequisite for the starts and finishes of movements, the handstands, takeoffs and snap-downs.*







### Takeoff

Action of pushing the body upward from contact of the feet with the floor, extending the legs and raising the arms.

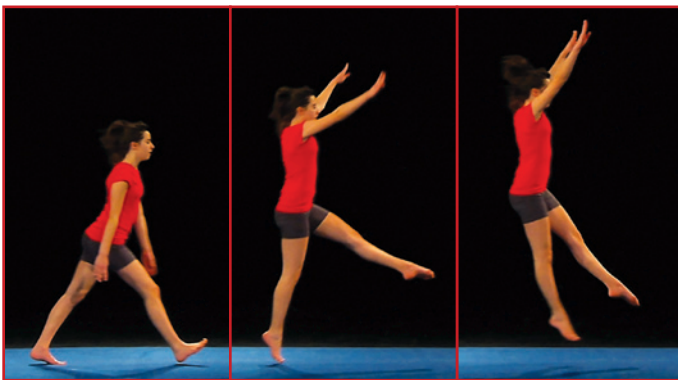
*Prerequisite for the dive roll and saltos.*



- **Hurdle for takeoff**

Movement that allows transition from a run to a takeoff.

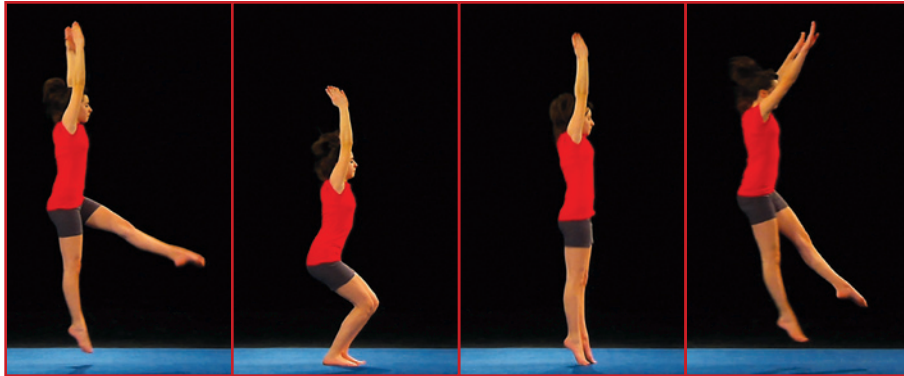
From a run, with the arms extended on either side of the head, jump while throwing one leg forward, block its movement and, by means of a brisk and dynamic movement, bring the legs back together.



**Body patterns that include the takeoff:**

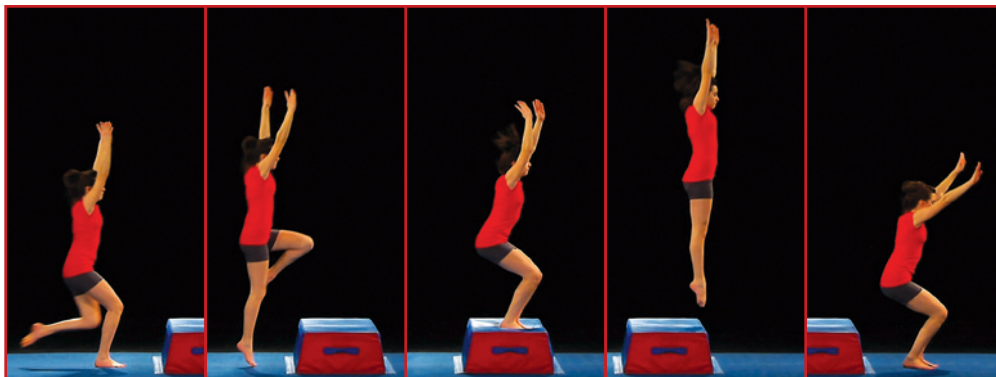
- **Takeoff with hurdle on the floor or on an MT**

After a hurdle, do a takeoff from the floor or an MT, landing on a mat.



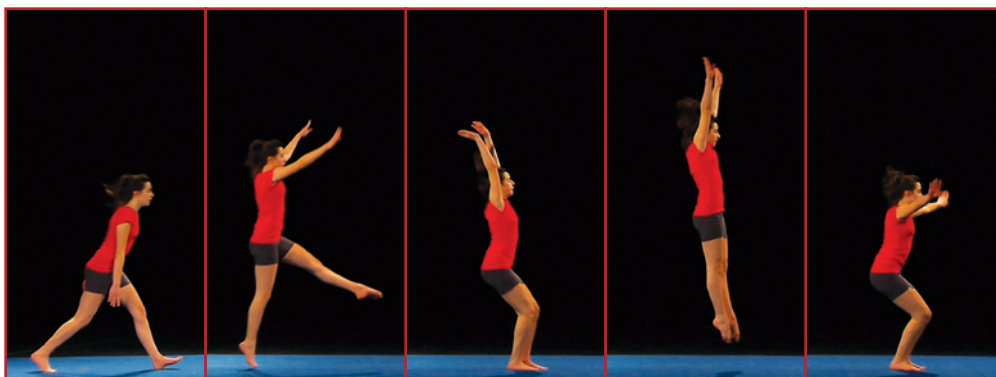
- **Takeoff on a block**

From a jump extension, land standing on a platform, then extend the legs and raise the shoulders, followed by landing on a mat. The legs must remain extended throughout the aerial phase.



- **Running takeoff**

Beginning with a run-up, do a hurdle for a takeoff followed by a takeoff and landing on a mat.

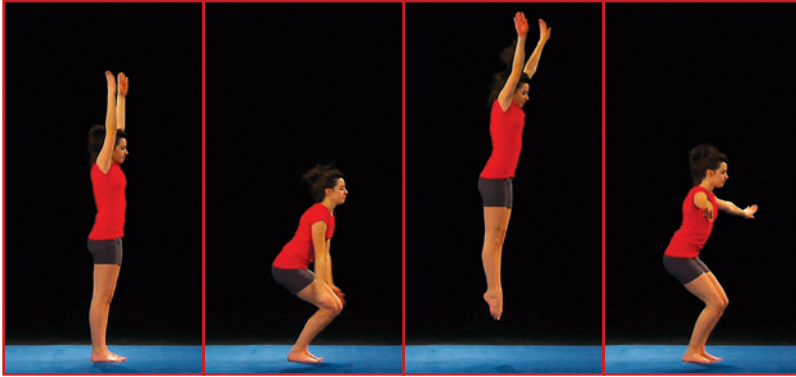


### Jump extension

Lifting the body into the standing straight position, with the arms on either side of the head, from a movement of complete extension of the legs and lifting the arms.

*Prerequisite for tuck jumps, split jumps and saltos performed from a stationary position.*

From the standing straight position with the arms on either side of the head, bend the legs and lower the arms. Then extend the legs, push off and finish by landing on a mat.



### Forward body rock with a lunge

Inversion of the body with support on one leg, which leads to the legs going into a stride split or a straddle split.

*Prerequisite for the handstand, the cartwheel, the round-off and the handspring.*

**Body patterns that include the body rock:**

- **Forward body rock with a lunge**

From the standing straight position, with the arms on either side of the head, extend one leg forward and move the COM over that leg while slightly bending the knee. Rock the torso forward and lift the free leg backwards. The arms, the torso and the rear leg must be aligned.

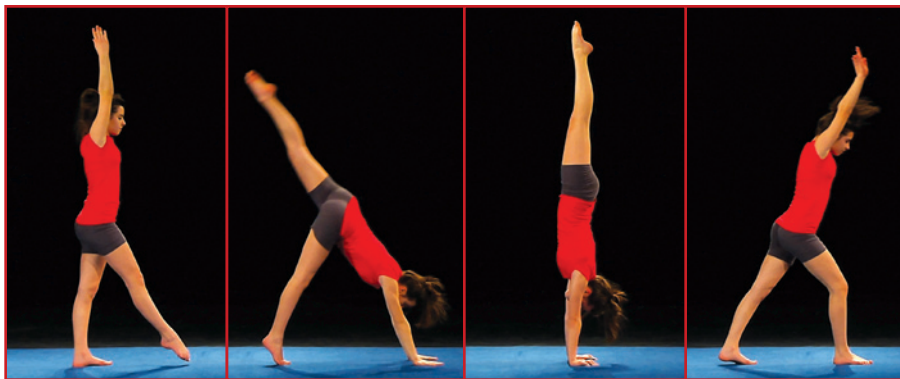


- **Forward body rock with a lunge to handstand**

From the standing straight position with the arms on either side of the head, do a forward body rock with a lunge into a handstand, then walk out to the standing straight position.

*(See Handstand, p. 13.)*





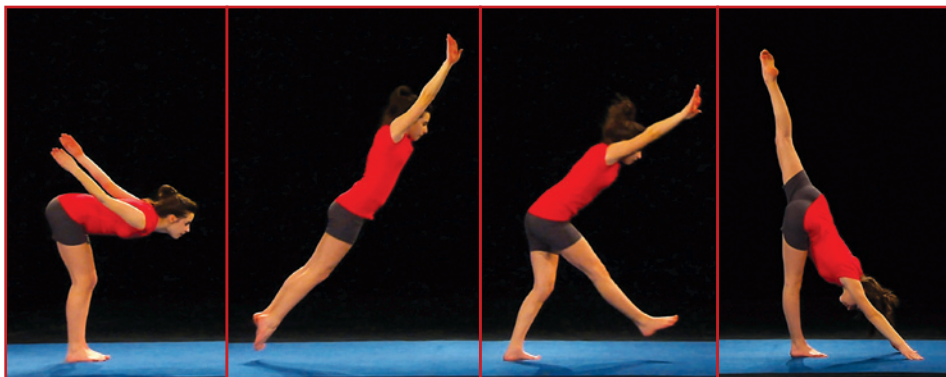
- **Lateral body rock with a lunge**

From the standing straight position with the arms on either side of the head, do a lateral body rock with a lunge into a handstand. Walk out with a lateral lunge and return to the standing straight position. (See *Handstand*, p. 13.)



- **Hurdle for acrobatic elements**

With the legs together, jump forward and land on one foot, extend the opposite leg and move the COM over that leg while slightly flexing the knee. Rock the torso forward and lift the free leg backwards. The arms, the torso and the rear leg must be aligned. Sequence with a round-off, a handspring, etc.





## Handstand

Balancing on the hands in the standing position with the arms on either side of the head.

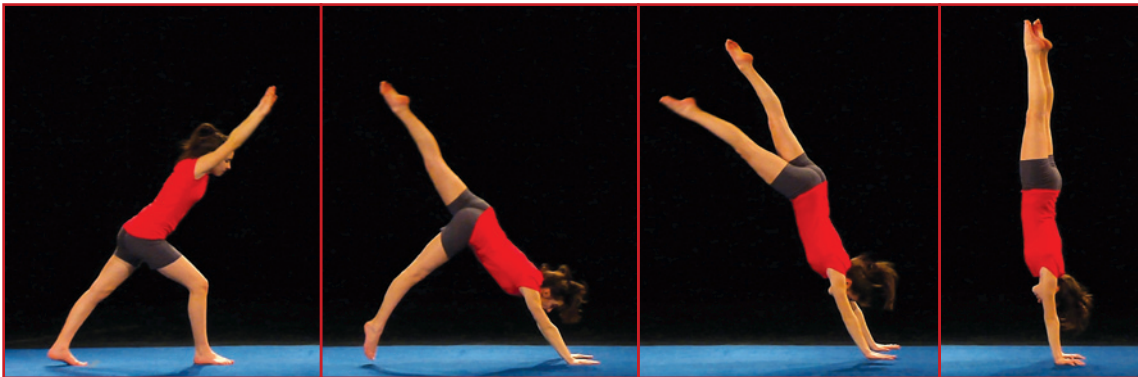
*Prerequisite for toc-tocs, snap-downs, walkovers and handsprings.*



### Body patterns that include the handstand:

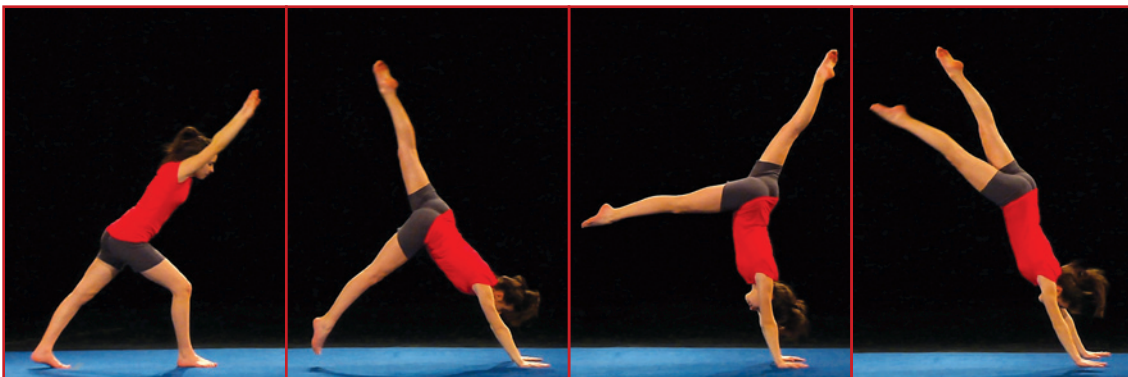
- **Toc-toc**

From the standing straight position with the arms on either side of the head, do a forward body rock with a lunge, then push up with the shoulders, just before the handstand, and walk out to the standing straight position.



- **Toc-toc, legs in a stride split**

From the standing straight position with the arms on either side of the head, do a forward body rock with a lunge into a handstand with the legs in a stride split, then push up with the shoulders and walk out to the standing straight position.



### Hollow chest position

Position in which the body forms a slight curve to the front, with the arms extended on either side of the head or of the torso and the pelvis in a posterior tilt.

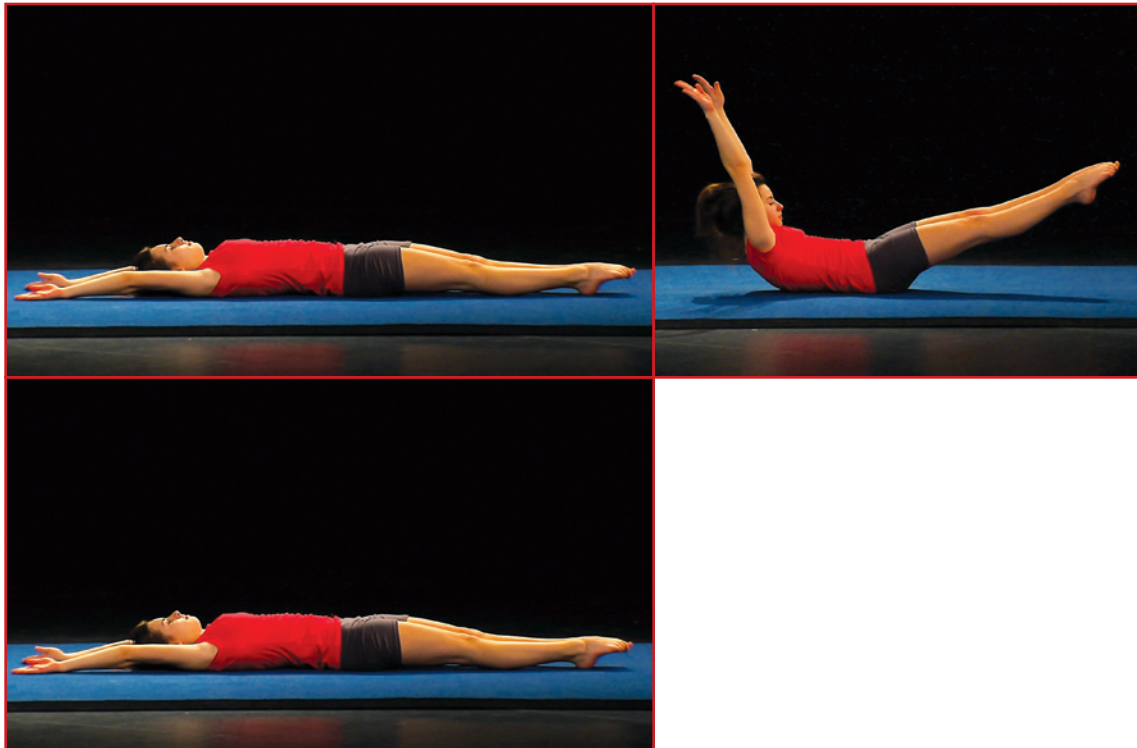
*Prerequisite for the dive roll, snap-downs and saltos.*



Body patterns that include the hollow chest position:

- **Dynamic hollow chest**

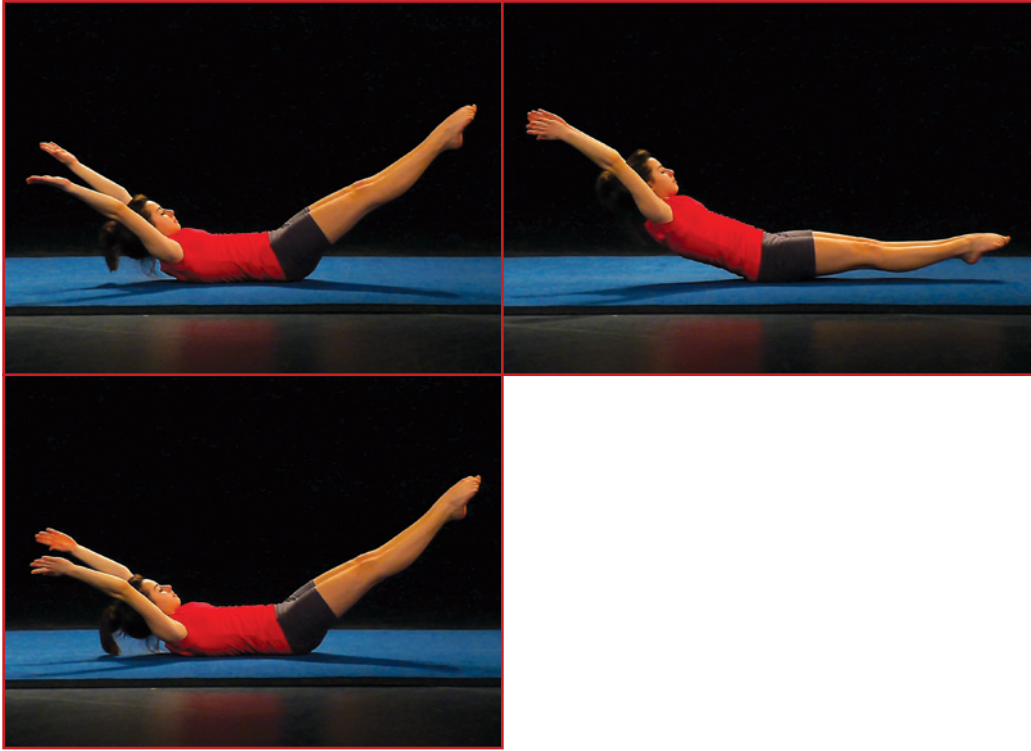
Lying supine, get into the hollow chest position, return to the initial position, and repeat.





- **Rocker on the back**

Lying supine, lift the arms and legs and rock the body forward and backwards in the hollow chest position.



- **Hollow chest position supported on the floor**

With the hands and the feet resting on the floor, adopt and hold the hollow chest position.



## Arch position

Position in which the body forms a slight curve to the back, with the arms extended on either side of the head or of the torso and the pelvis in an anterior tilt.

*Prerequisite for snap-downs.*



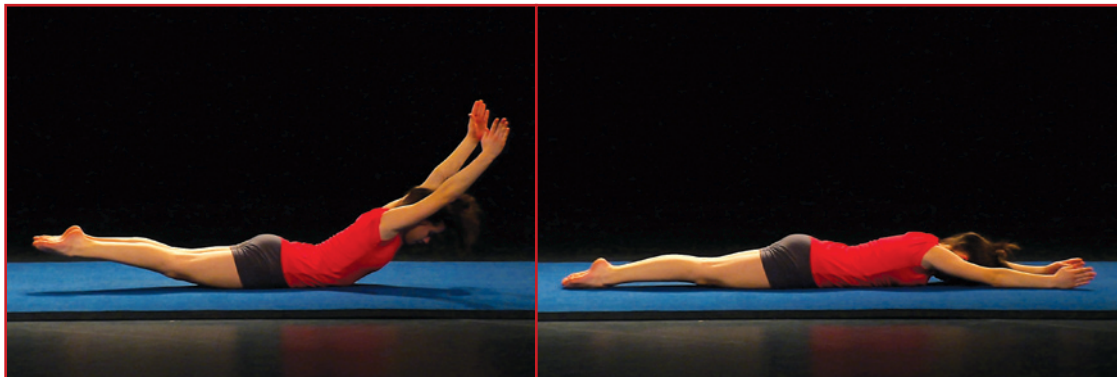
**Body patterns that include the arch position:**

- **Arch on the floor**

Lying prone, get into the arch position and hold this position for 10 seconds.

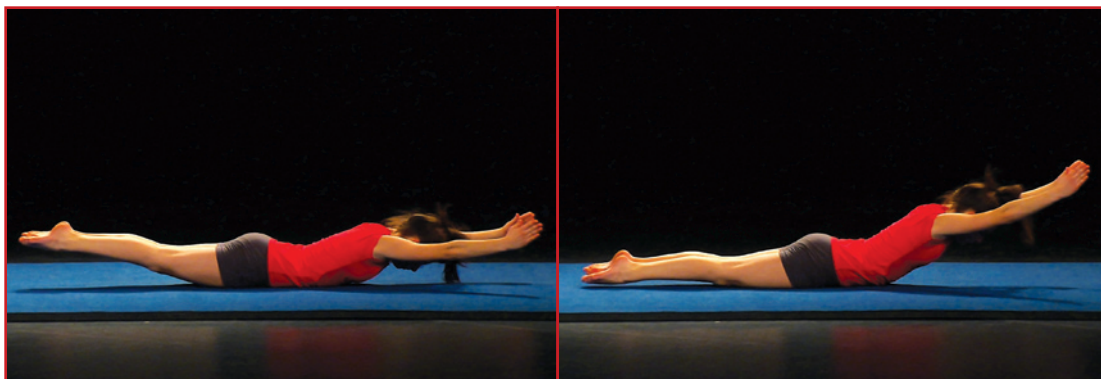
- **Dynamic arch**

Lying prone, get into the arch position, return to the initial position, and repeat.



- **Rocker on the stomach**

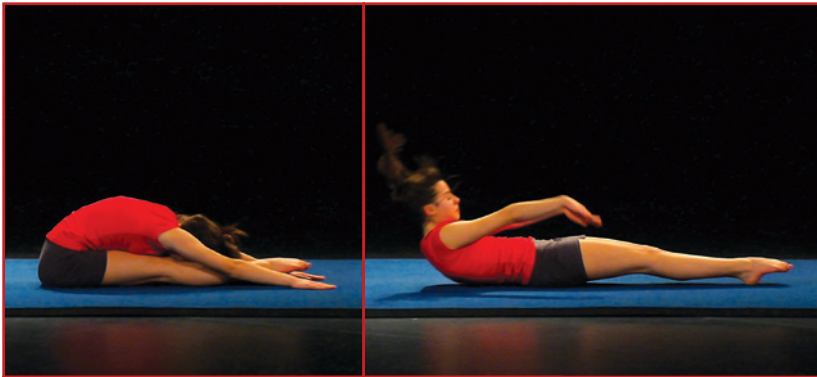
Lying prone, lift the arms and legs and rock the body forward and backwards in the arch position.





- **Back dolphin**

From the pike position with the legs extended along the floor, open the pelvis, roll down to the mat and bring the arms to either side of the head. Supporting on the feet and shoulder blades, lift the pelvis and get into the arch position.

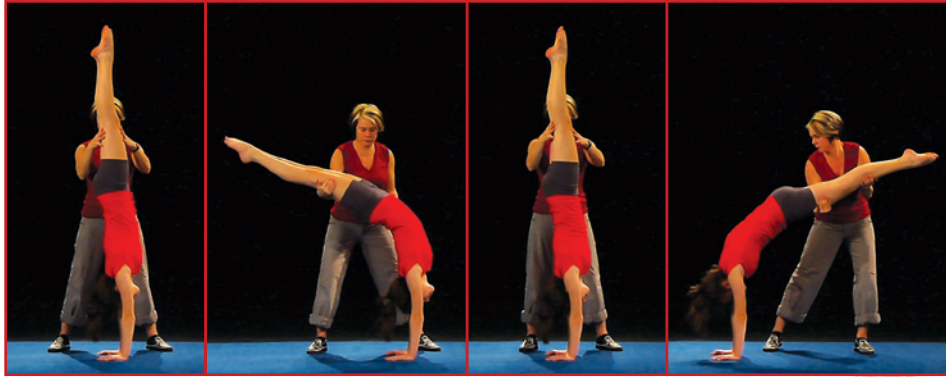


## Snap-down

Movement of the body going from the arch position to the hollow chest position, and vice versa, during a handstand or standing on the feet.

*Prerequisite for the back handspring, the round-off for back salto and the round-off for back handspring.*

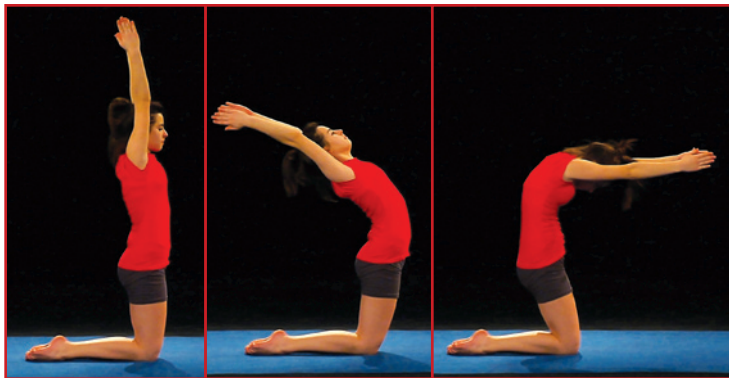
In a handstand with manual aid, move the legs slightly backwards into the arch position, return to handstand and move the legs forward into the hollow chest position.



Body patterns that include the snap-down:

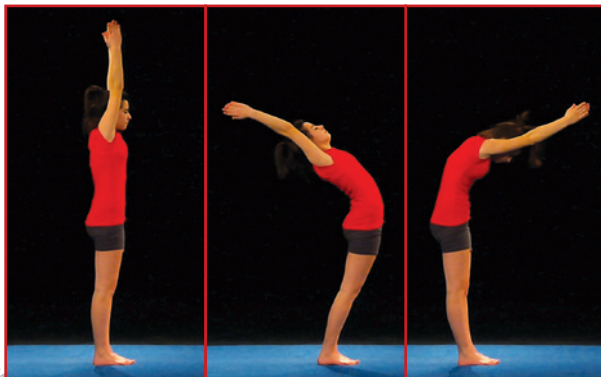
- **Snap-down on the knees**

Resting on the knees with the upper body upright and the arms extended on either side of the head, move the torso backwards into an arch, return to the upright position and bring the torso forward into the hollow chest position.



- **Snap-down on the feet**

In standing straight position with the arms extended on either side of the head, move the torso backwards into an arch, return to the standing straight position and bring the torso forward into the hollow chest position.





## Bridge

Position in which the body is bent backwards in dorsal hyperextension, with support on the hands and feet.

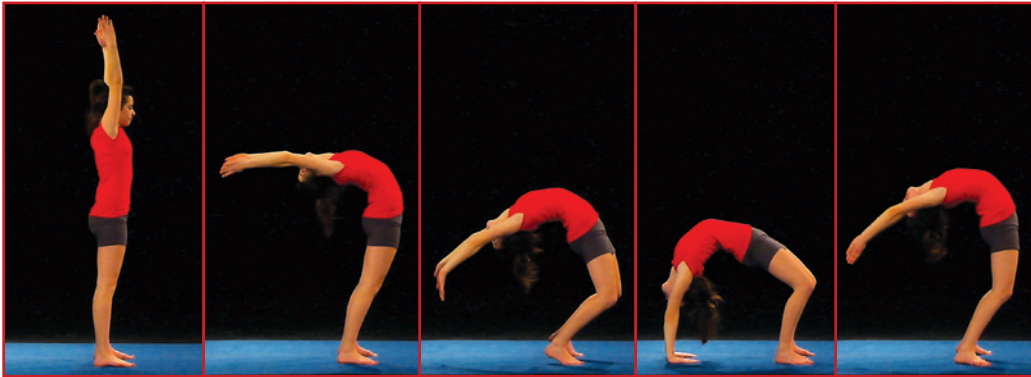
*Prerequisite for front and back walkovers.*



Body patterns that include the bridge:

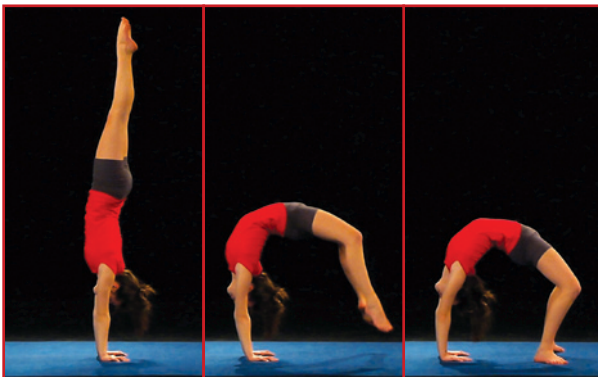
- **Lowering into and getting out of a bridge**

From the standing straight position with the arms on either side of the head, open the pelvis and the shoulders and lower into the bridge, supporting on the legs and extended arms. Return to the standing straight position.



- **Lowering into a bridge from a handstand**

From a handstand, open the pelvis and shoulders and lower into the bridge, supporting on the legs and extended arms.

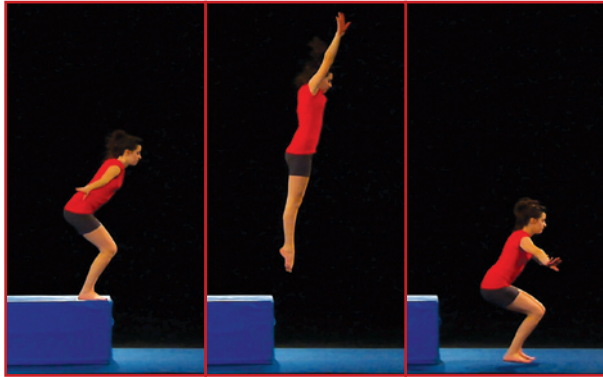


## Landing

Action of absorbing a movement upon contact of the hands or feet with the floor. In order to stabilize and control the landing, the arms or legs should be flexed.

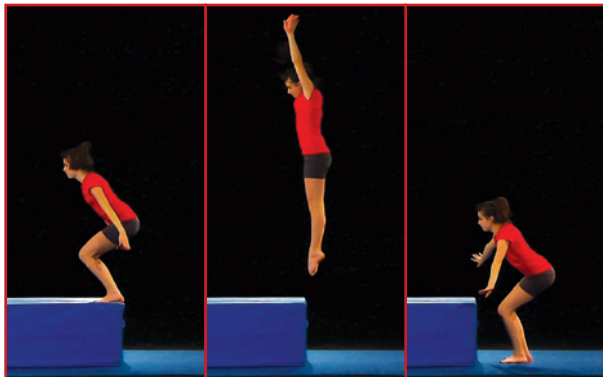
- **Forward**

From a raised surface, do a forward jump. When the feet hit the floor, simultaneously flex the knees and hips to a maximum angle of 90°. Lower the arms to either side of the torso when flexing the legs.



- **Backwards**

From a raised surface, do a backwards jump. When the feet hit the floor, simultaneously flex the knees and hips to a maximum angle of 90°. Lower the arms to either side of the torso when flexing the legs.



## WARM-UP EXERCISES

**Note:** Each pattern can be executed for the desired number of repetitions. They can also be executed one after the other as exercises.

### Arch drop

From all fours, round the back, bend the arms, and arch and extend on the stomach.

### Back dolphin

From the pike position with the legs extended along the floor, open the pelvis, roll down to the mat and bring the arms to either side of the head. Supporting on the feet and shoulder blades, lift the pelvis and get into the arch position.

### Forward body rock with a lunge

From the standing straight position, with the arms on either side of the head, extend one leg forward and move the COM over that leg while slightly bending the knee. Rock the torso forward and lift the free leg backwards. The arms, the torso and the rear leg must be aligned. Repeat, alternating the legs.

### Hurdle for acrobatic elements

With the legs together, jump forward and land on one foot, extend the opposite leg and move the COM over that leg while slightly flexing the knee. Rock the torso forward and lift the free leg backwards. The arms, the torso and the rear leg must be aligned.

### Hurdle for takeoff

From a run, with the arms extended on either side of the head, jump while throwing one leg forward, block its movement and, by means of a brisk and dynamic movement, bring the legs back together.

### Moving bridge

From the bridge position, walk or turn in place. Finish the exercise by lowering into the supine position.

### Pike candlestick

From the pike position with the legs extended along the floor, bring the torso backwards, roll down and bring the arms to either side of the head. Supporting on the shoulder blades and arms, lift the legs and the torso into the candlestick position.

### Rocker on the back

Lying supine, lift the arms and legs and rock the body forward and backwards in the hollow chest position.

### Rocker on the stomach

Lying prone, lift the arms and legs and rock the body forward and backwards in the arch position.

### Snap-down on the feet

In the standing straight position with the arms extended on either side of the head, move the torso backwards into an arch, return to the standing straight position and bring the torso forward into the hollow chest position.





**Tuck to handstand**

From the tuck position, lift up into tuck handstand. Return to the standing position.

**Tuck roll**

Rolling onto the back in a tuck position, feet to shoulders, and back. Finish in the tuck position on the feet.



## ACROBATICS

### FRONT ROLL



#### Technical Element Description

From the standing straight position, front roll over the back in tuck position and returning to the initial position.

#### Prerequisite

- Tuck position.

#### Explanation of the Movement

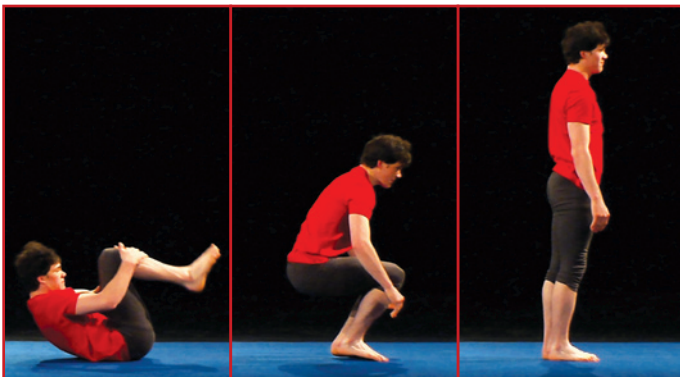
- From the standing straight position with the arms on either side of the head and the gaze forward, flex the legs and hips bring the legs to the upper body. Press the hands into the floor and rock forward in tuck position. **M 1**
- Put the nape of the neck on the floor while pushing with the legs and cushioning the landing with the arms. **M 2**
- Still in tuck position, with the gaze forward, move the COM over the feet. Simultaneously extend the hips and the legs and return to the initial position, with the gaze forward. **M 3**



M 1



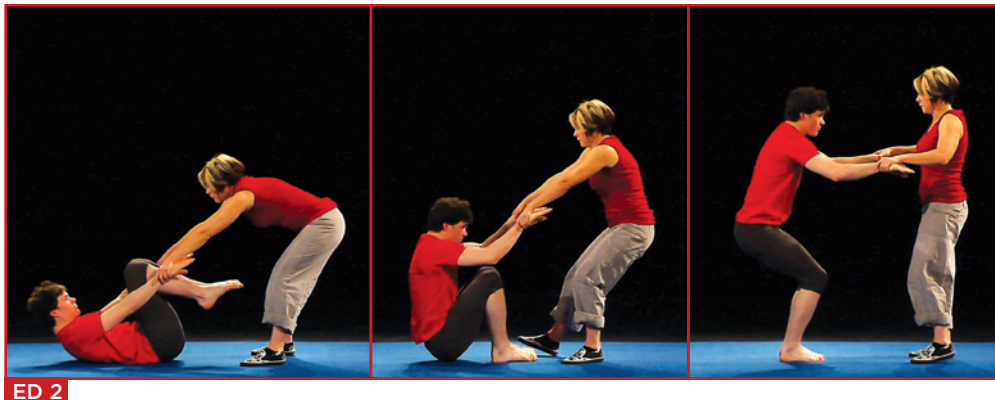
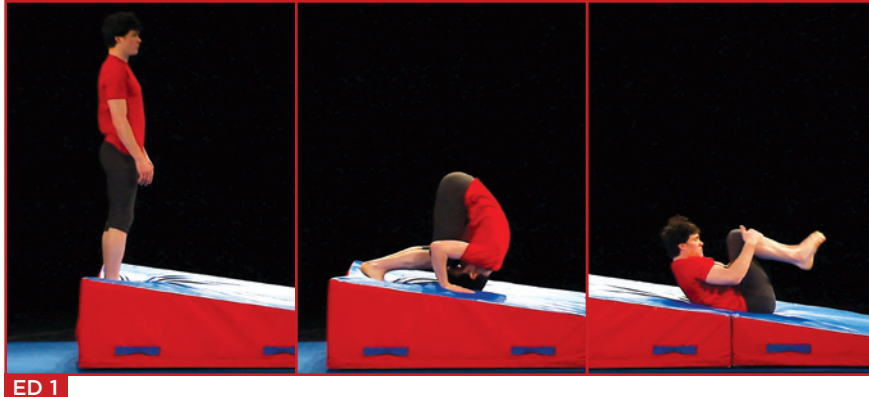
M 2



M 3

## Educationals

1. Do a front roll on an incline platform sloping downward. Do the educational again on an incline platform with the slope going upward. **ED 1**
2. From the floor, do the front roll with manual aid. The spotter helps the participant during the return to the standing straight position by holding his hands. **ED 2**



## Manual Aid

- From the straight position on the floor, the participant does a front roll onto a platform. He positions the hands so that the hips are at the end of the platform and returns to the initial position on the floor. The spotter supports the participant's pelvis during the roll on the platform. The proximal hand should be on the participant's stomach and the distal hand on his back. **MA 1**





MA 1

### Common Mistakes

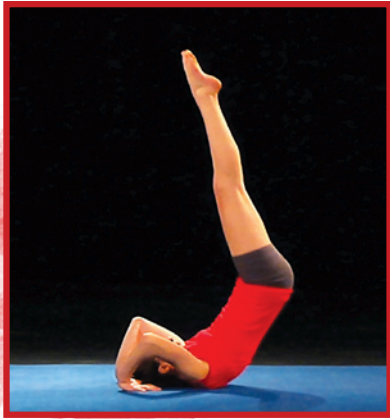
1. The participant's head does not follow his body.
2. The participant puts his hands on the floor when returning to the standing straight position.

### Corrections and Corrective Exercises

1. Keeping the gaze on the body when the nape of the neck touches the floor.  
Practising the movement on an incline platform. **EX**
2. Bringing the COM over the feet while getting up.  
Repeating the movement with manual aid. The spotter helps the participant during the return to the standing straight position by holding his hands. **EX**

### Variants

1. Roll in straddle position.
2. Roll in pike position.
3. Front roll with candlestick.



## ACROBATICS

### HANDSTAND FRONT ROLL

#### Technical Element Description

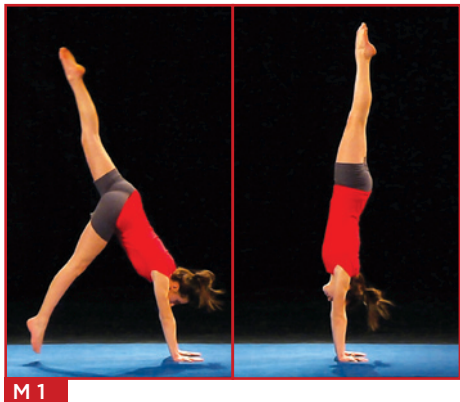
From a handstand, front roll in tuck position and returning to the standing straight position.

#### Prerequisites

- Tuck position.
- Forward body rock with a lunge.
- Handstand.
- Front roll.

#### Explanation of the Movement

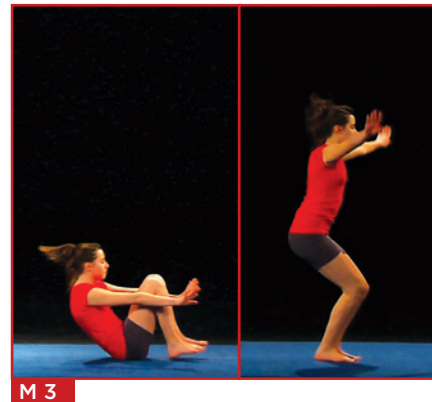
- From the standing straight position with the arms on either side of the head, do a forward body rock with a lunge, transfer the gaze from in front of you to the hands and kick up into a handstand. **M 1**
- Slightly move the COM backwards, flex the arms and put the nape of the neck on the floor in candlestick position. **M 2**
- In a tuck position, transfer the COM so that it is over the feet, extend the hips and the legs and return to the initial position. **M 3**



M 1



M 2



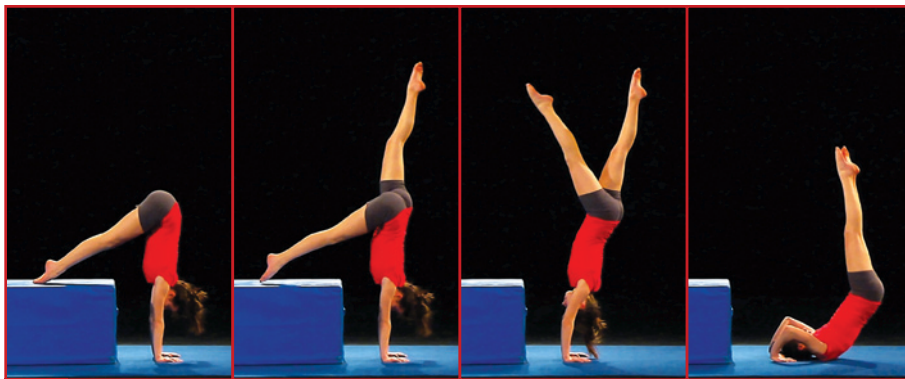
M 3

#### Educationals

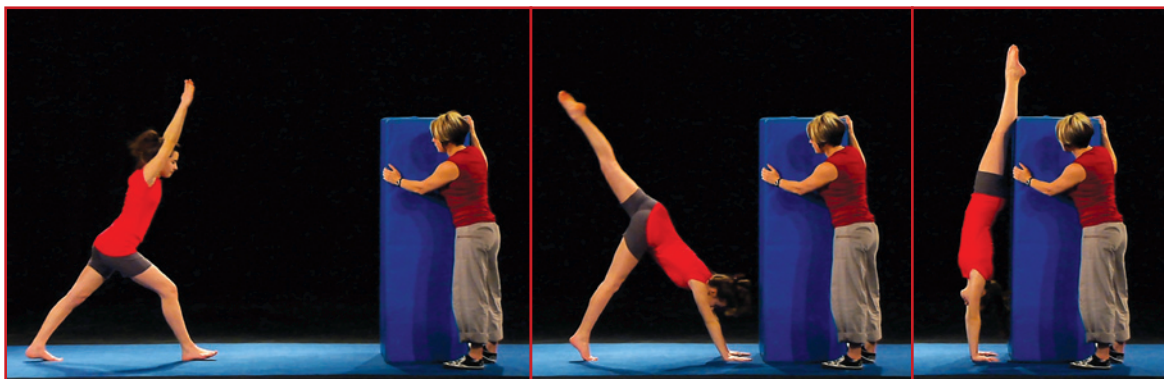
1. Supported on a platform in the pike position with the hands on the floor, kick up into a handstand and do a front roll. **ED 1**
2. Forward body rock with a lunge into a handstand, with support on a wall. **ED 2**







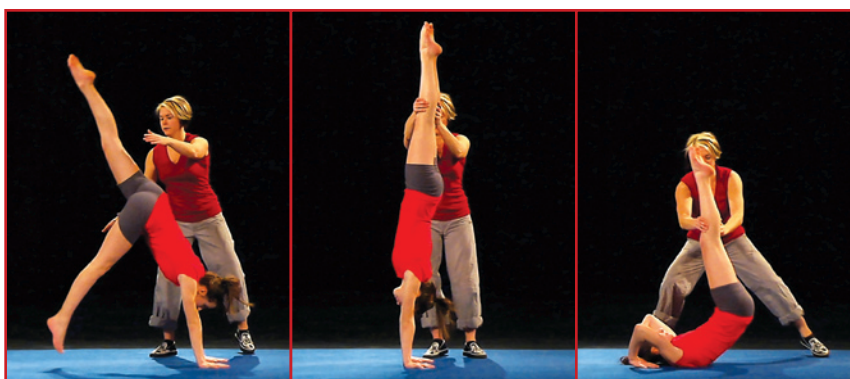
ED 1



ED 2

### Manual Aid

- The spotter holds the participant's legs during the handstand and his torso during the return to the standing position. **MA 1**



MA 1



### Common Mistakes

- 1.** The participant creates a too strong leg fouetté during the kicking into the handstand and falls into a bridge.
- 2.** The participant has trouble kicking up into the handstand.
- 3.** During the handstand, the participant lets his legs fall toward the floor into pike position.
- 4.** The participant does not have enough strength in his arms when doing the roll from the handstand.

### Corrections and Corrective Exercises

- 1.** Reducing the strength of the leg fouetté.  
Practising the forward body rock with a lunge with support on a wall in order to learn to correctly control the handstand. **EX**
- 2.** Increasing the leg fouetté.  
Practising the forward body rock with a lunge with support on a wall in order to learn to correctly control the handstand. **EX**
- 3.** Keeping the gluteus (the large muscles of the buttocks) contracted during the handstand.
- 4.** In order to lighten the load on the arms, doing the handstand with a platform. In pike position, with the hands on the floor and the legs on the platform, kicking up into the handstand and doing the front roll. **EX**  
Performing strengthening exercises for the arm muscles. **EX**





## ACROBATICS FRONT WALKOVER

### Technical Element Description

Forward body rock with a lunge around the transversal axis, descending into a bridge with the legs in a stride split and returning to the standing straight position on one leg.

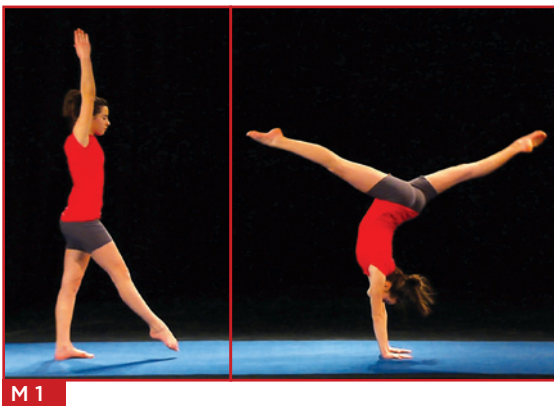
### Prerequisites

- Forward body rock with a lunge.
- Handstand with stride split.
- Bridge.

### Explanation of the Movement

- From the standing straight position with the arms on either side of the head, do a forward body rock with a lunge into a handstand with the legs in a stride split. Do an upward arms swing and take the arch position. **M 1**
- Transfer the COM over the foot of the landing leg and put the foot on the floor, with the gaze on the hands. **M 2**
- Gradually return to the standing straight position on one leg returning the torso/shoulders/head/arm segments one by one to vertical, with the gaze forward. **M 3**

**Note:** The arms must remain in line with the body throughout the execution of the element.

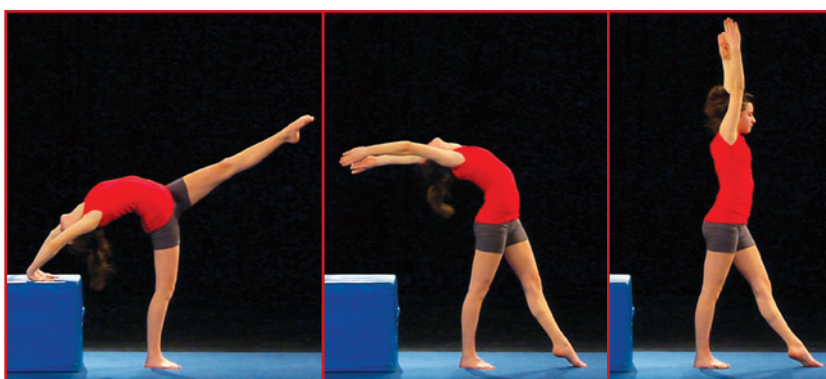


### Educationals

1. Do the front walkover while supporting the back on a round mat. **ED 1**
2. From a bridge, with the hands on a platform, do the finish of the front walkover. **ED 2**



ED 1



ED 2

## Manual Aid

- With his proximal hand, the spotter helps the participant to hold balance. **MA 1**
- Once the foot is on the floor, he pushes the participant with his proximal hand on the upper back so that the participant transfers his COM forward. With his distal hand, he holds the free leg. **MA 2**



MA 1





MA 2

### Common Mistakes

1. The participant gets up from the bridge in tuck position with the head inside.
2. During the handstand with a stride split, the participant closes his shoulders slightly. This brings his shoulders too far forward of his hands.

### Corrections and Corrective Exercises

1. With the hands on the wall bar and the body in arch position with one leg up, pushing backwards with the arms and ending in the standing straight position. **EX**
2. From a handstand with a stride split on a platform, taking the arch position, putting the pelvis on a mat and doing the finish of the front walkover. **EX**

### Variants

1. Front walkover, alternating legs.
2. Front walkover and return to the standing straight position with the legs pressed together.



## ACROBATICS

### FRONT HANDSPRING WALKOUT

#### Technical Element Description

Hurdling and rebounding on the floor with the hands, with a forward rotation around the transversal axis, and landing on one leg.

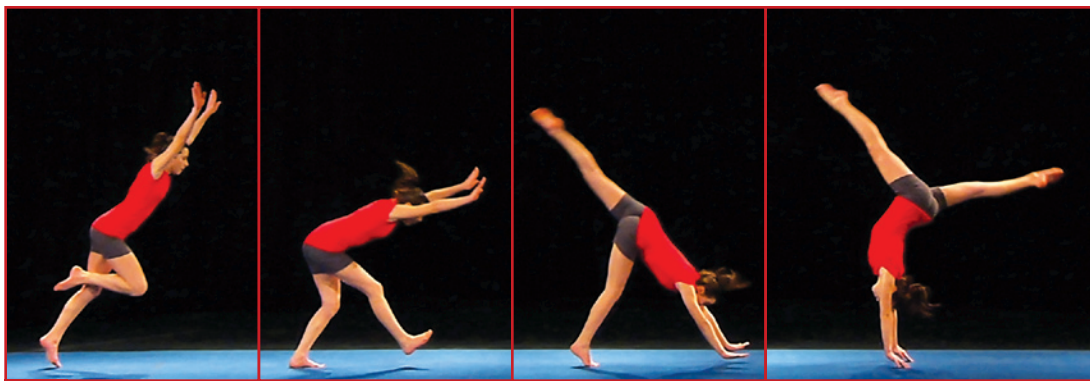
#### Prerequisites

- Forward body rock with a lunge.
- Handstand with stride split.
- Toc-toc handstand.
- Front walkover.
- Hurdle for acrobatic movement.

#### Explanation of the Movement

- From the standing straight position, do a hurdle followed by a forward body rock with a lunge and whip the rear leg to go into a handstand. Do a push-off and an upward arms swing, keeping the gaze on the hands. **M 1**
- In the arch position, land on one leg, extend this leg and then realign the torso/shoulder/head/arm segments, keeping the gaze on the hands. **M 2**

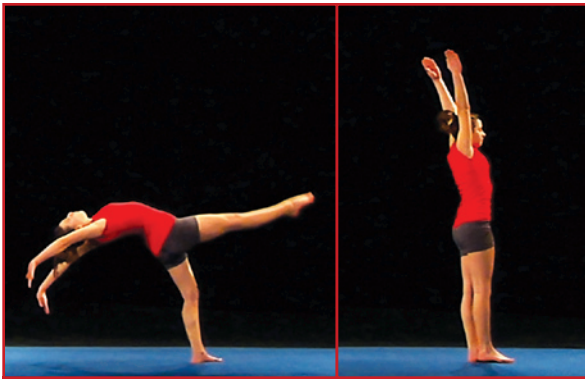
**Note:** The arms must remain in line with the body throughout the execution of the element.



M 1



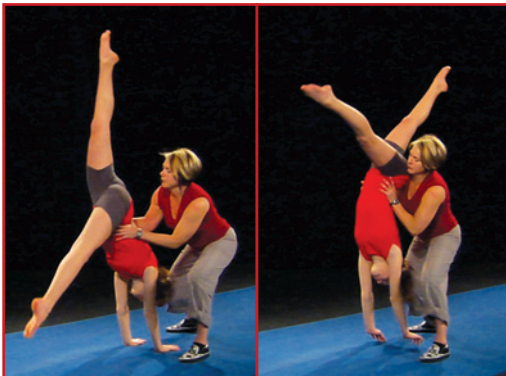




M 2

## Educationals

1. Do a rebound to a handstand on the floor with manual aid. The spotter supports the participant's pelvis when lifting up into a handstand. After the push-off, he blocks the movement. The participant then walks out backwards with a lunge and gets back into the initial position. **ED 1**
2. Do a front handspring walkout on a round mat with manual aid. **ED 2**



ED 1



ED 2



## Manual Aid

- When rebounding into a handstand on the floor, the spotter supports the participant's shoulders and pelvis. **MA 1**
- During the shoulder flexion, the spotter helps the participant keep his shoulders aligned vertically with his proximal hand. **MA 2**
- During the aerial phase, the spotter supports the participant's pelvis with his distal hand and presses his torso upward with his proximal hand upon landing. **MA 3**



MA 1



MA 2



MA 3

### Common Mistakes

1. The participant does the forward body rock in tuck position and his push with the back leg lacks force.
2. The participant does the front walkover too quickly. As a result, the push-off with the hands lacks force.
3. After the push-off, the participant lands in tuck position.

### Corrections and Corrective Exercises

1. Practising the rebound into a handstand on the floor with manual aid at the shoulders and pelvis, paying special attention to the body alignment and the push with the leg. **EX**
2. Practising the rebound into a handstand on the floor with manual aid at the shoulders and pelvis while paying special attention to the push-off with the shoulders. **EX**
3. Doing a handspring with manual aid or onto a landing mat, paying special attention to the body position. The participant must be in arch position upon landing. **EX**

## Variants

1. Front handspring walkout landing on both legs.
2. Front handspring: Starting with both legs together.



## ACROBATICS

### DIVE ROLL



#### Technical Element Description

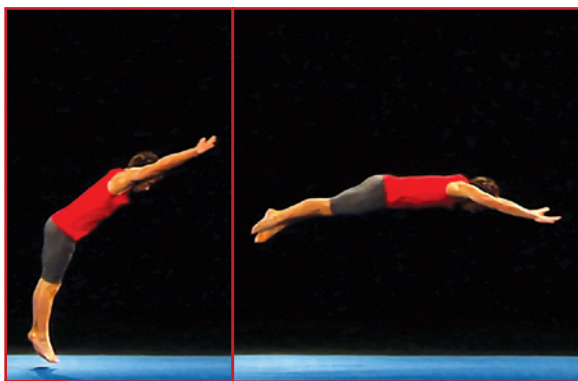
Front jump with the body in hollow chest position rolling onto the back and returning to the standing straight position.

#### Prerequisites

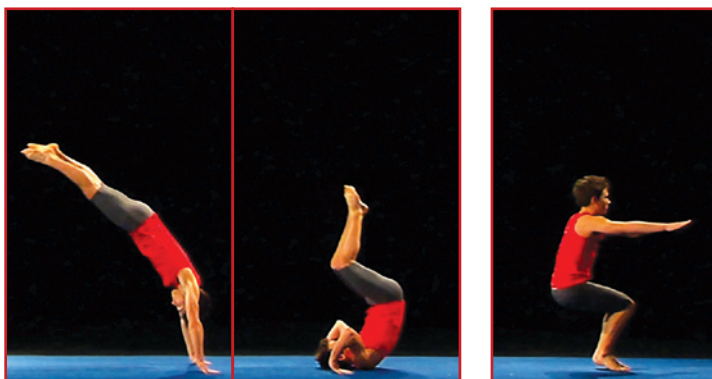
- Tuck position.
- Takeoff.
- Hollow chest position.
- Front roll.

#### Explanation of the Movement

- From the standing straight position, with the gaze forward, do a hurdle from one leg to two legs followed by a takeoff on the floor, extending the legs and raising the shoulders. The pelvis must be in a posterior tilt and the arms in line with the body. During the aerial phase, take the hollow chest position. **M 1**
- Flex the arms upon landing on the hands, then put the nape of the neck on the floor and take the tuck position. **M 2**
- When the COM is over the feet, extend the hips and the legs, and return to the initial position. **M 3**



M 1

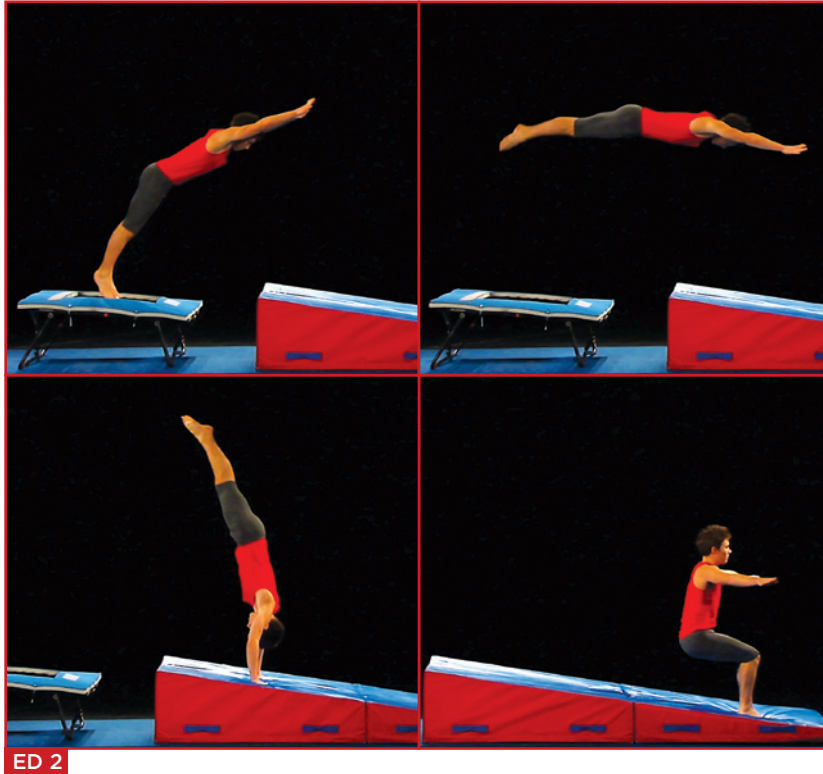


M 2

M 3

## Educationals

1. Do a dive roll landing on an incline mat.
2. Do a dive roll from takeoff on an MT, landing on an incline mat. **ED 2**



## Manual Aid

- During the aerial phase, the spotter supports the participant's legs with his proximal hand in order to help complete the rotation. With his distal hand, he also supports the participant's hips to facilitate the height gain. **MA 1**





### Common Mistakes

1. The participant does the takeoff in pike position. As a result, he is inclined too far forward at the beginning of the dive roll.
2. The participant flexes the legs too much upon takeoff.
3. The participant's arms are poorly synchronized.
4. The participant whips the feet too much after takeoff.

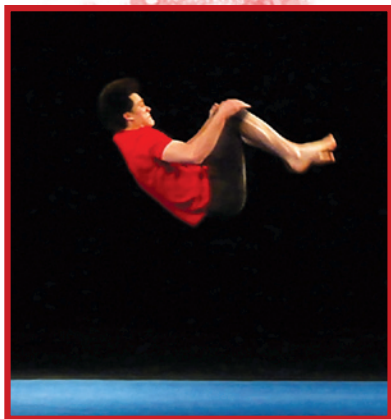
### Corrections and Corrective Exercises

1. Repeating the takeoff, paying special attention to body alignment.  
Practising exercises with rebounds.  
(See *Prerequisite, Takeoff*, p. 9.) **EX**
2. Limiting leg flexion when doing the takeoff.  
Practising exercises with rebounds.  
(See *Prerequisite, Takeoff*, p. 9.) **EX**
3. Keeping the arms synchronized throughout the sequence.  
Practising exercises with rebounds.  
(See *Prerequisite, Takeoff*, p. 9.) **EX**
4. Doing a dive roll over a platform.

### Variants

1. High dive roll.
2. Long dive roll.





## ACROBATICS FRONT SALTO

### Technical Element Description

From takeoff on both legs, rotating 360° in tuck position in the transversal axis and landing on the feet.

### Prerequisites

- Tuck position.
- Takeoff.
- Forward landing.
- Front roll.

### Explanation of the Movement

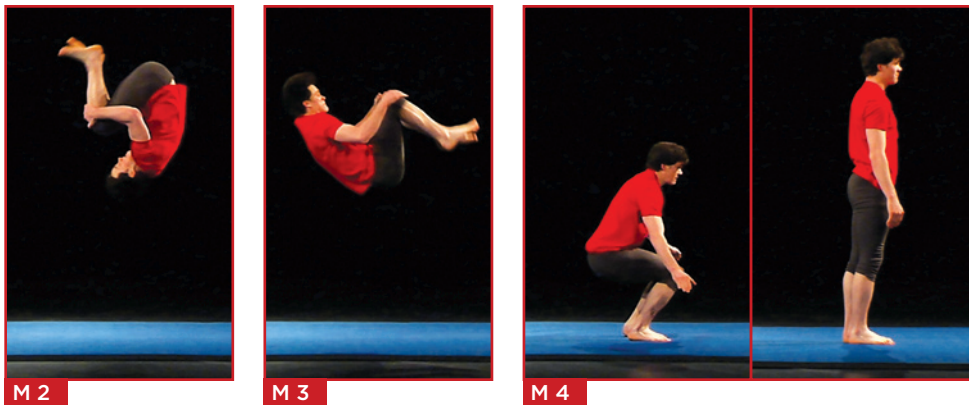
- From the standing straight position, with the gaze forward, do a hurdle on two legs followed by a takeoff on the floor, extending the legs and raising the shoulders. The pelvis must be in a posterior tilt and the arms in line with the body in order to initiate the rotation and move the body forward in the hollow chest position. **M 1**
- After the takeoff, flex the hips and take the tuck position to speed up the rotation, and bring the pelvis over the shoulders, with the gaze on the body. **M 2**
- Just before the COM is over the feet, extend the hips slightly, with the gaze on the floor. **M 3**
- Land on the floor with the legs flexed, and then return to the standing straight position, with the gaze forward. **M 4**



**M 1**

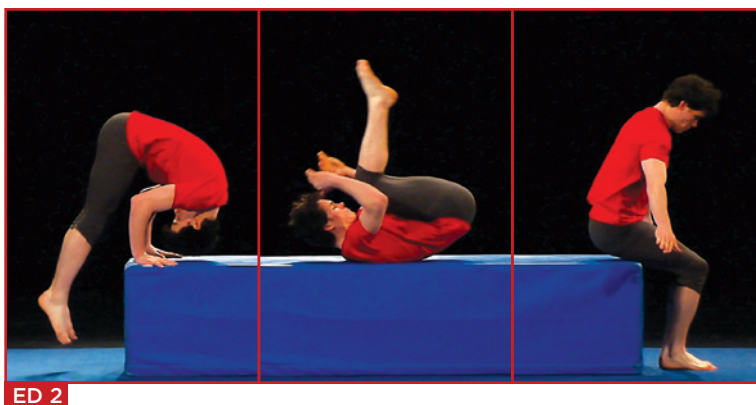
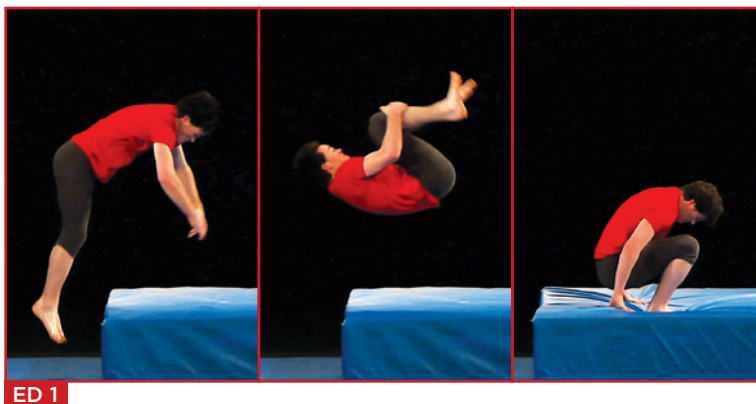




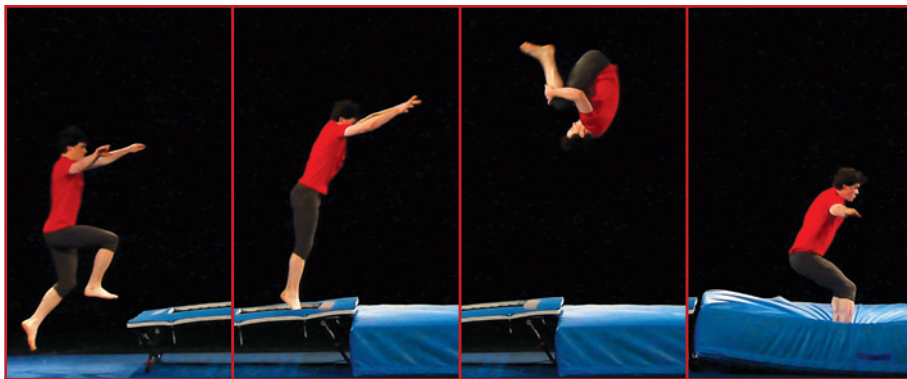


## Educationals

1. Standing in place, do a front salto, landing on a mat in tuck position. **ED 1**
2. From the standing straight position on the floor, do a front roll onto a platform. Position the hands so that the hips come to the end of the platform, and return to the initial position on the floor. **ED 2**
3. From an MT, do a front salto, landing on a mat. **ED 3**







ED 3

### Manual Aid

- At takeoff, the spotter puts his proximal hand on the participant's stomach and his distal hand on the participant's back in order to alter the rotation speed, if necessary. **MA 1**



MA 1



### Common Mistakes

1. The participant does the takeoff in pike position. As a result, he is inclined too far forward at the beginning of the salto.
2. The participant's arms are poorly synchronized.
3. The participant flexes the legs excessively at takeoff.
4. The participant extends the hips in the middle of the aerial phase.

### Corrections and Corrective Exercises

1. Maintaining straight body alignment at takeoff.  
Practising takeoff exercises, making sure to maintain straight body alignment.  
(See *Prerequisite, Takeoff*, p. 9.) **EX**
2. Standing in place, doing a front salto, landing on a mat in tuck position. Paying special attention to the synchronization of the arms. **EX**
3. Practising takeoff exercises, making sure to reduce the leg flexion.  
(See *Prerequisite Takeoff*, p. 9.) **EX**
4. From the tuck candlestick on a platform, practising the front roll landing on the floor. Making sure to extend the hips just before the COM comes over the feet. **EX**

### Variants

1. Front salto with the legs separated upon landing.
2. Front salto in pike position.
3. Front salto in layout position.



## ACROBATICS

### BACK ROLL



#### Technical Element Description

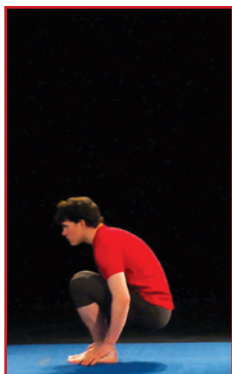
Rolling onto the back in tuck position around the transversal axis and returning to the standing straight position.

#### Prerequisite

- Tuck position.

### Explanation of the Movement

- From the standing straight position with the arms on either side of the head, with the gaze forward, flex the legs, then flex the hips and rock backwards, pushing with the legs. **M 1**
- With the gaze on the body, transfer the pelvis over the shoulders. Slightly extend the arms and put the feet on the floor. **M 2**
- Transfer the COM over the feet, extend the hips and the legs, extend the shoulders and return to the initial position, with the gaze forward. **M 3**



M 1



M 2



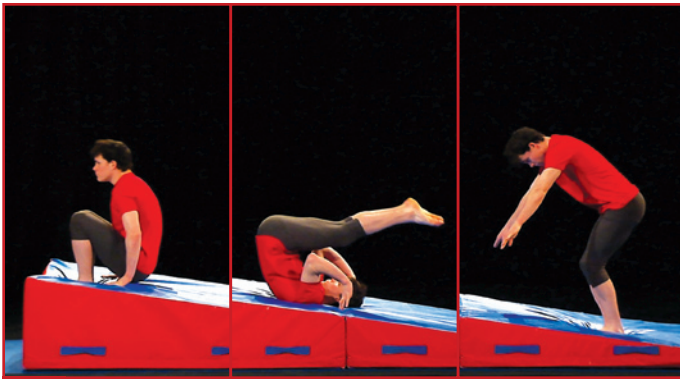
M 3



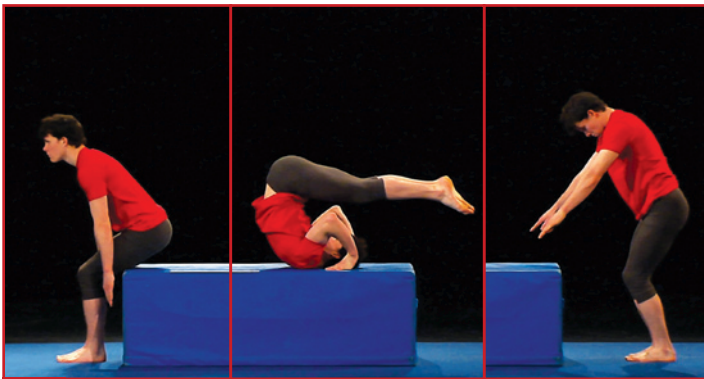
### Educationals

1. Do a back roll on an incline platform sloping downward. Repeat the educational on an incline platform with the slope going upward. **ED 1**
2. From the standing straight position on the floor, do a back roll onto a platform, landing on the floor. **ED 2**





ED 1



ED 2

## Manual Aid

- The spotter supports the participant's pelvis in order to free his head when pushing with his arms. **MA 1**



MA 1

### Common Mistakes

1. When going over his upper back, the participant pulls his head backwards and no longer has his gaze on the body.
2. The participant rolls with the head to the side.
3. The participant does not have enough arm strength to bring the body to the other side.

### Corrections and Corrective Exercises

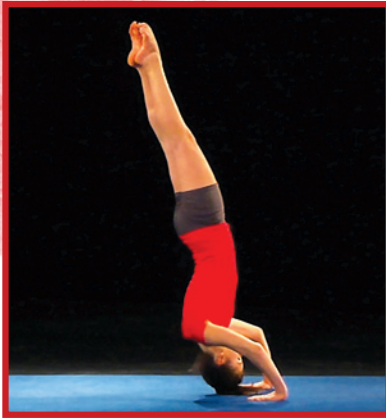
1. Doing the back roll supporting on the forearms and keeping the head in when going onto the nape of the neck, until the head is free.
2. Keeping the gaze on the body.  
Practising the back roll on an incline platform sloping downward, keeping the head to the centre. **EX**
3. In order to lighten the load on the arms, doing the back roll with manual aid and making sure the elbows are aligned with the wrists. **EX**  
Performing strengthening exercises for the arm muscles. **EX**

### Variants

1. Back roll in a straddle position.
2. Back roll in a pike position.







## ACROBATICS

### BACK ROLL TO HANDSTAND

#### Technical Element Description

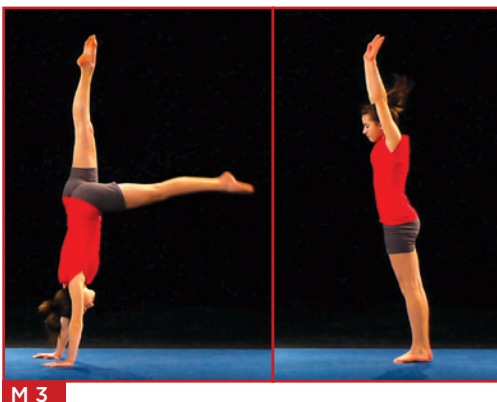
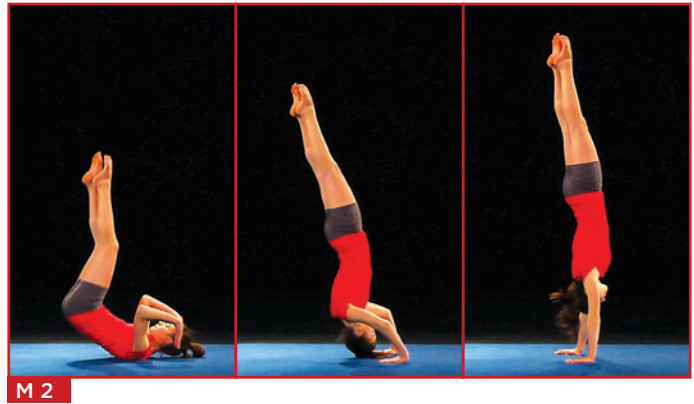
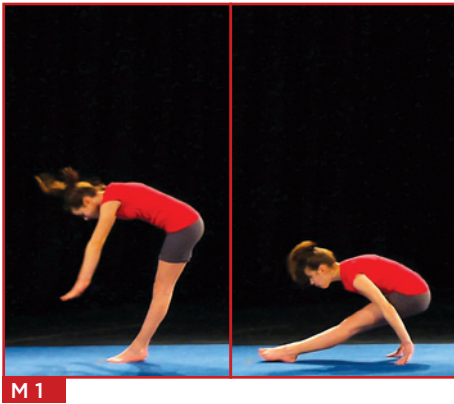
Back roll into a handstand and walkout.

#### Prerequisites

- Tuck position.
- Back roll.
- Handstand with walkout.

#### Explanation of the Movement

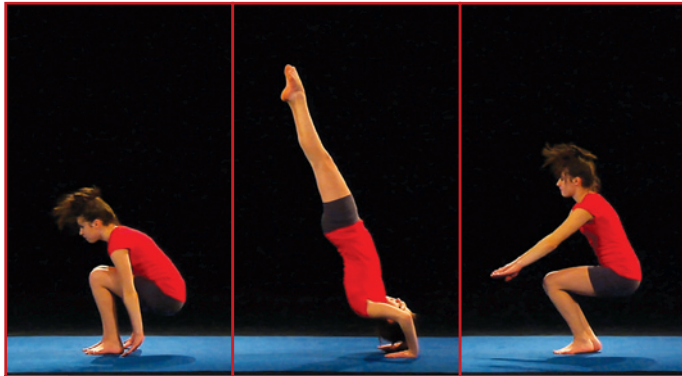
- From the standing straight position with the arms on either side of the head and with the gaze forward, rock backwards, lower the arms, flex the hips and put the hands on the floor in line with the hips. **M 1**
- With the gaze on the body, roll backwards, the arms flexed and the hands in extension, bring the pelvis over the hands. Quickly extend the hips and get into candlestick with the legs extended. With the gaze on the body, simultaneously push off and extend the arms into a handstand and bring the gaze to the floor. **M 2**
- Walk out with the gaze forward. **M 3**



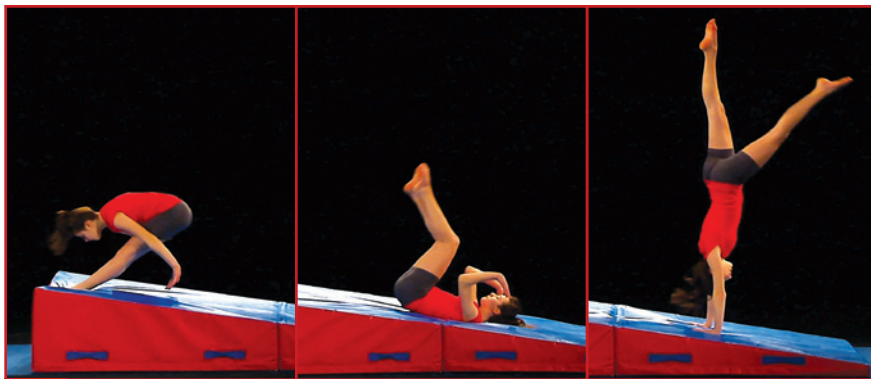


## Educationals

1. Do a back roll and, upon getting into a handstand, quickly extend the hips, with a partial push of the arms, and return by rolling forward into tuck position. Repeat the sequence then return to the standing straight position. **ED 1**
2. Do a back roll into a handstand on an incline platform with the slope descending, making sure to keep the gaze on the body during the roll. **ED 2**



ED 1



ED 2

## Manual Aid

- When the participant's upper body is resting on the floor, the spotter lifts the participant to vertical by holding his ankles or legs. The participant simultaneously quickly extends his hips and arms. **MA 1**





MA 1

### Common Mistakes

1. The participant gets up into handstand in arch position.
2. The participant's arms are poorly synchronized.
3. The participant's legs do not stay together when getting up into the handstand.

### Corrections and Corrective Exercises

1. Keeping the abdominals contracted when getting into the handstand.  
Practising the back roll into a handstand with manual aid, paying special attention to body and head position; keeping the gaze forward when getting into the handstand. **EX**
2. Quickly extending the hips when the COM comes over the torso, keeping the shoulder blades pressed into the floor. Paying special attention to the synchronization of the arms.
3. Quickly extending the hips when the COM comes over the torso, then returning in front roll. Ensuring that the legs stay together throughout the sequence.

### Variant

1. Back roll with handstand, with the arms outstretched.



## ACROBATICS BACK WALKOVER

### Technical Element Description

From standing on one leg, lowering into a bridge around the transversal axis and walkout.

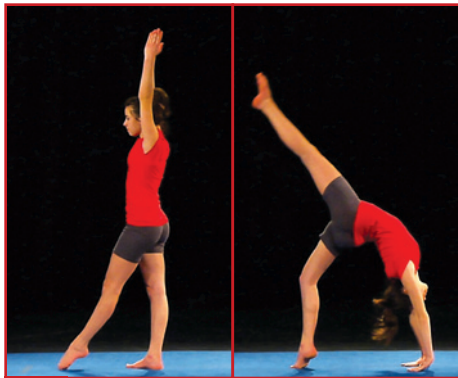
### Prerequisites

- Bridge.
- Handstand with stride split.
- Walkout.

### Explanation of the Movement

- From the standing straight position on one leg and the arms on either side of the head, do an upward arms swing and extend the hips. Lift the free leg and bring the hands to the floor, taking the arch position. **M 1**
- As soon as the hands contact the floor, push with the support leg and transfer the COM over the hands into a handstand, keeping the gaze on the hands with the legs in a stride split. **M 2**
- Walk out, with the gaze forward. **M 3**

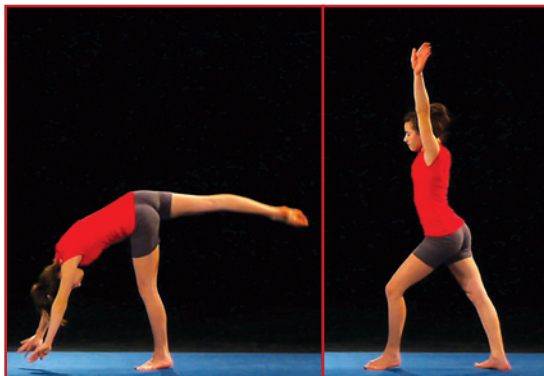
**Note:** The arms must remain in line with the body throughout the execution of the element.



M 1



M 2

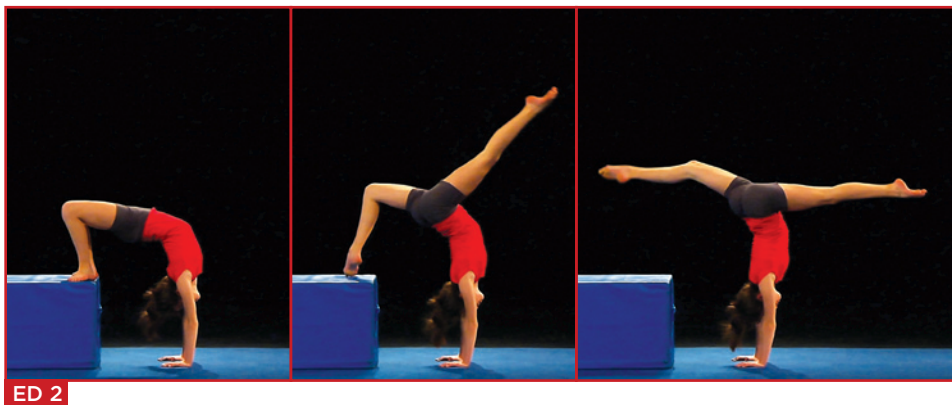
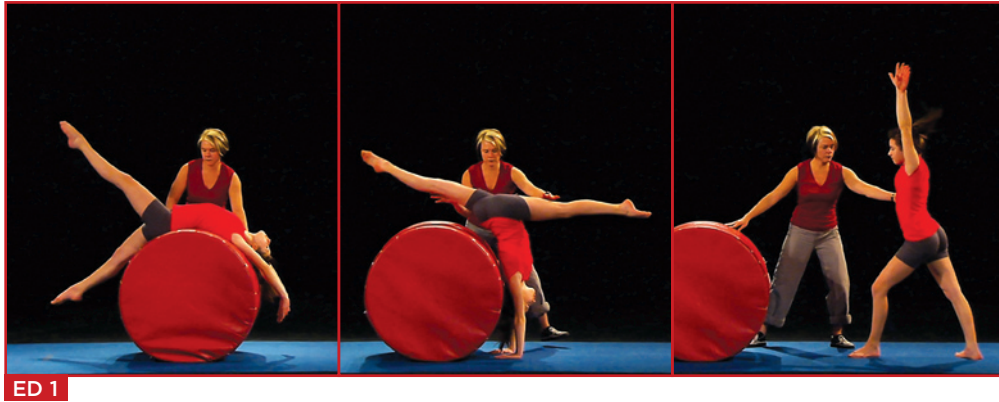


M 3



## Educationals

1. Do the back walkover while supporting the back on a round mat. Walk out with manual aid. **ED 1**
2. From a bridge, with the legs on a platform, do the back walkover. **ED 2**



## Manual Aid

- The spotter supports the participant's free leg with his proximal hand and supports the participant's pelvis with his distal hand to keep it over the support leg. **MA 1**
- Once the participant's hands are resting on the floor, the spotter pushes on his pelvis with the distal hand and on his leg with the proximal hand to support him during the walkout. **MA 2**



### Common Mistakes

1. The participant leans on the front leg and moves the pelvis forward during the descent.
2. From the handstand, the participant does a slight upward arms swing. This puts his shoulders too far forward of his hands when doing the walkout.

### Corrections and Corrective Exercises

1. Doing a back walkover on a round mat, keeping the free leg in the air. **EX**
2. From the handstand, keeping the arms aligned with the body until the walkout.

### Variants

1. Alternate legs at the start.
2. Back walkover with both legs together.





# ACROBATICS

## MENICHELLI



### Technical Element Description

Rotating 180° around the transversal axis, going into a handstand and finishing with a walkout.

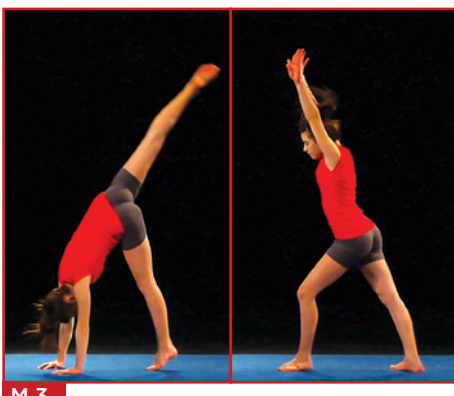
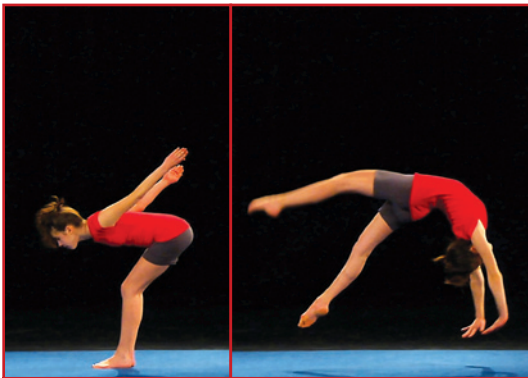
### Prerequisites

- Back walkover.
- Handstand with stride split.
- Walkout.

### Explanation of the Movement

- From the standing straight position with the arms on either side of the head, rock backwards slightly and lower the arms. Flex the arms until they are in line with the body and extend the legs and hips. **M 1**
- Transfer the COM over the hands and go into a handstand with the legs in a stride split, with the gaze on the hands. **M 2**
- Walk out and get back to the standing straight position, with the gaze forward. **M 3**

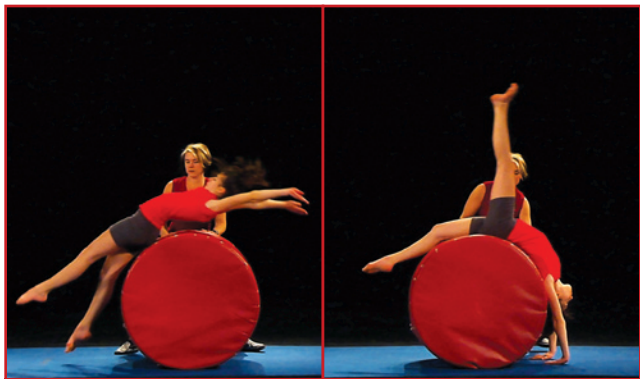
**Note:** Once the leg push is finished, the arms should remain aligned with the body.





## Educationals

1. With manual aid, do the Menichelli with back support on a round mat. **ED 1**
2. Do the Menichelli with manual aid.



## Manual Aid

- During the flight, the spotter supports the participant's pelvis with his distal hand and the back of the thigh of the other leg with his proximal hand. **MA 1**



### Common Mistakes

1. The participant adopts the stride split position before finishing the push with the legs.
2. From the handstand, the participant does a downward arms swing when doing the walkout.

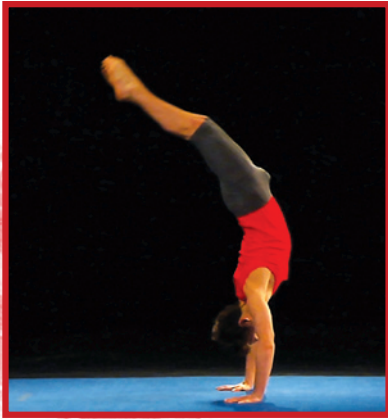
### Corrections and Corrective Exercises

1. Doing the Menichelli with the back supported on a round mat, making sure to completely extend the legs before extending the hips and getting into the stride split. **EX**
2. From a handstand in stride split, descending and walking out. **EX**

## Variants

1. High Menichelli.
2. Long Menichelli.





## ACROBATICS BACK HANDSPRING

### Technical Element Description

180° backwards rotation around the transversal axis and snap-down.

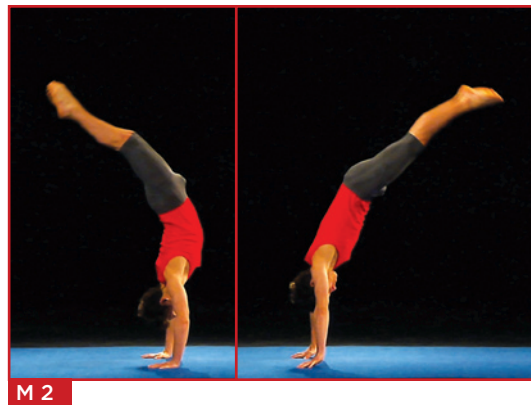
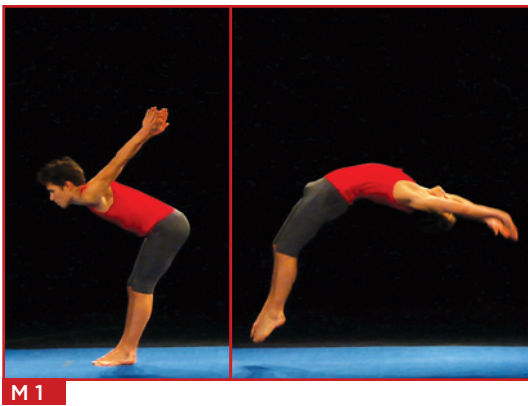
### Prerequisites

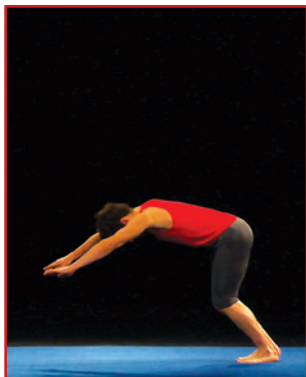
- Snap-down, from open to closed.
- Back dolphin.

### Explanation of the Movement

- From the standing straight position with the arms on either side of the head, shift the COM backwards slightly, flex the hips, bend the legs and lower the arms.
- Simultaneously lift the arms straight until they are in line with the body, extend the legs and hips and do an upward arms swing. **M 1**
- Transfer the COM over the hands and, when the hands hit the floor, do a snap-down and a push-off with the shoulders, with the gaze on the hands. **M 2**
- Slightly flex the hips and get into the hollow chest position, then land on the feet and come back to the standing straight position. **M 3**

**Note:** After the leg push is completed, the arms should remain aligned with the body.

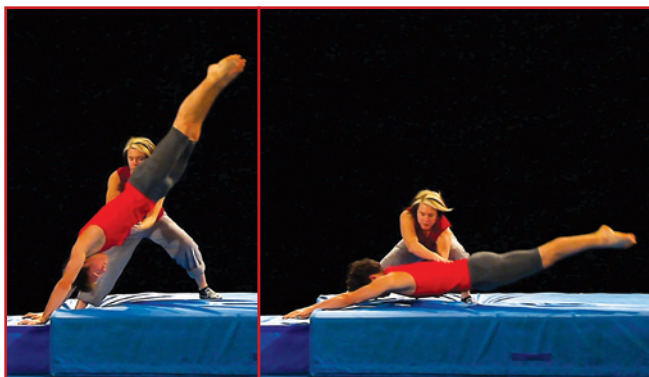




M 3

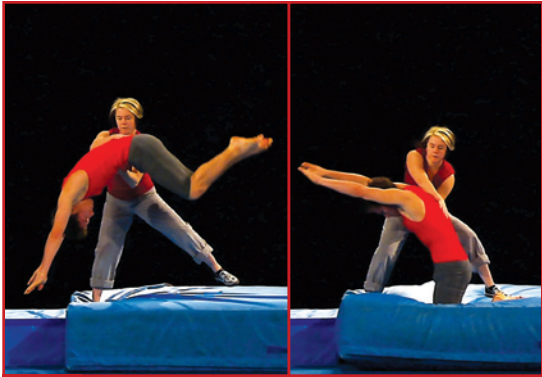
## Educationals

1. From the handstand on a platform, with manual aid, do a snap-down landing on a mat:
  - On the stomach; **ED 1.a**
  - On the knees; **ED 1.b**
  - On the feet. **ED 1.c**
2. Do a half back handspring with a handstand. On a platform, with manual aid, rock your body backwards into a handstand, then do a snap-down landing:
  - On the stomach; **ED 2.a**
  - On the knees; **ED 2.b**
  - On the feet. **ED 2.c**
3. With manual aid, do the back handspring with back support on a round mat. **ED 3**

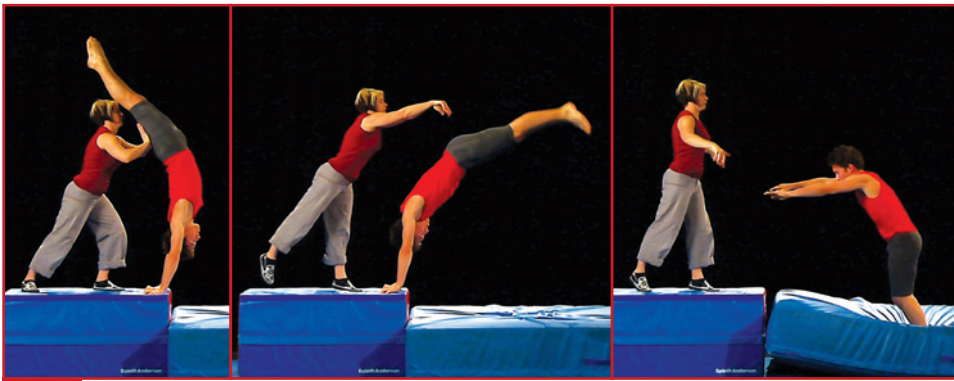


ED 1.a

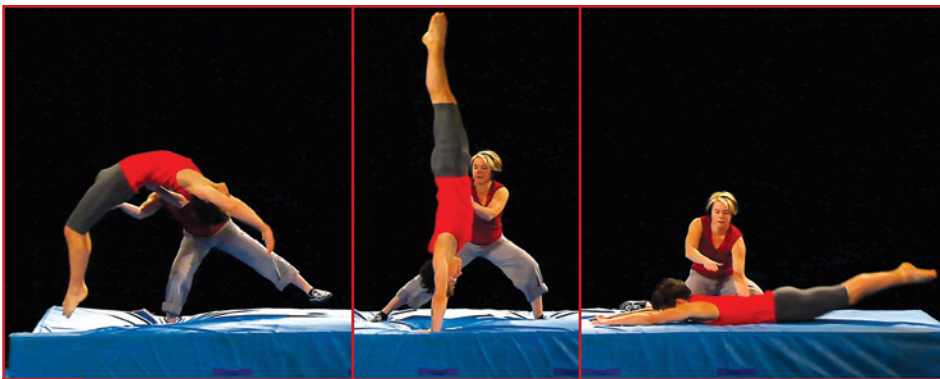




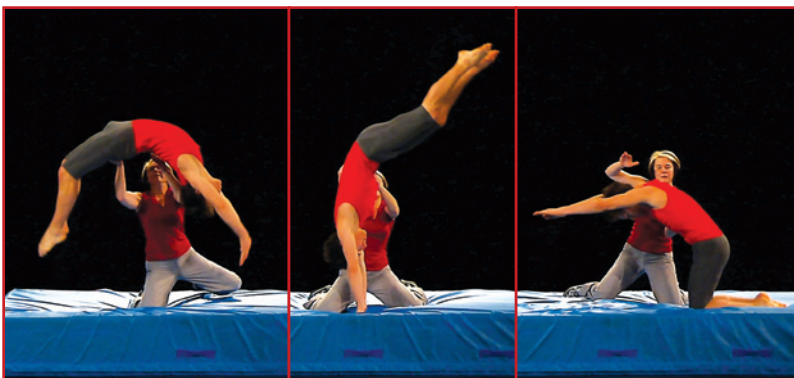
ED 1.b



ED 1.c

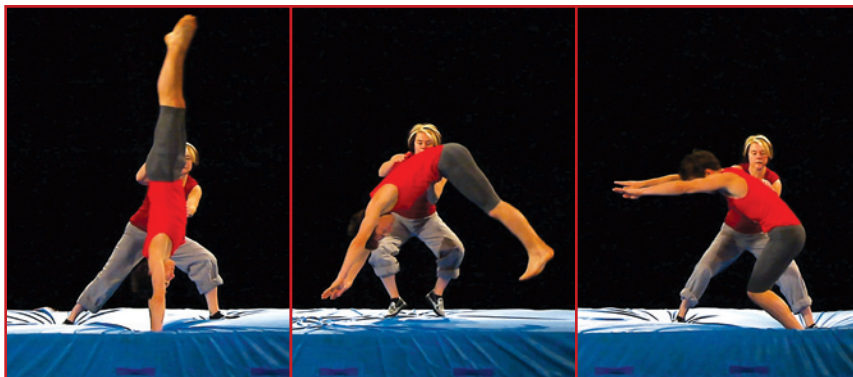


ED 2.a

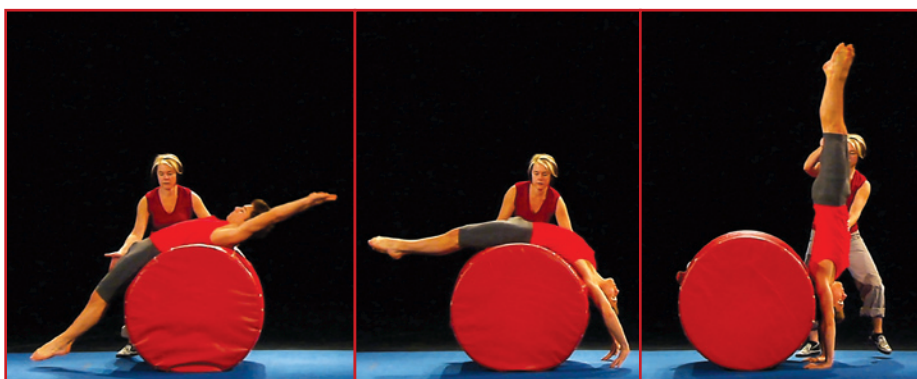


ED 2.b





ED 2.c



ED 3

## Manual Aid

- During the flight, the spotter supports the participant's pelvis with his distal hand and the back of the participant's thighs with his proximal hand. During the second part, he pushes the participant's pelvis with his distal hand to help him get into the hollow chest position. **MA 1**



MA 1



### Common Mistakes

1. The back handspring is too high because the pelvis is too far forward at the start or because the head is thrown more quickly than the rest of the body.
2. The participant's arms are poorly synchronized.
3. The participant does a downward arms swing during the handstand.

### Corrections and Corrective Exercises

1. From the standing straight position, moving the COM slightly backwards and flexing the hips. Extending the legs and hips and doing an upward arms swing. Finishing by landing on the stomach on a mat. Paying special attention to the height of the back handspring. **EX**  
  
Practising Educational 1.b, paying special attention to the height of the back handspring. **EX**
2. Practising Educational 2.a and 2.b, paying special attention to the synchronization of the arms. **EX**
3. Practising Educational 1.b, landing flat on the stomach. Keeping the arms in line with the body during the handstand. **EX**

### Variants

1. Sequencing back handsprings.
2. Back handspring followed by a salto.







## ACROBATICS

### BACK SALTO

#### Technical Element Description

360° backwards rotation, in tuck position, around the transversal axis and landing on the feet.

#### Prerequisites

- Tuck position.
- Takeoff or jump extension.
- Backwards landing.
- Back roll.

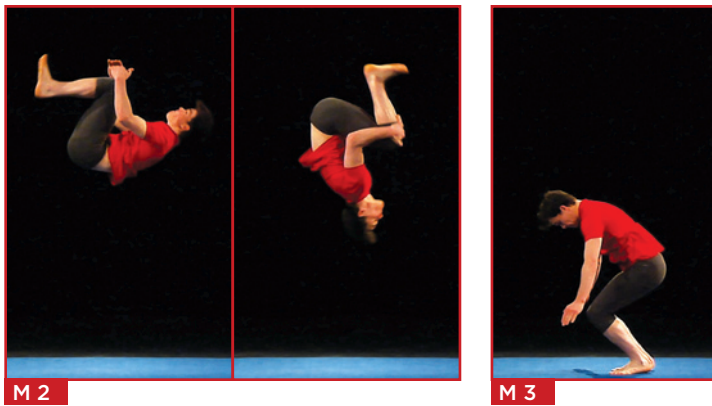
#### Explanation of the Movement

- During a takeoff, after a round-off or back handspring, or during a jump extension, initiate the rotation by extending the hips and flexing the shoulders, keeping the gaze forward. **M 1**
- After the takeoff, get into the tuck position to speed up the rotation and bring the pelvis over the shoulders. **M 2**
- Just before the COM is over the feet, slightly extend the hips, with the gaze on the floor.
- Land on the floor with the legs flexed and then return to the standing straight position, with the gaze forward. **M 3**



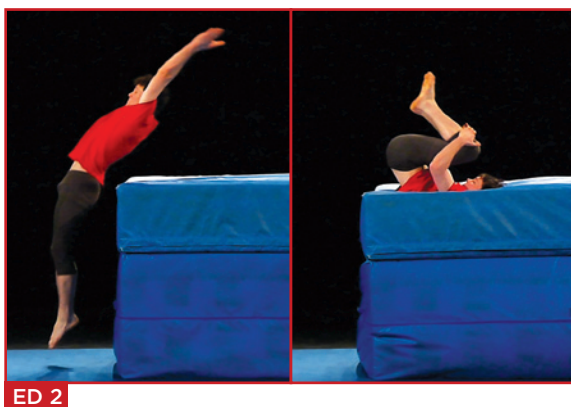
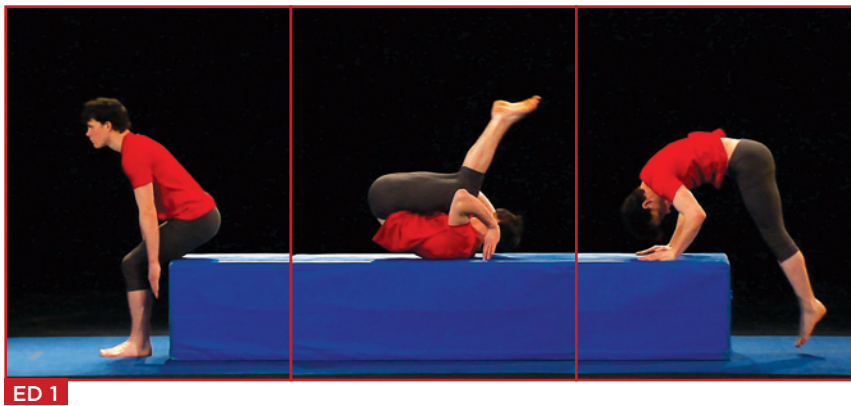
M 1

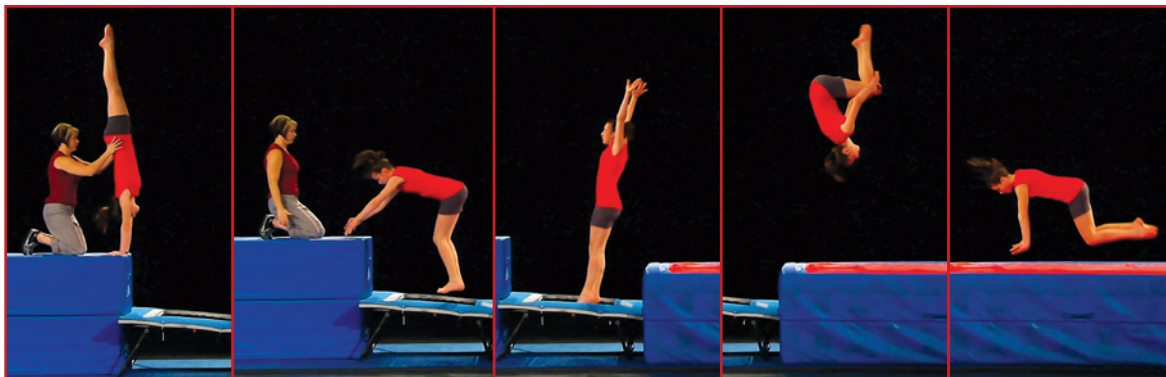




## Educationals

1. From a platform, do a back roll, landing on a mat placed below. **ED 1**
2. From a jump extension, do a back salto, landing in tuck candlestick position on a raised mat. **ED 2**
3. From an MT, get into a handstand on a platform placed in front. From the handstand, do a takeoff on the MT followed by a back salto, landing on all fours on a landing mat. **ED 3**
4. From a handstand supported on a platform, do a snap-down followed by a back salto, landing on a mat.





ED 3

## Manual Aid

- During the participant's flight, the spotter places his distal hand on the participant's lower back and his proximal hand behind the participant's thighs so as to speed up the rotation, if necessary. **MA 1**



MA 1

### Common Mistakes

1. The participant does not completely extend his legs and pulls his shoulders back at the start.
2. The participant has the feet in front of the pelvis during the takeoff.
3. During the hip extension, the participant starts with the head back and adopts an arch position.
4. The participant extends the hips in the middle of the aerial phase.

### Corrections and Corrective Exercises

1. Practising Educational 2, paying special attention to the leg extension and shoulder movement. **EX**
2. Making sure the COM is over the feet during the takeoff.
3. Practising Educational 2, paying special attention to body position in general and the head position in particular. **EX**
4. From a platform, doing a back roll, landing on a mat placed lower than the platform. **EX**

## Variants

1. Back salto in pike position.
2. Back salto in layout position.



## ACROBATICS

### CARTWHEEL



#### Technical Element Description

Body rock around the anterior-posterior axis into a handstand, legs in a stride split, walkout.

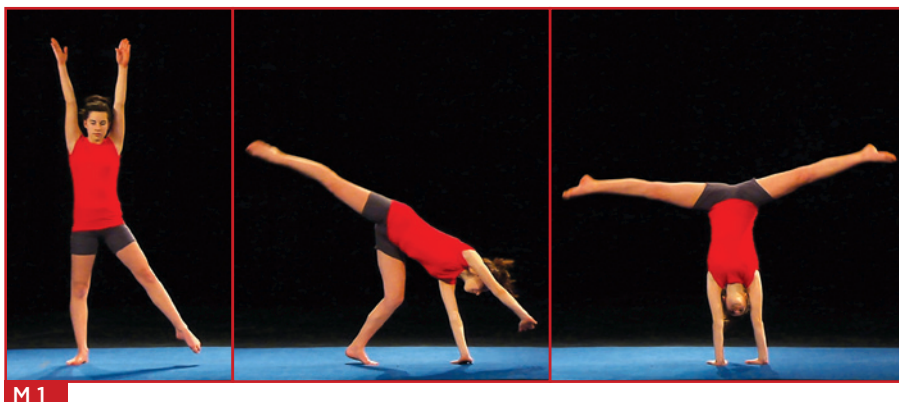
#### Prerequisites

- Lateral body rock with a lunge and walkout.
- Handstand with stride split.

#### Explanation of the Movement

- From the standing straight position with the arms on either side of the head, do a lateral body rock with a lunge, position one hand after the other and go through a handstand with the legs in a stride split and the gaze on the hands. **M 1**
- Walk out, with the gaze forward. **M 2**

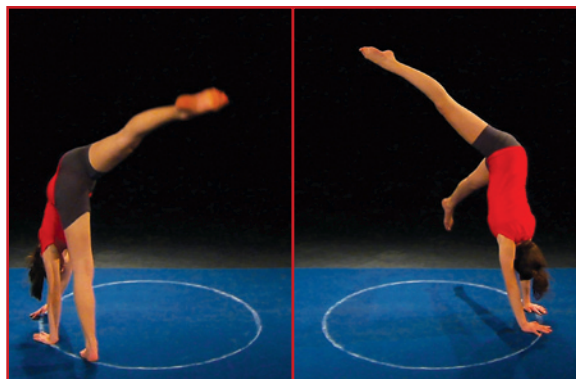
**Note:** The arms must remain in line with the body throughout the execution of the element.





## Educationals

1. Move in a circle, placing, in order, the first foot, the second foot, the first hand, the second hand, the first foot again and the second foot. **ED 1**
2. Do the cartwheel, supporting the hands on a platform. **ED 2**



ED 1



ED 2

## Manual Aid

- The spotter, standing behind the participant, holds his pelvis when going into a handstand and in the lateral walkout. **MA 1**



MA 1

### Common Mistakes

1. The participant stops the movement once in a handstand.
2. The participant is in tuck position during the handstand.
3. The participant does not do the cartwheel in a straight line.

### Corrections and Corrective Exercises

1. Doing a lateral body rock with a lunge over an obstacle from standing, then helped by a leg fouetté walk out laterally. **EX**
2. Doing a lateral body rock with a lunge, stopping in a handstand, with the legs in a stride split. **EX**
3. Drawing a line on the floor so that the hands and feet are aligned during the cartwheel.





## **Variants**

- 1.** Cartwheel on just the right or left hand.
- 2.** Cartwheel to both sides.
- 3.** Cartwheel for a side salto.





## ACROBATICS

### SIDE SALTO

#### Technical Element Description

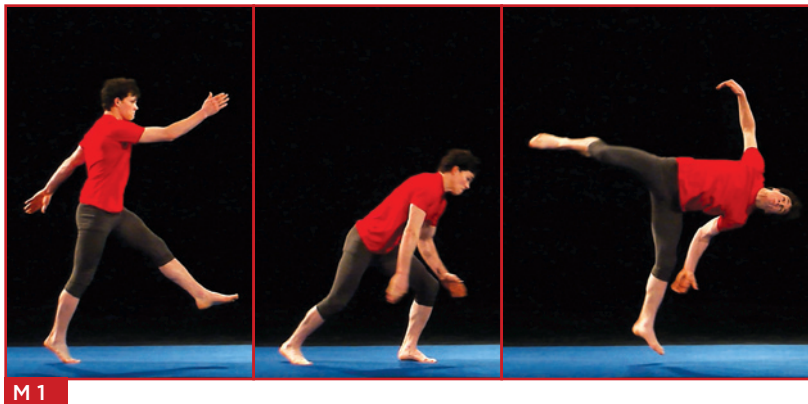
Rotating 360° around the anterior-posterior axis.

#### Prerequisite

- Cartwheel.

### Explanation of the Movement

- From a sideways takeoff on one leg with arm abduction, lift the body, with the gaze forward. **M 1**
- Increase the speed of the rotation by a leg flexion in split position, bring the hands behind the knees and bring the pelvis over the shoulders, with the gaze on the body. **M 2**
- Land on one leg, then transfer the COM over both legs, with the gaze forward. **M 3**



M 1



M 2

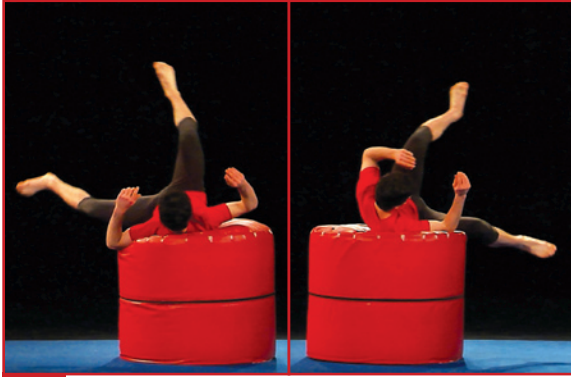


M 3



## Educationals

1. Do a side roll onto a platform, returning into the standing straight position on the floor. **ED 1**
2. From a raised surface, do a side salto and land on a landing mat.



**ED 1**

## Manual Aid

- The spotter, standing behind the participant, puts his proximal hand on the participant's hip and, when the participant's head is down, supports the other hip with his distal hand. The spotter follows the participant's pelvis throughout the rotation and finishes with the arms crossed. **MA 1**



**MA 1**



## ACROBATICS CARTWHEEL 1/4 TURN IN

### Technical Element Description

Forward body rock with a lunge with a quarter turn rotation around the longitudinal axis and walkout with a second quarter turn rotation.

### Prerequisites

- Forward body rock with a lunge and walkout.
- Handstand with straddle split.

### Explanation of the Movement

- From the standing straight position with arms on either side of the head, do a forward body rock with a lunge with a quarter turn rotation around the longitudinal axis, then put the first hand on the floor. **M 1**
- Put the second hand on the floor and get into a handstand, with the gaze on the hands. **M 2**
- Do a second quarter turn rotation around the longitudinal axis, then walk out with the gaze forward. **M 3**

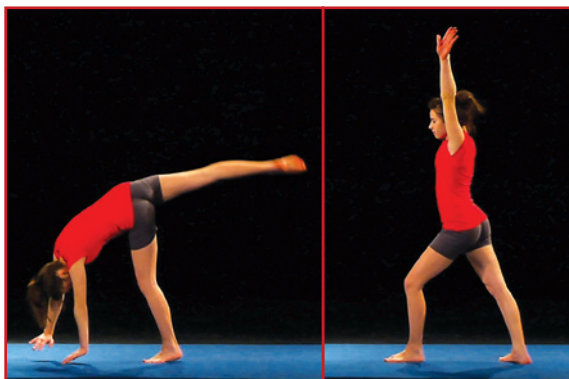
**Note:** The arms must remain in line with the body throughout the execution of the element.



M 1



M 2

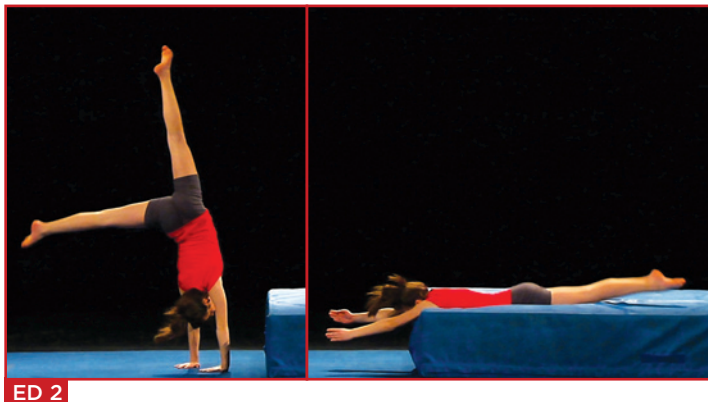
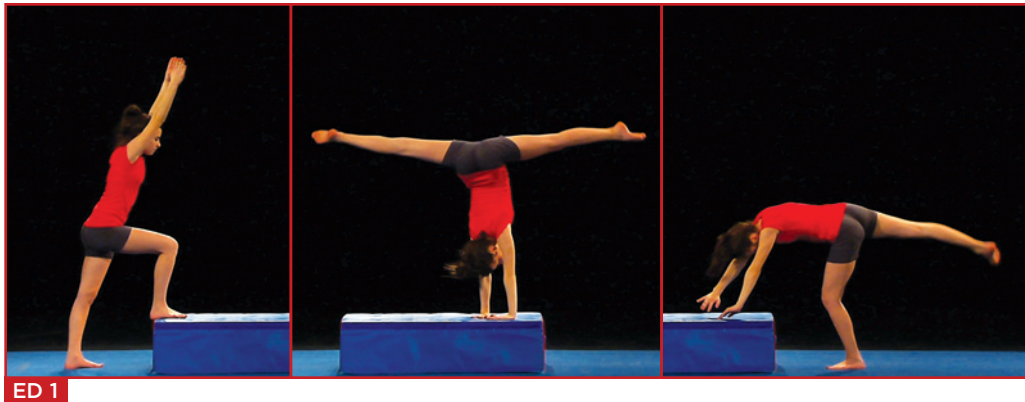


M 3



## Educationals

1. Do the cartwheel ¼ turn in supporting the hands on a platform. Position the hands so that the feet are on the floor when walking out. **ED 1**
2. Do a half-cartwheel with a quarter turn rotation around the longitudinal axis, followed by landing flat on the stomach on a landing mat. **ED 2**



## Manual Aid

- The spotter stands behind the participant and supports his hips during the move onto the hands.



### Common Mistakes

1. The participant does the quarter turn before the body rock or does not complete the second quarter turn.
2. When getting into a handstand, the participant is in hollow chest position.

### Corrections and Corrective Exercises

1. Practising the different body rocks with a lunge. **EX**

Doing the first quarter turn over a round mat. **EX**

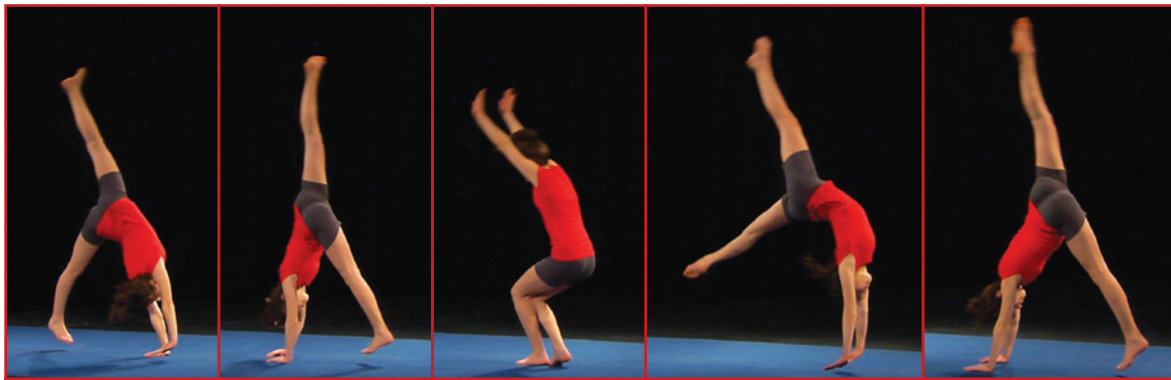
In a handstand on a platform with the legs separated, dropping with a quarter turn to walk out facing the platform. **EX**

2. Practising the different body rocks with a lunge, paying special attention to body position. **EX**

Practising handstands with the legs in a straddle split, making sure that the torso and legs are aligned when getting into the handstand. **EX**

### Variants

1. Cartwheel  $\frac{1}{4}$  turn in followed by a takeoff.
2. Cartwheel  $\frac{1}{4}$  turn in followed by a Menichelli. **V 2**



## ACROBATICS

### ROUND-OFF FOR BACK SALTO



#### Technical Element Description

Forward body rock with a lunge, half turn in the longitudinal axis into a handstand, snap-down and takeoff on the floor for salto.

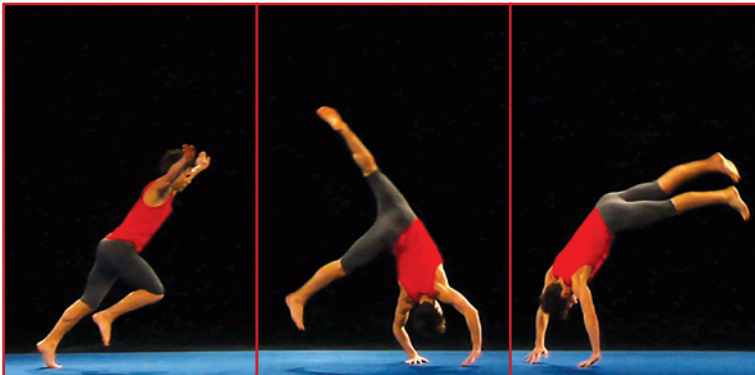
#### Prerequisites

- Hurdle.
- Forward body rock with a lunge.
- Snap-down, from open to closed.

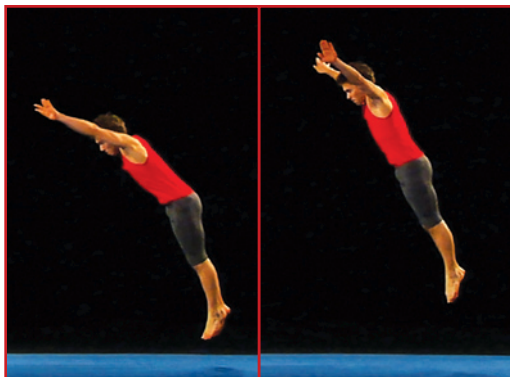
#### Explanation of the Movement

- From the standing straight position, do a hurdle followed by a forward body rock with a lunge pushing with the rear leg. At the same time as the body rock, do a half turn around the longitudinal axis and put the hands on the floor, choosing one of the following two possibilities:
  - Make a quarter turn on the longitudinal axis outward with the first hand. Lean on this hand and, before transferring the weight to the second hand, make sure you turn the first hand inward, forming a triangle with the hands; **M 1**
  - Do a half turn in the longitudinal axis with both hands before resting them on the floor.
- During the snap-down, push off with the shoulders. Make floor contact with the feet slightly behind the COM, finishing with a takeoff. **M 2**

**Note:** From the hurdle, the arms should remain aligned with the body.



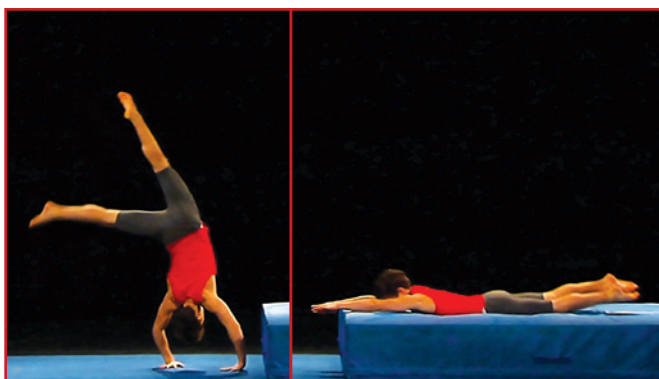
M 1



M 2

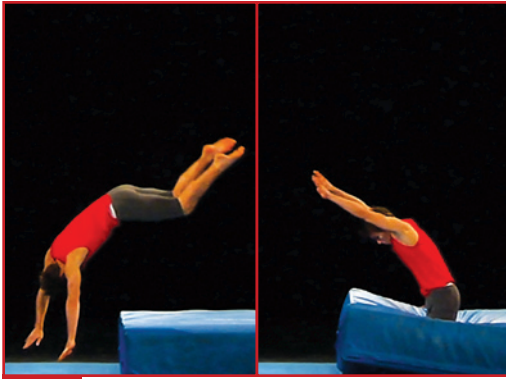
## Educationals

1. From a handstand, do a snap-down, landing on a mat:
  - Flat on the stomach; **ED 1.a**
  - On the knees; **ED 1.b**
  - Standing.
2. With manual aid, get up into a handstand on a platform placed in front. From the handstand, do a snap-down followed by a takeoff on the floor. **ED 2**
3. Practise the round-off for back salto up to the push-off with the shoulders, using the first possibility of resting the hands on the floor or by transferring the weight from one hand to the other while executing a half turn. Land flat on the stomach or on the knees on a landing mat.
4. Do a round-off from a raised surface followed by landing in the straight position on a landing mat placed below.

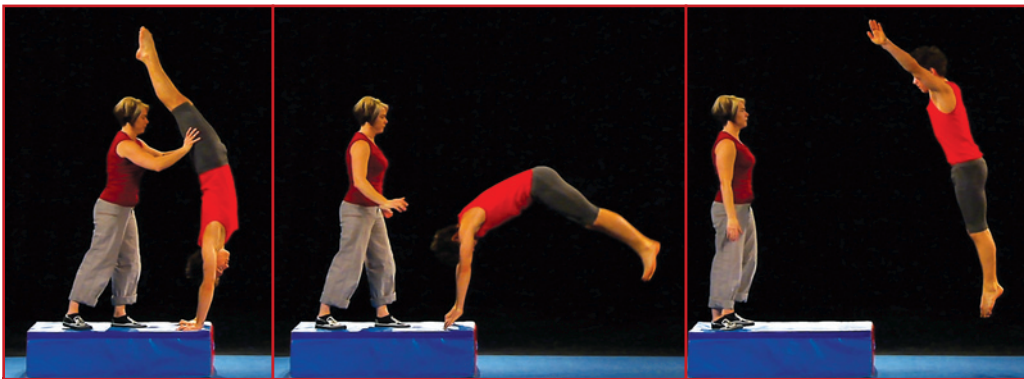


ED 1.a





ED 1.b



ED 2

## Manual Aid

- The spotter puts his proximal hand on the participant's hip and, when the participant's second hand touches the floor, the spotter supports his other hip with the distal hand. The spotter helps with pelvis position and finishes with the arms crossed. Manual aid during the round-off is rather rare.



### Common Mistakes

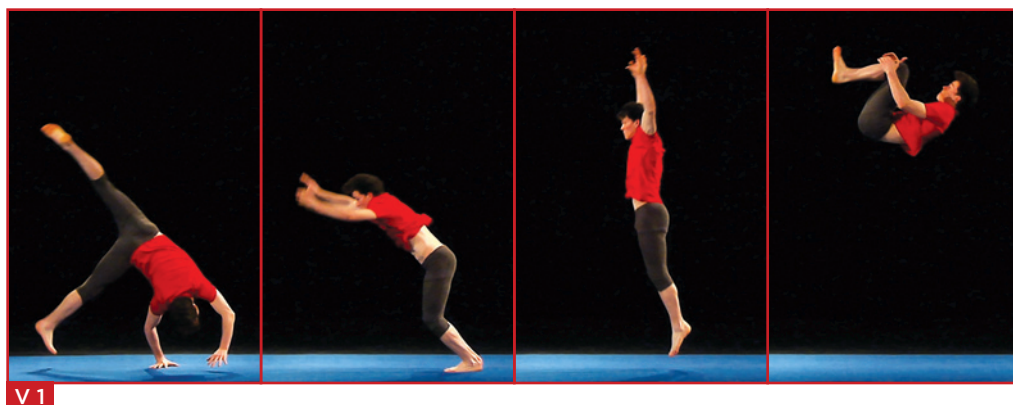
1. The participant does the half turn or quarter turn too early.
2. During the forward body rock with a lunge, the participant does a slight downward arms swing and puts the first leg outside the axis.
3. The participant does the takeoff in pike position.
4. When the feet hit the floor, the participant absorbs the landing instead of sequencing it with a takeoff.

### Corrections and Corrective Exercises

1. Doing a forward body rock and a half turn to a handstand in front of a wall and onto a landing mat. **EX**  
From a forward body rock, transferring from one hand to the other while executing a half turn. **EX**
2. Doing a body rock and a half turn to a handstand in front of a wall and onto a landing mat. **EX**  
From a forward body rock with a lunge, transferring from one hand to the other while executing a half turn. **EX**
3. From the handstand on a platform, doing snap-downs followed by a jump extension on an MT, landing on a mat. Making sure the torso and legs are aligned when getting into the handstand during the takeoff. **EX**
4. From the handstand on a platform, doing snap-downs followed by a takeoff.

### Variant

1. Round-off salto; sequence with a back salto. **V 1**





## ACROBATICS

### ROUND-OFF FOR BACK HANDSPRING



#### Technical Element Description

Forward body rock with a lunge, half turn in the longitudinal axis into a handstand, snap-down and takeoff on the floor for back handspring.

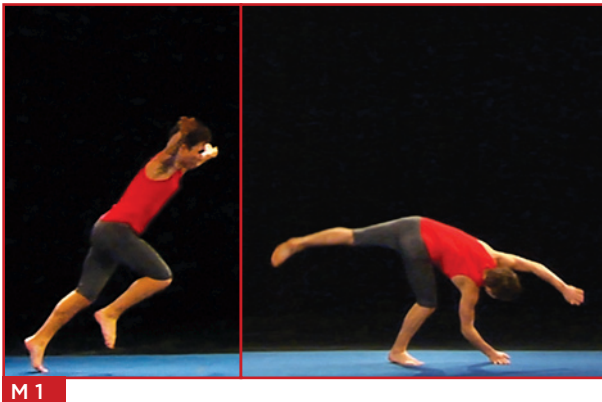
#### Prerequisites

- Hurdle.
- Forward body rock with a lunge.
- Snap-down, from open to closed.

#### Explanation of the Movement

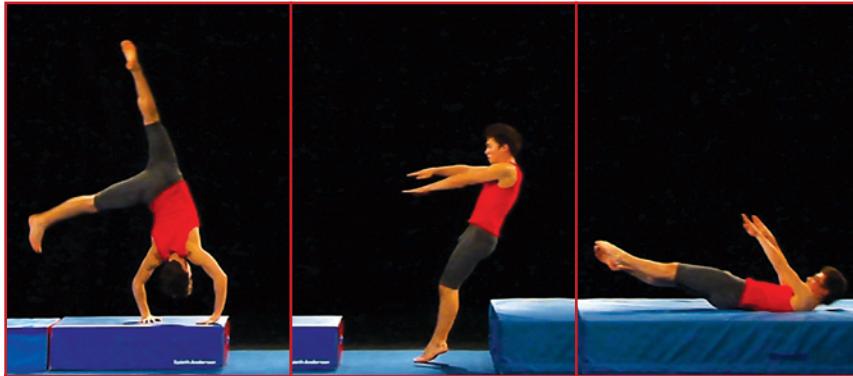
- From the standing straight position, do a hurdle followed by a forward body rock with a lunge pushing with the rear leg. At the same time as the body rock, do a half turn around the longitudinal axis and put the hands on the floor, choosing one of the following two possibilities:
  - Make a quarter turn on the longitudinal axis outward with the first hand. Lean on this hand and, before transferring the weight to the second hand, make sure you turn the first hand inward, forming a triangle with the hands; **M 1**
  - Do a half turn in the longitudinal axis with both hands before resting them on the floor.
- During the snap-down, push off with the shoulders. Slightly flex the hips into hollow chest position with the feet placed slightly forward of the COM, finishing with a takeoff. **M 2**

**Note:** From the hurdle, the arms should remain aligned with the body.

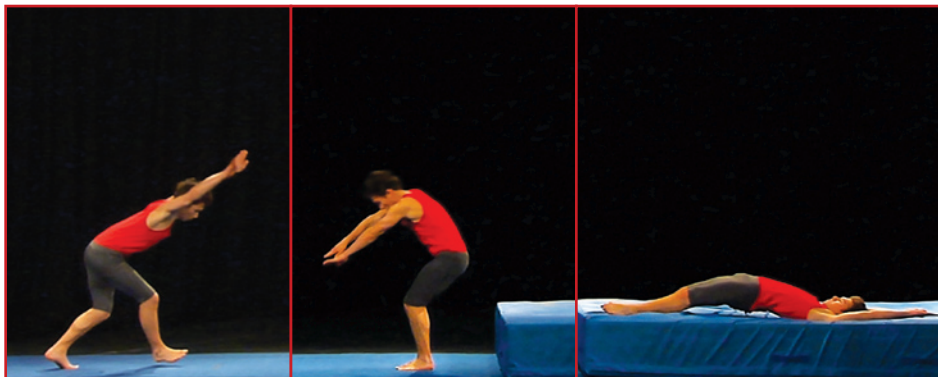


## Educationals

1. Do a round-off from a raised surface landing on a landing mat:
  - Standing; **ED 1.a**
  - In pike position and back dolphin.
2. Do a round-off on the floor landing flat on the back on a landing mat. **ED 2**



ED 1.a



ED 2

## Manual Aid

- The spotter puts his proximal hand on the participant's hip and, when the participant's second hand hits the floor, the spotter supports the participant's other hip with his distal hand. The spotter helps with pelvis position and finishes with the arms crossed. Manual aid during the round-off is rather rare.



### Common Mistakes

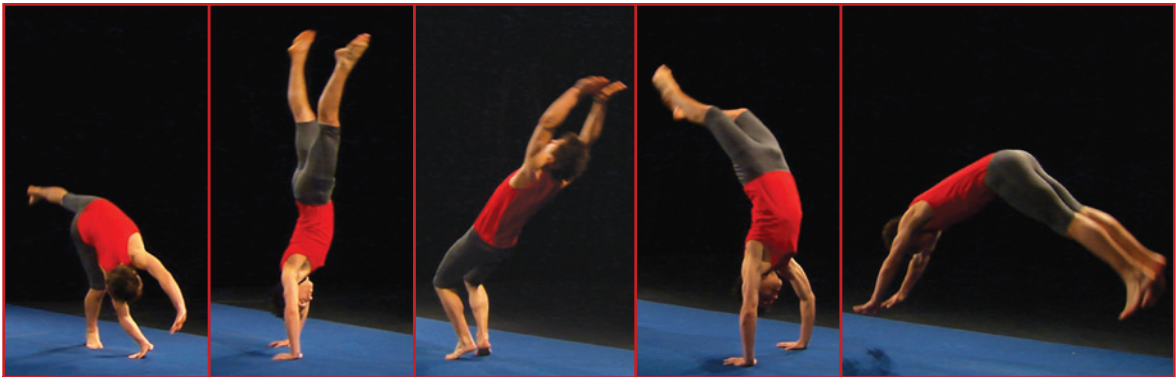
1. The participant does the half turn or quarter turn too early.
2. During the forward body rock with a lunge, the participant does a slight downward arms swing and puts the first leg outside the axis.
3. The participant does the snap-down too early.
4. The participant does not finish the snap-down with the feet forward of the COM.

### Corrections and Corrective Exercises

1. Doing a forward body rock and a half turn to a handstand in front of a wall and onto a landing mat. **EX**  
From a forward body rock, transferring from one hand to the other while executing a half turn. **EX**
2. Doing a forward body rock and a half turn to a handstand in front of a wall and onto a landing mat. **EX**  
From a forward body rock, transferring from one hand to the other while executing a half turn. **EX**
3. Doing the half turn to a handstand and landing flat on the stomach on a landing mat.
4. Doing a round-off on the floor, landing with the hands on a raised surface to increase the shoulder push-off.

### Variant

1. Round-off back handspring; sequence with a back handspring. **V 1**



**V 1**

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Produced in collaboration with the National Circus School, and translated into multiple languages, *Basic Techniques in Circus Arts* aims to introduce the public to circus arts. As both a technical guide and an educational tool, this document illustrates 177 technical elements drawn from 17 basic circus arts disciplines. Accompanied by video documents, this work offers in-depth expertise and technical content that will enable the delivery of progressive and specialized instruction in a safe environment.

In collaboration with



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